



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.

**Caesar Borgia;
a tragedy: and
other poems**

William Evans







CÆSAR BORGIA

AND

Other Poems.

CÆSAR BORGIA;

A Tragedy:

AND

OTHER POEMS.

BY

W. EVANS, B.A., Oxon.

London:

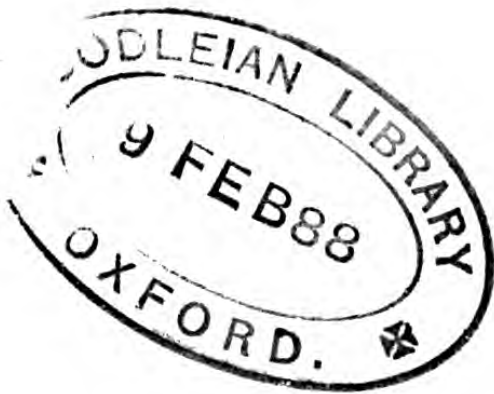
W. MAXWELL & SON,
8, BELL YARD, TEMPLE BAR, W.C.

—
1888

280.

f.

395.



LONDON :

PRINTED BY C. F. ROWORTH, GREAT NEW STREET, FETTER LANE, E.C.

CONTENTS.



	PAGE
CÆSAR BORGIA : a Tragedy	I
VIOLA'S SONG	74
VALENTINE'S SONG	76
ROMEO'S SONG	76
CICELY : a Lyric of Beggary	78
A WINTER DIRGE	82
TO MISERY	83
THE BARD'S SONG	85
THE CAPTIVE	87
MAIDENHOOD	88
RICH HOURS	89
A WOMAN'S PORTRAIT	90
LOVE AND GRIEF	91
WAITING	92
PARTING	93
STANZAS : written near the Worm's Head	94
IN ARCADY	96
ANTIGONE	104
A RONDEL	109
RECONCILIATION	110
WE SAT BENEATH A RUINED WALL	111
THE CHANGE	112
LINES	112
STANZAS	113
A WITHERED ROSE	114

SONNETS—	PAGE
THE CORNISH LIONS	115
TO WALES	115
THE DOGMA OF INFALLIBILITY	116
KILSANOS	117
THE DREAM OF ST. HELENA	117
A MOUNTAIN TARN IN WINTER	118
WRITTEN IN THE VALE OF NEATH	119
“A GENTLE BEATING OF THE HEART”	119
THE CRY OF ISAIAH	120
NEPTUNE GUARDS OUR NATIVE LAND	122
PSYCHE	123
A WILD BIRD SANG	125
AT CATHEDINE	126
TO WINTER	128
HARMONY AND BEAUTY	128
A REVERIE OF YOUTH	129
HERMIONE	132
A VAIN FAREWELL	134
AD MUSAM	134
WELLINGTON AT WALMER	138
TO FANCY	144
THE DRAMA	145
AN ODE TO THE MUSES ON THE APPROACH OF SPRING	146
A HYMN	148
THE POET TO THE MUSE	149
A FAIR REWARD	151

TO
THE RIGHT HON. SIR CHARLES BOWEN

Lord Justice of Appeal,

WHO

*WITH A PROFOUND KNOWLEDGE OF LAW
COMBINES THE TASTE*

OF A

Scholar and Poet,

I WITH HIS ASSENT DEDICATE

THE DRAMA OF CÆSAR BORGIA.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.



CÆSAR BORGIA.

CARAFÀ—A CARDINAL.

JULIAN—A CARDINAL, AFTERWARDS POPE JULIUS II.

COLONNA—A ROMAN LORD.

GONSALVO—A SPANISH GENERAL.

MICHELOTTO—CÆSAR'S FRIEND.

VITELLI,

PETRUCCI,

BAGLIONE,

OLIVEROTTO,

} GENERALS IN THE SERVICE OF
CÆSAR.

MANUEL—JULIA'S STEWARD.

PIETRO—CÆSAR'S SERVANT.

JULIA FARNESE—CÆSAR'S MOTHER.

LUCRETIA BORGIA—JULIA'S DAUGHTER.

AMBASSADORS, PRELATES, OFFICERS, MUSICIANS, SOLDIERS,
CITIZENS, PRIESTS, SURGEON, JAILER.



*The Drama opens in the Pontificate of Alexander VI., and closes
in that of Julius II.*

THE TRAGEDY
OF
CÆSAR BORGIA.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Chamber in the Vatican, Rome.*

JULIAN and COLONNA.

Col. True. Ease and prosperous fortune oftentimes
Have robbed ambition of the will to tempt
Th' obscure and voiceless future. I admit
It is the rule. But mark me, Cardinal,
There are exceptions to the rule, e'en here.
His Holiness, who, if all said is true,
Rose to his greatness on a golden flood
That swept opposing obstacles away,
Will scarcely be content until he welds
The scatter'd coronets into a crown
To fit a Borgia's head.

Jul. It must not be!

Col. It must not? Nay, it will be. What prevents?
France? Naples? Spain? The vicars of the Church?
The Sacred College? No! 'Tis policy
In France to aid in the design, to strip
The Church of her dominions, and to pay
This price for Borgia's love. If so with France,
'Tis so with Naples, Spain, and all whom gold
Or crooked hopes unite in villany.
This statecraft policy

That binds in league your high contracting powers,
 Must ever elbow virtue to the wall,
 And cull ten new commandments from the house
 Of dark ambitions—aye, call falsehood truth,
 Truth falsehood with a seeming innocence,
 And who will help the vicars of the Church?
 None but themselves, and men like you——

Jul. And Heaven!

It cannot be that Christ has blest his Church
 With rich domains that stretch from Tiber's mouth
 Eastward to th' Adriatic shore, to make
 A bastard sovereign.

Col. Gandia's in the field;
 Suppose him fortunate, what then?

Jul. The Duke?
 O! he is truly styled a man of pleasure,
 Freehanded, laughter-loving, amorous;
 Brave but improvident, and of his fame
 Quite careless; wins a victory to-day
 And spends the morrow rioting in lust.
 No, no; he will not build an empire; he!
 To sit upon a firmly-stablished throne,
 Whose feet are mortised in allegiance, love,
 And that great strength, whose root is loyalty,
 Needs no more gift than comes by birth; but here
 The Duke must make his throne, and having made,
 Must plant it safely on the slippery neck
 Of discontent, and keep it safely there.

Col. You make too light of him.

Jul. Do I? But mark,
 One lives who may deserve your augury.
 You look perplexed now.

Col. I?

Jul. Were he not bound
 By sacred vows.

Col. What, Cæsar Borgia ?

Jul. Ha!

Have I not noted him ? No magnet e'er
More truly pointed to the polar star
Than his close thoughts to empire. Like a rook
Throned in the aery of a winter tree
He fronts the coming tempest. But his vows,
His sacred functions, interpose a guard
'Twixt him and your Romagna.

Col. Would 'twere so !

Not many days ago the Pope declared
That the Orsino lands had by escheat
And lawful forfeiture passed from their lords ;
Orsino first, Colonna follows—then
What happens ? Then there'll be another king,
Another throne. Do you believe in dreams,
My lord ?

Jul. In none save such as holy writ
Allows.

Col. Then trust not to this later dream.
“It must not be,” is but a dream. Nought yet
Has ever come to pass that changed the form
And life of states, but some have vainly cried,
“It must not be.” See, Michelotto comes,
Perhaps with news.

[*Enter MICHELOTTO.*]

Jul. What news from Bracciano ?

Mich. A messenger has just arrived, my lords,
Breathless with haste, and now is cloistered here
Within the Vatican. His news is not yet known,
But soon must be.

Jul. Come, let us go and hear it.

[*Exeunt JULIAN and COLONNA.*]

Mich. Good news or bad ? What is good news or
bad ?

Aquinas, were he living, might employ
His wisdom-pated phrasing on the point
Subtly. 'Tis hard to settle. It depends
On many things. 'Tis not enough to say
That such a one has gained a victory,
Rivalled Leonidas in blacker times,
Or grown the chief and foremost of his age.
Good news of one we hate is not good news.
My friend does well, 'tis very well, indeed.
The wise ones of the world praise not, nor hate,
This act or that ; but first must learn the actor.
O, then, what praise or indignation deep !
Unless 'tis some poor devil not worth thought,
Whose act were else praiseworthy. Here I know
The actor, not the act. I hate the man,
The amorous-hearted carpet knight. Am I
Uriah ? Why should I take slights from him ?
But Cæsar proved a brother to me once
In that affair of Guido's useful death,
Which startled half the city. Him I love
For many a secret intercession, too,
When I had stumbled o'er the narrow thread
That sunders right from wrong, and plucked, perchance,
Some knavish life for Cæsar's good and mine.
Besides, he is a man of action ; one
Whose thought is not penned up in each to-day
To the small space of time 'twixt night and night.
O, Nature ! 'tis thy freak to cram our pates
With most unequal gifts. This Gandia, pooh !
His little flame will flash and splutter out,
But Cæsar's fire will blaze and light the way
To some great destiny for him and me.

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*Another Chamber.*CÆSAR BORGIA *alone.*

Cæsar. We cannot all be that we would, and act
The part that fits our aim and quality ;
Fate, patrons, interest, and expediency
Quite twist our aim from this to that, and blow
Us from our course, like strong opposing winds
That sweep the pastures of an autumn cloud,
Until it reels and staggers over heaven :
And in this voyage of our life more sink
Than rise, although their honour's jettisoned,
Like common goods, to make their barque sail safely.
Are there no priests in strict habiliments,
Who wear them of necessity—not choice ;
Who love them not, or after those desires
Which, under robes conventional, smoulder
Unsatisfied ? Are there no men who thrust
The secret and aspiring thought back to the cave
And innermost recesses of the heart,
And seize the open road to competence :
Change temporal desires for spiritual,
Spiritual for temporal, and one
For the other contrary : as peace for war,
Or soldier's dreams for benedicites,
And love for hate, at some rich patron's voice ?
O, 'tis the world's hypocrisy to blame
The common sin ! Pietro ! Tomasini !

[*Enter* Servant.]*Ser.*

My Lord.

Cæsar. Has not Don Michel called to-day ?*Ser.*

Not yet.

Cæsar. Inform me when he calls.*Ser.*I will, my Lord. [*Exit* Servant.]

Cæsar. Lorenzo the Magnificent was proud
 To see his kin made Cardinal : and I ?
 How soon we cheapen that which unattained
 Puts to the rack of thought ! Who is content ?
 The prior whose sides are sleek with luxury ;
 The rich-placed bishop, whose great revenues
 Have turned his sated eyes from heaven to earth ;
 The worn-out mercenary, tired of war,
 And laden deep with unenjoyed delights,
 May be content, like oxen in their stalls
 Of sweet and fragrant clover, newly mown.
 How often have I preached, Content doth hold
 The topmost and the bottom rung of life,
 The bestial and the angelic ! Yet am I
 Contentless, till our house is safely throned,
 Not for a day, or life, or numbered years,
 No, but in perpetuity. This done,
 I'll be content. I could attempt the thing,
 For I was born a soldier more than priest.
 What then prevents ? My vows may be absolved.
 What then ? My brother's in the field, and lives.
 To-day he combats the Orsino brood.
 If he should fail or die—Down devilish thoughts.
 Now is the boundless ocean of desire
 Outstretched before me. What if our dark thoughts
 Were written large about us, so that man
 Could spell and read their meaning clearly ? Ah,
 As 'tis, 'tis well—priest—infidel ! Who comes ?

[*Enter MICHELOTTO.*]

Cæsar. Michelotto ?

Mich. I entered hurriedly
 And unannounced.

Cæsar. You are my trusty friend,
 Announced or unannounced. You're discomposed,
 What is it ? Speak, speak.

Mich. Matter sufficient,
Cæsar, your brother, sorely beaten flies,
Pursued by foot and cavalry to Rome.

Cæsar. The Duke defeated! your authority?

Mich. The Pope's high chamberlain, who, with a
voice
All trembling with the weighty news, desired
That I would bear it to your ear, and say
"His Holiness would speak with you alone,
'Tis urgent, haste."

Cæsar. Our army overcome!
My brother lost! On such a broken reed
We prop our house. There are no worse allies
Than weak ambitious men. I would to heaven
He were unborn.

Mich. That is a useless prayer.
Only to think of it, o'ercome by one
And not the strongest lord!

Cæsar. O! 'tis death's blow
To his too careless longing. So to fail
Is, at the very threshold, to become
The jest, the laughing-stock, of Italy.
This draught's a bitter one to us. To die
Upon the battle-field were honourable;
But thus to give his back to the pursuit—
O! 'tis disgraceful. Roman troops—Roman!
Our chambermaids would be more valiant far.
You stare at me, and with a meaning gaze
Explore the silent chambers of my eyes;
What see you there?

Mich. One Cæsar Borgia, sir,
My intimate and best-beloved friend,
Whose wings are pinioned by the robes he wears.
Were they cast off he could outfly the flight
Of Sforza and the Medici.

Cæsar. Michel!
I have ne'er hid my thoughts from you. So long
As Gandia lives I cannot rise or fly.
Has he reached Rome in safety?

Mich. I know not.

Cæsar. If some swift-flying arrow pierced his heart—
That death's the easiest. Meet me here to-night,
Within an hour of sunset. We have much
To talk of. Now, to see his Holiness:
Will you walk with me through the corridor?

[*Exit.*]

SCENE III.—*A Terrace in front of JULIA'S House.*

JULIA and MANUEL advance, conversing.

Man. It was a cheerful sight to see them both,
Gonsalvo and the Duke. The sky rained flowers
Upon the streets of Rome, and laurel leaves
Greedy to crown the soldiers, as it seemed;
So thick a shower of roses, red and white,
And leaves of laurel, loose and intertwined,
Fell from each open lattice as they passed;
Rome never smelt so sweet before, or showed
Such beauty thronging everywhere, from door
To battlement. They were brave men. The Duke
Looked handsomest and bravest too, I think:
'Twas hard Orsino 'scaped him.

Jul. Good Manuel
The Duke, my son, escaped, and not Orsino;
His troops, dry leaves caught in a windy gale,
Were blown from Bracciano. He escaped.
The tale is painful.

Man. Pardon me; have I
Been practised on? My lady, 'tis a trick

I will be even with. I'll take a glance
To see that all is ready for the guests.
The number will be large to-night.

Jul. Do so ;
And keep an eye upon the serving men ;
Look through the hall and see that nothing lacks
Its proper place. [*Exit MANUEL.*]

Who could have stuffed him thus ?
He has no vein of irony, good soul.

[*LUCRETIA approaches with a basket of flowers.*]

Luc. See, mother, what I bring !
I have been gathering flowers for Gandia. See !
A bunch of fresh wood violets which grew
Under the trees where he and I have talked
Of all the hardships of a soldier's life
Many an evening in the spring :

Jul. Why violets ?

Luc. Of all wild flowers he loved them best, and so
We made a laughing compact ; that whene'er
He had grown famous I should haste to wreath
A crown of violets, if any blew
Beneath the trees where we were used to sit—
And now he's Duke of Beneventum.

Jul. Yes,
He has grown famous truly, won a name
To conjure with against our enemies.
A man may be created duke or lord,
And yet be infamous.

Luc. He infamous ?

Jul. You are too hasty, now ; too hasty, girl ;
I have not called him so. 'Tween infamy
And fame are many intermediate names ;
Distinguishing the bearer's as between
The long and short is many a marked degree.

Luc. Give him what intermediate name you please,

I do not want him famous for my love.
 Let us not quarrel, mother, I was proud
 To see so many magnates and great names
 Joined in his train to-day.

Jul. Well be it so.

Luc. Cæsar reproved me for my levity—
 That was his word—because I did not stand
 Unmoved as any marble bust in Rome
 When all the air was musical with cheers.
 Were Cæsar not a prelate, one might think
 He's touched with jealousy, so sharp and crabbed
 His speech; and at my ecstasy he mowed
 With puckered lips and drooped his eyelids low,
 As one who said, "'Tis nought." Are they good friends?

Jul. What idle words you babble; are they friends?
 Is Cæsar jealous? May he blink his eyes
 Because the light is strong, or move his lips
 And show no jealousy?

Luc. I cannot please
 To-day. Come, see the banquet-hall with me.

Jul. Bid Manuel be not sparing with the wine.
 I follow. Stay, is not that Cæsar? Look!
 My sight was better once. I know his walk:
 'Tis he! but you have younger eyes.

Luc. 'Tis he!
 I'll not forget your message. [Exit LUC.]

[CÆSAR enters.]

Jul. Cæsar!

Cæsar. 'Tis I;—but surely you are wearied out
 With laboured preparation for the night;
 Will you not rest awhile? The guests will soon
 Be here.

Jul. No, no; I am not tired so soon.
 To-morrow I shall rest. Has it not proved
 A tedious day?

Cæsar. To all except to Gandia,
His fortune grows.

Jul. The Sacred College proved
More merciful than old Orsino's arms,
And drew from out the coffers of the Church
A salve to heal your brother's wounded fame ;
How fortunate ! Nay, even his Holiness
Showed well-pleased wrinkles glimmering o'er his face
When cheer uprose on cheer, like wave on wave,
Beating tumultuously.

Cæsar. The people cheered ;
Do they not ever cheer at pageantries ?
What cause have we for cheerfulness to-day ?
We grow by favour only, not by strength ;
And when these clement airs are changed to storm,
And blow upon our nakedness, O then,
Like lame and halting men whose prop is gone,
Our legs will fail beneath us suddenly.
On whom can we rely ?

Jul. Gonsalvo's strength
Is ours, and he is strong.

Cæsar. 'Tis our's to-day
Because it suits his interest to befriend
His Holiness. The strong have many friends,
And we are strong in our alliances,
But only for the lifetime of the Pope,
Unless we make ourselves impregnable
By conquest ere he dies. If we do that,
'Tis well, if not, farewell to all our dreams.
The Sacred College will not always yield ;
To-day when this new Dukedom was discussed,
One Piccilomini spoke boldly out,
And said, 'Twas scandalous to rob the Church,
Even for the Pope's own son.

Jul. He should take care——

Cæs. Let him alone, the ways of heaven are just.
How often have our enemies, who schemed
Against his Holiness or 'gainst his house,
Met unexpectedly with violent end?

[*Faint music in the distance.*]

Listen.

Jul. I hear nothing. The casement creaks. [*Listens.*]
'Tis Gandia, and perchance some early guest;
Excuse me, Cæsar, we'll expect you soon.

[*Exit* JULIA.]

Cæs. My brother come!
He should have died upon the battle-field
Before those great deeds were imagined, aye,
Or in the quiet of his bed, I grudge not that,
Not that.

[*Enter* MICHELOTTO.]

What news?

Mich. I saw the man——

Cæs. Good. Well?

Mich. He knows his business. Of my own free choice
I would not meet him in a lonely place
For half my goods, so legibly his brows
With cut-throat signs are scribbled o'er.

Cæs. Knows he
The time and place?

Mich. Aye, both.

Cæs. Let us go in.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.—*A Chamber in the Vatican—Night.*

CÆSAR BORGIA.

Cæs. It should be done, it should be done, ere this,
Yet nature shows no sign. If old men's tales

Of shrieks and portents in the sky, convulsions
In the air, and clamours indefinable,
From some dark nest beneath the vault of night,
Were not the babbling of a tim'rous dream,
This stillness could not be. All Nature's frame
Would vibrate, and strange perturbations seize
The fevered universe. The night is calm,
Suffused with azure beams of moon and stars,
As if no wickedness were done on earth,
And no loud supplications were outpoured
Wildly in vain and fiery turbulence.
O unrespective night!
Who robing in thy gray and silver garb
This hard, worn, earth, dost cradle it to sleep,
I name thee as a creature present now,
And moved by that which pricks the heart of man.
But thou dost not regard him, heedest not
Solicitations, tears, or piteous cries,
The ambush that is sheltered in thy folds,
Nor murderers, who, pavilioned in thy gloom,
Lie threatening. At thy hour, ambition-like,
Thou risest from thy sunless vales and climb'st
Up to thy glacier throne and bluest height,
And turnest not aside for aught man does,
Nor tarriest like the moon at Ajalon!
Therein, O senseless night, I copy thee;
Henceforth I cease for evermore to drone
Upon the marge of a forbidden sea.

[*A star shoots across the window.*]

There's matter in the sky for small philosophers,
Who deal in signs and portents, palmistry,
And arts Chaldean and Egyptian. See,
My star's unsphered and rushes madly down,
Flies from its place in heaven to mix with mud;

No, 'tis my brother's star that never stood
Fixed in the galaxy of steadfast lights.

[*A knocking at the door.*]

Who knocks.

Car. [*outside*]. Carafa.

Cæs. Enter, enter, sir.

[*Enter CARAFA, COLONNA, and JULIAN.*]

Welcome, all.

Jul. Good evening.

Col. Good evening, sir.

Car. We thought to find your brother, Cardinal,
With you.

Cæs. I have not seen him since he left
The room. You saw him leave mysteriously,
The first of all the guests?

Car. We did, and thought
To find him here, awaiting us.

Cæs. He went
Upon some wild goose errand to relieve
What, whom, or where, I know not. May no harm
Befall him, is my prayer; for this Rome
Has many haunts of danger. Yesternight,
The Count of Brenno, walking without guard,
Was foully murdered near the Pincian Gate.
The assassins are at large.

Jul. May all be well.
I'll call again to-morrow—fare you well!

Col. 'Tis very late—farewell!

Car. Fare you well!

Cæs. Nay, let me light you down, my friends, the way
Is hard to find. This way, my lords, this way.

[*Aside.*] They cannot read the stars with their dull eyes.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V.—*A Hall in CARAFA'S Palace.*

CARAFA and JULIAN, attended by many Prelates, Dignitaries, and Officers.

Car. My noble lords and well-beloved friends,
This heavy-handed grief has stricken down
The gray years of his Holiness. He eats
Nor drinks; but, shut in solitary rooms
Stalks to and fro distractedly, and calls
For vengeance on the murderers of his son.
Then breaking into tears—[*excitedly*—O, pardon me,
It is too horrible to think of it.
Those wounds that poured their flood into the cold
And treacherous Tiber have o'ersmeared his thoughts
With bloody images! 'Tis horrible.

A Prelate. Be calm, my dear lord Cardinal. Perchance
The Duke is safe, and this poor outcast corpse,
Bearing some faint resemblance in its face,
Has been mistaken for him.

Car. No, alas!
'There is no doubt. I saw him where he lay,
Within a cottage by the Tiber shore,
O! miserably pierced with nine deep wounds,
Such deadly siege was laid unto his life.

Jul. Alas, poor Duke! Was he still clothed?

Car. Completely.

Jul. Saw you his purse?

Car. O, yes; and marvellous
'Twas full of gold, as if his murderers
Were startled in their devilish industry.

Jul. Perhaps they sought it not.

Car. It is most strange
That they should pluck no ring or ornament.
The jewel which he wore about his neck—
You saw Lucretia place it there the night
His mother gave the banquet?

Jul. I remember,
How fondly did she cling about his neck
As prescient of the event; 'twas lover-like.

Car. That, too, was safe, and in his breast he wore
A bunch of violets, all stained with blood,
Yet scented still.

Jul. This is no common deed
Of highwayman or footpad, or of men
Who startled in the act break off and fly.
Nine wounds, you say?

Car. At least. Severe ones, too;
One would alone have snapt the thread of life.

Jul. [*aside*]. What horrible suspicions thrust them-
selves
Upon my sober thoughts. Where is the Duke?
Has he not been removed?

Car. To day the Duke
Will be removed into San Angelo,
And thence be buried. May he rest in peace.

[*Enter COLONNA.*]

Col. Amen.

Jul. You know the Duke is dead?

Col. Murdered?

Jul. 'Tis true.

Car. One Schiavoni, an old withered man,
Who dwells within a hovel roughly made
Of stones and timber on the river bank,
Was almost present at the horrid deed.
Have you not heard his tale?

Col. A rumour only.

Car. There is great viliany abroad in Rome,
But judge you for yourselves. 'Two nights ago
This Schiavoni, watchman for the time
Upon a vessel anchored near the quay,
Paced through the silent moonlight on the deck
And gazed upon the emptiness of Rome.

The full moon rose her height. There was no sound
 Save of the waters rippling. Still he gazed,
 Aye, shoreward. Suddenly towards him came,
 Like some weird apparition in a dream,
 A snow-white horse, whose rider, gashed and dead,
 Drooped crosswise down. Two muffled figures walked
 Beside, and two in front, all mute. These pry'd
 Through tenantless deserted streets until
 They gained the river bank. There, once arrived,
 The steed was backed, and that still reeking corse
 Thrown far into the yellow stream. The cloak
 Wrapt round his body for a burial sheet
 Fell short and floated, which descried, gave clue
 To this black crime.

Jul. From what dark passions sprang
 This barb'rous deed?

Col. Is none suspected?

Car.

O!

Suspitions are most rife, but few give tongue
 To what they think. [*Bell tolls at intervals.*]

The hearse will pass this way.

Come to an upper window, sirs; come all.

[*Exeunt all save JULIAN and COLONNA.*]

Jul. Few should give tongue to what they think in
 Rome.

Is Cæsar too mew'd up, with his great grief
 As sole companion?

Col. Who? Cæsar? he overwhelmed with grief—
 what grief?

Keep your own counsel as to that. This bell
 Tolls drearily. [*Sound of chanting heard from the street.*]

Can you not hear the choir,
 That follows chanting requiems? Poor Duke!

[*Exit.*]

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*An Ante-chamber in JULIA'S House.*

CÆSAR and JULIA.

Jul. Stop, Cæsar, hush! no more! your eager words,
Like a sharp dagger, cut into my heart.

Cæsar. What have I said? How often have we
prayed,
My mother, you and I, nor we alone,
With voluble and uttered earnestness,
And in our bosoms' inmost sanctuary,
That heaven, if ours the opportunity,
Might yield us strength to seize it ere it fled?
And now——

Jul. Stir not the past. Shut close
The gate 'twixt that and me. O, could I fling
Into some deep abyss the guilty hope
That you might be absolved of all your vows,
And take your brother's place in Italy.
And he is gone!
Remembrance, swifter than a hound in chase,
Pursues the thoughts I would forget.

Cæsar. You have
No reason, mother, to forget what I
Or you have thought or said.

Jul. Much, Cæsar, much!
I loved you more than e'er I loved your brother.

Cæsar. I used to think so ever.

Jul. Think so still.
You say we often prayed for one same end;
True, too true. Cæsar, tell me, had our prayers
Ne'er risen from our hearts up to our lips,
Ne'er been conceived or breathed, would he have lived?

Cæsar. Mother!

Jul. A spectre ranges through my thoughts,
And cries, "Gandia is dead. You wished him dead,
And he is murdered." People in the streets
Gaze strangely at me as I pass.

Cæsar. Push off
Those melancholy thoughts. Take exercise.
Do not good saints see spectres—devils too?
The mind, being too intent upon some aim
Of self-inspection, floats into a mist,
That dulls the sight, till innocence appears
A thing most criminal. When spectres range,
Take exercise, sing, talk, work, entertain
And see your friends. This spectre, cheek by jowl
With anguish, broods or wanders night and day
O'er self-condemned and miserable men.
The evil's physical, at least in you.
Take exercise, and pass no sleepless nights:
You have not slept for many a restless night.
This sleeplessness is prodigal of strength,
And fritters it away, until what's left
Breaks down beneath the tale of common ills;
Death, sickness, change of fortune, loss of friends,
And with it fails all fortitude of soul,
And all that braces men to bear unhurt
The press of this strong world. Not any wish
Or keen desire to have another's lot,
Nor envy of his chance to tread the path
Of golden opportunity, can kill.
My brother died because heaven willed his death,
And not because we thought him weak
For our desires.

Jul. There is no felony,
No deed wrought by the most abandoned wretch,

No murder, treason, rapine, sacrilege,
Which is not in some fashion willed by heaven,
And yet the doer's not excused.

Cæsar. I ne'er denied it.

Jul. I want fortitude;
I am deranged, you say, and why? because
A murderer is at large. Am I excused
If I hold back the arm of Rome, outstretched
To seize his murderers?

Cæsar. You are excused.

Jul. Cæsar?

Cæsar. Be satisfied with what I say,
You may discover what will pain you more
Than Gandia's death.

Jul. Tell me the worst—all, all;
I am his mother, tell me all.

Cæsar. The worst
Is matter of suspicion, only that.

Jul. No more?

Cæsar. No more; but you may rake, and probe,
You know not what dung-heap.

Jul. What words are these?

Cæsar. The Duke had many friends, some good,
some bad,

And he was popular with womankind,
On which presuming he made enemies.

You understand. [*Pauses.*]

Jul. Enough! Gandia is dead.
Why should I fast or weep? When David's son
Fell sick, the King lay fasting on the earth,
And took no comfort from his councillors,
Nor rose to change apparel or to eat
For seven long days. The child died on the seventh.
Then David rose and ate, and changed his robes
Before unchanged, and said, "I wept and fasted,

The child being yet alive ; now he is dead
 Why should I fast ? I cannot bring him back.”
 I will arise, like David, but more glad.
 You were not accessory to the deed,
 Who else I care not, since the path is clear.

Cæsar. Let us not think of it, but bend our wills
 Unto the task before us, for I swear
 You shall be mother to a king.

Jul. That is the word
 Of Cæsar. Strike, strike boldly for the crown.
 Avenge your brother's death when time shall serve.
 Heaven, by the hand of violence and lust,
 May work some good 'mongst men, and by foul means
 And cursèd instruments remove the bar
 And innocent obstruction that prevents
 Fruition of great hopes.

Cæsar. I am resolved.

Jul. It cannot be against the laws of Heaven
 To take advantage from bloodguiltiness
 To which we are not party. [JULIA retires.]

Cæsar. Be assured——

[Enter CARAFA.]

Car. The consistory sits. His Holiness
 Will soon arrive. The Cardinals will vote
 As you desire. You are expected there. [Exit.]

Cæsar. Thanks, thanks, Carafa ; I attend.

[JULIA returns.]

At last
 The ascent begins. The mountain, with its crags
 And sudden precipices hid in clouds,
 Through which my steps must safely mount and wind,
 Uprises straight before me. I can feel
 The invigorating breezes blowing down
 From lofty slopes and solitary heights,
 That close and wrestle with the battling winds,

And dash them downwards to the lowly earth.
To-day my life begins.

Jul. I'll pray for you. [Exit.

SCENE II.—*A Street in Rome.*

GONSALVO and COLONNA.

Col. Sincere—pshaw!
The delicate green that breaks its sheath in spring,
Is index of the hidden root and seed;
And industry may learn what wholesome fruit
Or poisonous bane to expect ere bud or flower
Thrust forth to meet the sun; what summer scents,
What flowers, that lie in waiting till the bees
Drone in the lazy eventide; but words—
Man's words—may flow until the tongue is tired
With never-interrupted fluency,
Yet give no token whence their flood is poured,
Whether from clean or poisoned reservoirs.
'Tis hard to fathom character or thought
From speeches woven by a cunning tongue.

Gon. I said I thought the Cardinal sincere.
Is he not so?

Col. Cardinal Julian? Well,
I thought him so.

Gon. Thought? Julian ne'er concealed
His hatred of the Borgias.

Col. No, in that
He was sincere. Trust me, had he the power
He'd sweep this monster from the Papal throne—
Had he the power.

Gon. You were good friends.

Col. We have
A common foe, who, once o'erthrown, be sure

The Cardinal would be as merciless
To all the Roman barons as the Pope
Has ever been ; but with this difference,
That he designs to aggrandise the Church
And not his family.

Gon. O ! there's the bent
That marks a nobler mind. But tell me, sir,
Of Cæsar. Have the Cardinals agreed
T' annul his vows ?

Col. The college meets to-day.

Gon. Unloose his bonds and his all-scheming
hand
Will shake forth scorpions, and chastise you all
With fiery pains.

Col. You know the man, Gonsalvo.
His brother, Gandia, was a pleasant fool ;
I thought him abler once. But Cæsar's bold
Yet cautious, honey-tongued yet virulent,
Most courteous yet most cruel. It is said
He breathes forth slaughter against Naples.

Gon. When Gandia died the Cardinal was pleased,
In expectation of the time when he
Should change his mantle for a coat of mail,
To fall in love with one of Naples' daughters.
He made proposal for her hand and dower,
The Duchy of Tarentum. These refused,
He turned his eyes to France again.

[*Enter a number of people carrying flowers—
with music.*

Leader. My friends,
Mind what I say.

One of the Crowd. Go on.

Another. Speak up !

Another. We will.

Leader. When you perceive his lordship, halt.

Another. But should
His lordship fail to halt, what then?

Leader. I mean
That you should halt as soon as you perceive
His lordship.

Voices. That we will.

Leader. And shout, Huzza!
Toss up your caps and bonnets in the air
And cry, "Long live Lord Cæsar Borgia!" Then
Strike up a soldier's tune. March! [Exeunt.]

Gon. So, so, so,
In one small circumstance we oftentimes
May see foreshadowings of some grave events.
This clack was hired by Cæsar.

Col. Doubt it not.
He was forearmed with knowledge of the vote.
All goes to prove that Julian's words are true.
We have amongst us a devouring fire:
There is no tinder lacking.

[Enter CARAFA.]

Gon. None. My lord,
You walk like one whose thoughts are much engaged.

Car. Gonsalvo and Colonna pardon me;
I was in thought. We lose a Cardinal
To-day—nay, two.

Col. Two!

Car. Aye, two! One resigned
This morning.

Gon. Cæsar?

Car. So, the other's fled—
Cardinal Julian.

Gon. Julian fled!

Col. He was
No friend to Cæsar.

[Exit.]

Gon. Cæsar's only friend
Is Cæsar's self, or such time-serving knaves
As hope to pick the few dry crumbs that fall
From that ambitious table. Tell me, friend,
Are Gandia's murderers still at large. His name
Is rarely mentioned at the Vatican.

Col. O, rarely now. 'Tis whispered that the search
Is interdicted. Cæsar has his goods,
And soon will have his troops.

Gon. Whence you infer——

Col. 'Sh. Why should I infer? Wait, wait, awhile.
Old Schiavoni asked his questioners
What signified a murder more or less
Amidst the crowd of infamies at Rome.
'Twas not his business to report such things,
Nor is it mine, nor yours.

Gon. Yes, we must wait. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*A Council Chamber.*

LUCRETIA.

Luc. She is not here: and Cæsar—Thou good
Lord!

Forgive him for the dark reproach he loosed
Upon me—for the indignities and worse—
Because I turned my back upon the past.
Let me forget his words.
He will not dare say o'er what he has said,
Or tempt me with his subtle tongue again.
I have fallen stumbling down the steps of crime,
And slipped and slid beyond the grasp of saints
Or guardian angels, down into a gulf
Of bottomless pollution; down, down, almost

Beyond the merciful strong arm of God,
 Where every wind brings echoes blown from hell.
 No, no, let me forget his words. O, thou
 All-folding, omnipresent air of heaven,
 Thou tongueless listener to my infamy ;
 Thou, on thy wild wings, rushest o'er the earth,
 And chariotest, between us and the stars,
 The undistinguished utterance of our lips,
 That named the awful shadow of our lives,
 Yet with thy clarion blast and boisterous note
 Wilt ne'er disclose the secret. It is locked
 Within the darkest chamber of our hearts,
 A sleepless torment unrevealed to man.
 Though Cæsar spoke—Let me forget his words,
 His mocking words, that will hereafter rise
 In some apocalypse of woe to come,
 And clothe us both with infamy and shame :
 O, unpolluted dreams of infancy,
 And thou pure joy of childhood undefiled,
 Let me not stumble lower down the abyss,
 But rest more firmly on this ledge of hope :
 Good saints assist me.

[*Exit.*][*Enter JULIA and CÆSAR.*]*Jul.* Both Julian and Colonna ?

Cæsar. Both. 'Ere this
 They're safe in Naples. We shall be prepared,
 Because the King of France has made me Duke—
 Duke Valentinois—they must take offence.
 Colonna has been muttering in the dark
 Against me for some days, as if his breath
 Could blow me from my course ! O, foolish thought,
 I'll shake these rebel lords within their nests
 And rocky battlements.

Jul. Be circumspect,
Until the triple compact is secure ;
Then, bold as is your nature, blaze throughout
The Marches, o'er the Appennines, and down
To Naples.

Cæsar. Circumspect ! O, trust me there.
I have not studied musty books alone,
That dry the spirits up in solitude ;
Until the student, lost within himself,
Looks vacantly upon the moving world
Of jostling emulation, scant of hope
And observation.

The man who hopes to rise must study man,
That compound of the obscure and palpable,
Of subtlety and openness, of great
And small, of contrasts violent and extreme,
The enigma of the centuries ; that shows
More problems deep within his little world
Than all the hosts of planetary spheres.
Yes, I have been most circumspect in this,
That ere our enemies shall know my thoughts,
Which are not destined for their peace of mind,
Or any terror seize on Tuscany,
I'll have the treaty duly ratified
Subscribed by France and Venice.

Jul. That is well ;
Yes, that is wise. I knew you would do so.

Cæsar. The ambassadors accredited to Rome,
And to his Holiness, are on their way
To meet me here.

Jul. They will be welcome, son,
Let France and Venice drop the golden chain
Across the bridgeless chasms and rugged scarp,
In succour, as you climb the dizzy height,
And I shall yet behold you proudly fixed

Upon the loftiest seat in Italy ;
And be content.

[*Enter* LUCRETIA.]

Luc. I could not rest until
I found you, mother.

Jul. You, Lucretia, here ;
What is it, child ?

Luc. Something to make you start
Has happened.

Jul. What ?

Luc. The blood of Gandia cried
To heaven for vengeance—not in vain—

Cæsar. Sister,
Nothing cries to heaven in vain.

Luc. Most true,
Not even broken vows.

Jul. Lucretia fie !
Fie ! 'tis ungenerous.

Cæsar. Let her alone,
She is quite changed of late.

Luc. Would I could say
So much of you ; but these are idle words.
One of the murderers—ah, Cæsar starts !
And you, poor mother, you are pale and faint.
How often, too, have I been pale and faint
When my o'erwrought imagination poured
Its bloody vials o'er my memory.
O that fierce night ! I am confused, my mind
Takes fearful leaps into the mystery
Of that too sudden and unpitied death.
I must be calm.

Jul. Yes, yes, be pertinent,
And to the point.

Luc. What was I going to say ?
O, I remember. Half-an-hour ago
A wretch crawled hobbling to our outer gate,

And prayed to see you, mother. You were out,
He asked for me. I saw and questioned him—
You are not listening, Cæsar?

Cæsar. Who says so?

Luc. 'Tis strange that in most barb'rous men there
grow

Some bramble trees of conscience that compel,
With painful inward pricking, tortured cries,
Whose sole relief is to confess the crime
That weighs upon them sorely. So this man
Confessed that, with another desperate fiend,
He hurled my brother in the midnight stream,
Which, when I heard, first having given the word
For his safe custody, I hurried out
To find you. Come, he waits.

Cæsar. What is his name?

Luc. I cannot say.

Cæsar. Let him not be examined
Until I see him. I shall be there soon
To question him—within an hour at most.

[*To JULIA*] Take you good care.

Jul. [*Nodding assent.*] Come, let us go.

[*Exeunt*] *JUL. and LUC.*

Cæsar. My hand

Is on the plough, and Rome itself would fail
To shake me from my purpose. Let such fools,
Scared with the shadow of their past resolve
And acted resolution, gossip thus;
Confess and prove that they have lost their nerve
And all the sources of their vanished strength.
This fellow cannot hurt me should he swear
I did the deed; and with his venom'd tongue
Demand remuneration for the soiled
And cast-off remnants of his virtue. O,
The purpose, slowly built, is like a tower

Amidst the inconstant roar of March, too strong
To be blown over.

[*Enter MICHELLOTTO.*]

Mich. The Ambassadors of France
And Venice are without,

Cæsar. Bid them come in.
But Michelotto, listen, hasten straight
Down to my mother's; say you come from me;
Close guard the man, let no one speak to him
Till I appear.

Mich. To guard the man! What man?

Cæs. One who upon his own confession, made
To-day, was privy to my brother's death.

Mich. Who is the dolt and idiot, fool? Con-
fessed?

What has he to confess? The knave is dead
Who stabbed the Duke.

Cæs. What?

Mich. Dead beyond a doubt.
Why should the assassin's scape the victim's fate?
'Tis dangerous to walk the streets at night
Without a guard. He found it so, for ere
The Tiber gulphed your brother in its jaws
Some roysterers saw the villain stretched across
A narrow alley, dead. They knew him not.
'Twas he without a doubt.

Cæs. Thank God for that.
I would not have him live who did a deed
So dreadful.

Mich. No, the precedent is bad.

Cæs. Had you strayed near the alley on that night?
Nay, answer not; it matters nought to me;
But see my mother.

Mich. I'll hurry there at once.

[*Exit.*]

[*Enter Ambassadors of France and Venice preceded by an Officer who announces them.*]

Amb. of France. The treaty has been signed and
ratified,

This is a minute of the terms agreed,
And mutual covenants.

Cæs. My Lord, accept
My thanks, let this your courtesy be placed
Amongst my debts. But let me read and learn
How far the abstract and epitome
Varies the tenour of the first rough draft
Presented by his Holiness.

Ven. Amb. In nought
Essential.

Cæs. True, here is the very clause.

(*Reads.*)

The high contracting Powers herein named,
Shall, in consideration of the acts
Described, and premises, aid with their arms
And otherwise, in wresting from the Lords
Of Forli, Imola, Faënza,
Pesaro, too, all their respective States,
The same being forfeit to his Holiness,
The sole lord paramount.

French Amb. It then recites,
Your Grace observes, that if thereunto chosen,
After approval by the Cardinals,
The Duke of Valentino shall be called
Sole head of all the escheated lands,
First Duke of all Romagna.

Cæs. Good—my lords.
You see before you one whose thoughts were fixed
On nothing temporal until the Pope

(My dear beloved brother being slain),
 With that large forethought for the good of Rome,
 And his successors, which he ever shows,
 Resolved to crush these region tyrannies
 That plague the Church through her domains, and stir
 Dissensions without end. My studious hours
 Are inapt preparation for the field,
 But practice and a holy cause suffice
 To make th' unskilful mighty.

French Amb. 'Tis a law
 We shall find instanced in your Grace.

[*Exeunt* AMBASSADORS.]

Cæs. Farewell!
 Yes, instanced in my Grace. It shall be so.
 It is most advantageous for a man
 To see the good he aims at. I have here
 A clear and burning light that holds my gaze,
 Unveiled by lesser fires. O, many a wretch
 Who spends his latter years in misery,
 Lived not without ambitious thoughts to rise
 To some ideal greatness dimly seen,
 Beyond the blinking lights whose little glare
 Betrayed to foundrous paths.

[*Re-enter* MICHELOTTO.]

Mich. Our unshaped fears
 Are credulous, and in plain-spoken words,
 That have no deeper meaning than they wear
 To casual hearers, read deep mysteries;
 Or else the hidden meaning of some dark
 And unexplained enigma in the mind
 Of him who listens.

Cæs. Michelotto! tut!
 This self-anatomy from you?

Mich. From me?
 O, you mistake my words, shall I not pluck

A general proposition from the world,
But you must think I am the picked example?
No, no; I spoke not of my fears or yours,
But of your sister's, mother's, whose you will.

Cæs. Then pardon me.

Mich. I do so, readily.

Now learn the reason of my late discourse:
No sooner had I left you than I went
Upon your errand; saw your mother, then
Your sister. Fear possessed them both: the one
Lest Gandia's death should lose its mystery;
The other, lest it should not: yet the one
Made no disclosure to the other. I remained
Some minutes in their company. They drew
Conclusions most absurd and opposite
From some unmeaning words their prisoner dropt,
And fed their apprehension with surmise
And falsely-reasoned inference, as thus—
“I'll track the bloody river to its source,
This contrite villain being my guide;” or thus—
“This rogue, by his confession, must destroy
The last fame of my son, for men will say,
He was a lawless paramour, and died.”
Their fears were credulous. I saw the man,
A witless simpleton, a ninny fool;
Weak-kneed, weak-minded, weak in everything
That makes a man deserve the name of man.
“He was a murderer, his poor soul was touched;”
(Such things as he can scarcely have a soul.)
He must confess—this gimcrack tinker's work,
That leaked its dirty water with such noise—
He must confess. What have you to confess?
I asked. “I led the horse; I led the horse,
That bore the murdered Duke.” Who killed the
Duke?

“I know not,” he replied. I questioned closely.
He knew not. No; and yet his conscience pricked!
The fool knew less than Schiavoni did.

Cæsar. I'll see the man. [Exeunt.]

SCENE IV.—*A Corridor in JULIA'S House.*

MANUEL, PIETRO, and Servants.

Man. Turn him out! haste! His bag of whining
tales

Are wares that will not purchase food and drink
Another hour. [Exeunt Servants.]

Piet. But you believed his story.

Man. Good friend, was my belief a fault? a knave
Would read the fellow through, 'tis honest men
Who're at a disadvantage in the world
Of roguery: so plausible and scared
The rascal seemed. He knew such fearful things,
Divined the murderer of my poor lord;
And by obscure suggestions drew salt tears
From all the women folk.

Piet. What said my master?

Man. He came with Michelotto, saw the rogue,
And soon convicted him before my mistress
And her daughter.

Piet. Yes; Duke Valentine
Will ferret out the truth, trust him for that.
But how?

Man. The fellow told a tale
Which anyone might fashion who had heard
What Schiavoni said: so far the ground
Was ripe for perjury to flower therein.
Yet, mark how cautious one should be who lies:

For Michelotto summoned from the hall
 (Where he was waiting to confront the wretch)
 A tavern-keeper of the Tiber side,
 Who said that on the mentioned night this rogue
 Had slept within his house, nor gone without
 Until the sun had risen.

Piet. He should be whipt.

[*Re-enter SERVANTS.*]

Ser. We thrust him out.

Man. Good. To your duties all.

[*Exeunt Servants.*]

[*Enter CÆSAR and JULIA, conversing.*]

Piet. The Duke sets out to-day. He went within
 To bid good-bye, and then——

Man. Hush! See, he comes,
 Let us retire.

[*Exeunt PIETRO and MANUEL.*]

Cæsar. Nay, courage! be not sad;
 If my departure brings your night, O think
 A glorious dawn will follow soon!

Jul. I will.
 That thought supports me, Cæsar; for my hopes,
 And that large vision of his Holiness,
 Take root in you. Who is there but yourself
 To give this vision form, to body out
 And place upon the world's great stage what yet
 Is unperformed? I shed no woman's tears
 O'er this leave-taking. One embrace, thus, thus!
 Now fortune prosper you.

Cæsar. And you—and you. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Room in JULIA'S House.*

JULIA and CARAFA.

Jul. Cæsar will need much money for the war.

Car. 'Tis fortunate so many rich old men
Bequeath their riches to his Holiness.
A day scarce passes but there's willed to him
A good fat legacy, or large bequest
Of fields, or vineyards, plate, or gems of price ;
For soldiers must be fed.

Jul. What news of him ?

Car. Of Cæsar? Marvellous. Though new to war
He captured Imola with little loss,
And now besieges Forli.

Jul. That is well.

[*Enter* LUCRETIA.]

Car. Most excellent. We soon shall hear great
things. [Exit CARAFA.]

Luc. Would we might hear of greater—that this
Rome

Were purified of her corrupting dross.

Jul. Such thoughts are hornet-winged.

Luc. I speak the truth,
The too plain truth, which men care not to hear.
If truth is hornet-winged, 'tis so to vice
That clothes its nakedness in sophistries,
Yet shows a tender skin to every thrust.
Am I not free to speak the thing I feel?
Some men have spoken freely.

Jul. Yes, and died.

Luc. Be candid, mother, to yourself and me.
Rome groans and travails with the wickedness

That scarfs and wraps her round as with a cloak.
Shall we not say so in our privacy
When men have spoken of it openly?

Jul. Tell me what man.

Luc. Savanorola, the Dominican,
Said that the Church had borrowed from hell's sire
A maw that swallowed naked lust and gold,
And reeking fragments from Circean feasts.

Jul. Savanorola was a dangerous man,
Half charlatan and half fanatic. You
Should be more cautious. God was merciful
Unto His Church, and struck her enemy
With sudden death.

Why should a woman meddle with such thoughts,
Or eat the lenten fare of controversy?
Leave that to man—endeavour to forget
These arid thoughts. Prevent their access.

Luc. 'Tis useless!
Shut out the thought? Shut out the day-spring light,
Cover the earth's dim face from sun and moon!
'Tis easier far to do so than to rule
What thoughts shall flock into the mind and what
Shall be excluded. Say, can I declare,
Being what I am, changed, if you will, yes, changed,
That wicked deeds can raise a pleasant thought
In the cleansed chambers of the heart? O no,
You are deceived, good mother.

Jul. Cleanse again
The chambers of your heart, and sweeten them.
Come, be yourself.

Luc. Myself! That guilty thing
Who shook forbidden flowers into her lap
And sucked the cup of pleasure dry. Alas!
Why should we call that pleasure which destroys
The very core of happiness, and weaves

Into the warp of life its darkest shade ?
There's no excuse for it.

Jul. None, none, O none !
Nor for this self-bewilderment which feeds
Upon your peace of mind. Do not let loose
The monster discontent. Be comforted.
What is't to you if Rome gives birth to men
Whose souls are coloured by their crimes ? Again
I say, be your old self. If you did wrong
'Tis past. Let us not speak of it. Be gay.
You once were glad to see your brother rise ;
Be so again.

Luc. 'Tis true, I am distraught ;
Nor can I clearly see the path I tread,
Beneath the night of my burnt-out desires ;
Nor shall I till that other dawn appears,
Whose holier fires are kindling in my heart.
The past makes hideous faces at me oft,
Through all the garish self-indulgent years,
Until the night seems stretched into a span
Of endless weariness, and Gandia's face,
White in the pallid moonshine——

Jul. Hush !

Luc. Wherefore ?

Jul. Let us not speak of that.

Luc. Of Cæsar, then,
For he has ever been your favourite.

[*Sound of bells pealing, and people cheering at intervals.*]

Jul. Hark !

[*Enter MANUEL.*]

Man. Forli capitulated yesterday,
And Caterina Sforza and her ward
Are prisoners of his Grace, your son.

Jul. This news
Will make me young again. Both Imola

And Forli won! Take this, distribute all
Amongst the crowd.

[*Exeunt* JULIA and MANUEL.]

Luc. So Caterina falls, Cæsar must rise,
And young Riario's portion is devoured.
What crimes have been committed to sustain
Our climbing feet! And in the very house
Of Christ, this Rome, religion clothes herself
With multitudinous and loathsome vice,
And wanders like a pestilence abroad,
Destroying when she should be merciful.
God will not let His sacred home become
The sanctuary of men who rob and slay,
To grace and buttress up some private scheme;
Cool, hardened men, who feel no touch of shame,
Who scarce will keep the outside platter clean.
The hour of cleansing must be drawing nigh;
It must come soon.
Sincerity, affection, virtue, love,
Are dead in lofty places, and our hearts
Have little in them that will bear the light.
Are there no tears for Gandia? Who will weep?
Ambition is no mate for sorrow. No!
The lean kine of ambition swallow all
The mind's sleek nurslings. There are secret things
That I would fathom. [Exit.]

SCENE II.—*A Camp outside the Walls of Florence.*

[*Enter* BAGLIONI and PETRUCCI, meeting.]

Bag. Petrucci!

Pet. Welcome to the camp, my friend.

What news from Rome?

Bag. The citted populace
Talk only of our victories; and boys

Who used to whistle idly in the streets,
Excited by the thousand martial tales
Of single combats, charges, and assaults,
Now speak most learnedly of battle-fields,
Of Forli, Imola, and Rimini,
Pesaro, and the rest.

Pet. Ah, Valentinois——

Bag. You are behind the time, not Valentinois,
Duke of Romagna, if you please. The Pope
Has granted the investiture, and made
Him Gonfalonier of the Holy Church.

Pet. 'Tis so, 'tis so, my friend! 'Twas published here
Some days ago. He is a soldier born,
And in the field out-generals all. 'Tis true
That Nature gives some men such aptitudes
That whatsoe'er they do becomes them.

Bag. Yes.
Yet circumstance ordains what men shall be.
The accident of fortune or of birth
Makes this a brigand, that a general;
Robes one with honour for the self-same deeds
That load another with all infamy.
But tell me where his tent lies.

Pet. Yonder. See
Where that tall sentinel stands motionless.
We shall assault the city soon, and place
The Medici on their old throne. Report
Yourself without delay.

Bag. 'Tis fortunate
The roads were passable. I would not miss
The assault for twice my chance of booty. Ah,
If there's no fighting
A soldier's life grows tedious as a sail
Upon the bosom of a foggy sea.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE III.—*The same.* CÆSAR'S Tent.

CÆSAR and MICHELOTTO.

Mich. Retire? Withdraw our troops?

Cæsar. It can't be helped,
France thinks we grow too powerful.

Mich. Seize the prize.
The rest is but routine diplomacy;
The A B C of statesman's trickery.
First seize the prize; to hold it will be easy.
The tongue of statecraft finds a ready gloss
To extenuate a soldier's hasty deed
That benefits his country. "'Twas provoked;
The seizure temporary; only that."
And so through all the catalogue of pleas,
Excuses, subterfuges, make-believes,
That private moralists call lies. Pray, sir,
Feed men with promises.

Cæsar. Impossible.
His Holiness is peremptory now.
I'll hear what answer Florence makes, and then
Decide what should be done. If Florence yields——

[*Enter* AMBASSADOR OF FLORENCE.]

What message comes from Florence; peace or war?
Speak out, my lord; but know that we have prayed
For messages of peace.

Amb. Peace, if you will.
After deliberations made, in which
The several propositions of your Grace
Were pondered anxiously, it was agreed
That one should be accepted, and the rest,
Being hurtful to our sovereign power, refused.

Cæsar. Name it.

Amb. I come to offer you the post
Of Chief Condottiero of the State,
With all emoluments, and annual pay
Of many thousand ducats.

Cæsar. Be it peace.
Inform the magistrates on your return
How much I love the state. But tell me this:
If I accept——

Amb. Your Grace will pardon me.
I have some words to add. You may perform
The duties of this post by deputy.
We could not ask your personal services,
Except on rare occasions, for our ears
Are filled with rumour of the things achieved
By you in Italy.

Cæsar. Most generous Florence!
Commend me to the state; my humble thanks;
I ask no more. Within an hour, ere you
Regain its sacred battlements, we march
Towards Urbino.

Amb. Fortune be your friend.
This answer loads me with a precious freight
That will make glad the heart of many a citizen
To-night.

[*Exit.*

Cæsar. And mine. Our adversaries' fears
Are oftentimes good as victories.

Mich. O better,
Where fighting brings more enemies.

Cæsar. As here.
But see how fortune succours fortune's ills,
And remedies what seemed remediless!
His Holiness forbids the assault purposed,
And Florence to avoid it sues for peace!

Mich. 'Tis excellent. Shall I give word to strike
The camp, and march without delay?

Cæsar. Do so. [*Exit* MICHELOTTO.]

[*Enter* OLIVEROTTO, VITELLI, and Soldiers.]

So soon from Piombino, my good friends?
I see not on your faces the scared look
And ensign of defeat.

Vit. Defeat, my lord?
That seized the enemy who met your troops
At Piombino. O'er the citadel
And sundered walls your Grace's standard waves.

Cæsar. 'Tis captured?

Vit. A small detachment guards
Its now dismantled forts.

Cæsar: I envy none
Their generals, French or Spanish. You are men
After my heart. Take each a sword of mine.

[*Takes down a couple of swords and
hands one to each.*]

Wear them in memory of my gratitude,
And as an instant pledge that this success,
Whose mere recital is a much-prized wine
That wakens all the unseen world of joy,
Shall not be unrewarded.

Vit. I thank your Grace.

Oliv. May all our onslaughts end
Thus happily.

Cæsar. 'Tis I should thank you, sirs,
And those bold-hearted men who followed you.
I hold their virtues in my memory;
Their suffering in my cause I'll not forget—
I'll not forget.

[*Exeunt* OLIVEROTTO, VITELLI, and Soldiers.]

Fortune befriends me still!
And that unbodied sceptre in the mind
Becomes a possible creation. Things
Most unexpected come to pass, and build

My future greatness. It is well, so far.
 Condottiero, yes, perhaps her King,
 And King of Italy; for those great States,
 That tower and shadow o'er the subject world,
 Sprang first from small beginnings, and the man,
 The individual man, gives birth to empire,
 Directs the eyeless energy of things
 To some far-sighted and ambitious end,
 And from the fluctuating sea of chance
 Steers wide. Each step I take sets me beyond
 The tidal waters of that faithless sea,
 Whose ebb and flow have drowned full many a scheme
 That promised largely in inception. Ha!
 What curse was that which made the heart of man
 Leap, as mine does, with those ambitious thoughts
 That weary of the hope of heaven, and soar
 No higher than the flesh and devil? Chant on,
 Thou ill-fed friar within thy lonely cell,
 Sing at thy matins, complins, holy prayers,
 That waste themselves upon bare, lampless walls;
 They are not wasted if thou sing'st in truth,
 For thou art lord and master of desires
 That pluck us down to hell.

[*Re-enter* MICHELOTTO.]

Mich. The tents are struck.
 The pikemen, archers, men-at-arms, and all
 The foot and cavalry await the word,
 To march with their respective officers,
 Vitelli, Baglioni, Oliverotto,
 Petrucci, and the rest.

Cæsar. Bid them advance.
 My sun is rising to its zenith point.

[*Exit* MICH.
 [*Exit.*

SCENE IV.—*The interior of a Tent.*

OLIVEROTTO and VITELLI.

Oliv. I am a mercenary soldier, slave
To him who bids the highest, yet a man
In this, that I feel indignation rise
At these most horrid deeds.

Vit. What deeds ?

Oliv. Those crimes
That make our common human nature blush,
Or did so once.

Vit. I know you for a plain
Outspoken man, you riddle darkly now ;
What crimes have moved you thus ?

Oliv. Varano, Lord
Of Camerino, was my old, dear friend.

Vit. Varano !

Oliv. Yesterday he was received
Into the sepulchre of Cæsar's love ;
Did you not see them, how they met and kissed
Upon the public square ?

Vit. I did. Proceed.

Oliv. Alas for his excess of trustfulness !
He needs fear treachery no more ; unless
It ranks amongst the stern tormenting pains
That purify the dead.

Vit. O horrible !
The all-enfolding gloom of night conceals
No greater torment than this trustless scourge,
Whose stock of virtue, beaten e'er so fine,
Will scarce suffice to give a thin veneer
Of graciousness to his false smile.

Oliv. My friend,
What gives this scourge its strength? 'Tis you and I,
Petrucci, Baglioni, and such men.
Draw nearer. Tell me, when this Cæsar needs
Vitelli's life to crown ambitious ends,
And prosper them, what will your answer be?
The question must be answered, be assured,
When Cæsar throws you by like some dull sword
Grown rusty.

Vit. I have soldiers in my troop
Who soon will answer that. Oliverotto
Speak out, what would you say?

Oliv. Some men forecast
The future from the stars, or think they do,
The thought and deed are much the same to them,
And he who thinks he can will say he does;
Whilst I, being one who rarely spent an hour
In solving problems in the book of stars,
Or studies more abstruse than this of war,
Have not been unobservant of the truth,
That like in action follows like, and that
The man who does a treacherous thing to-day
May do the same to morrow; so of things
Ungenerous, cruel, or their opposites,
For acts disclose the heart.

Vit. If so, what then?

Oliv. That granted, what may we expect?
The tiger procreates no gentler breed
Than its own savage race, and if you plant
The scion of a poisonous tree, its fruit
Will not be harmless. Will the oak or elm
Produce the fir; the bramble, grapes; grapes, nuts;
In one short generation of mankind?
Thus Nature teaches us through all her works
To expect the like from like. We serve a man

Whose knife is at our throat even when he calls
Us best of friends.

Vit. My dear old comrade !
Give me your hand. I will no longer feign
This ignorance of your meaning. We have spent
Too many years together in the wars
To be too lightly parted. What you say
I'll second ; what you will I'll follow out,
Even to the peril of my last few years.
Oliverotto battled by my side
In that fierce war when Sforza stood at bay ;
Shall I forget, how once he saved my life.
Ingratitude, the all too common vice,
May breed forgetfulness in other minds,
But not in mine. Besides, we are at one
That Cæsar should not grow to be the scourge
And tyrant of all Italy.

Oliv. And us.

Vit. And us.

Oliv. Give me your hand, again, my friend,
I thank you from my heart. We are agreed.
We shall divert the fountains of his strength,
Nor shall we be alone, for hark you, Sir,
Petrucci, Baglioni——

Vit. They ?

Oliv. To them
I spoke this morning. They are ripe to strike,
And have their several reasons to desire
The downfall of the Borgias.

Vit. Vigilant,
We must be wary too ; for Cæsar's eye
Is keen, aye, keen enough to pierce within
Our very breasts and read what's graven there.

Oliv. Wary and vigilant ; yes, yes, my friend,
We must be wary ere we strike ; ally

Ourselves with Louis, who would be well pleased
To see this haughty Borgia chased to earth,
Or with Gonsalvo.

Vit. Either might make sure
Th' event of our revolt. Where'er we march
Our soldiers' tread will rouse a crowd of men,
From Rimini to Florence, Imola
And Forli, men who thirst to avenge themselves
For Cæsar's wrongs to them, and to their kin.

[*Enter BAGLIONI.*]

Bag. Good day, Vitelli.

Oliv. Friend, speak openly.

Bag. (*to VITELLI.*) First let me welcome you to our
good cause :

When one we value joins the cause we love
We love the cause more dearly.

Vit. I am proud
To hear you speak so.

Bag. We shall meet to-night :
There is a rumour that his Holiness
Will hold a conclave of the Cardinals
To-day, and that the matter to be moved
Is Cæsar's change of title.

Oliv. Ah ! What now ?

Bag. His ducal coronet must be transformed
Into a Crown. He will be crowned the King
Of Umbria and Romagna without fail.
Don Michelotto, who should know, has sworn
There'll be no controversy.

Oliv. So the world rolls !
But rarely in this wise, rarely ! rarely !
Priest, Bishop, Cardinal, Duke, lastly King.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*Inside CÆSAR'S Tent.*

CÆSAR and MICHELOTTO.

Cæsar. What could affect the man? Were we not friends?

Mich. My Lord,
There is a kind of men whose friendship lasts
So long as they're allowed to act the patron,
T' advise, chide, bless with bounty or withhold;
If checked in that, their friendship takes a chill,
Which grows more serious as they're needed less,
Until it withers down into the ghost
Of its old self, and cold; stiff nods usurp
The smile or ready welcome. These same men,
If once outrivalled in their own career,
In arms, or love, the Church, or scholarship,
By their once bountied friend, become transformed
Into a fever of hot envious hate,
Which shows itself by divers outward signs,
According to the circumstance. Now mark!
This Baglioni showed no signs of change
Until the rumour spread throughout the camp
Of your intended Kingship.

Cæsar. That is so;
But when have I received his bounty, say,
My friend?

Mich. Has he not brought his troops afield
And served you in the wars? This, to his mind,
Will stand in place of bounty.

Cæsar. Say you so?
He must be crushed at once. Be your first thought

To capture him. Use money, promises,
Spare nothing, so you bring him back to-night,
Alive or dead, which matters not. I'll make
A scarecrow of him, to dismay the brood
Of traitors. Who is this? Such haggard looks
Foretell no good.

[*Enter OFFICER, hurriedly.*]

Speak, man! In vain the coward shuts his ears
Against bad news.

Off. Bad news! disastrous news,
I bring. Petrucci, Oliverotto,
And e'en Vitelli, have declared against
Your Grace, and marched to Baglioni's camp
In open insurrection.

Cæsar. News, indeed,
To paint your blanching cheeks with fear. Such words
Pluck down the high-placed hope. The world's corrupt.
There is no confidence in friendship; none!
My friends? How often have I called them friends,
Associates, comrades? Many a time when life
Nigh slipped from this expanse of light and air
Into the sightless gloom—eternity,
Through death's cold ante-chamber. These were men
Who fought beside me in the jaws of death.
What proof is there?

Off. Their camp's deserted, save
Of some poor wretched sick and wounded men,
Who will confirm my tale.

Cæsar. God punish them
For this base, treacherous deed. My horse, my dog,
Would put such men to shame! Is't man alone,
The very crown of all created things
That tread the surface of this busy world,
To whom our acts of amity and love
Are but a passing fragrance, quickly spent,

To be forgotten ere a moon grows old,
And not a root to blossom in the time
To come ?

Mich. Let me confirm or test the truth
Of this report. Come, sir.

Cæsar. Here I await
You, Michelotto. Be not long away.

[*Exeunt MICHELOTTO and OFFICER.*]

It is the curse of this old world of ours,
That the invisible and precious end,
Which, like a glass, collects our rays of thought,
And every impulse, aim, and appetite,
To one absorbing centre, mocks us still
To unavailing action. 'Tis our bane
That we may choose our end, and wisely use
The instruments and means to attain it, too ;
Yet, through some blind conjunction of events,
Perhaps some common incident of life,
That chances often without ill-effects,
Never attain it.

O, spite of all the mocks and banes of life,
So near must bring me nearer to the goal ;
Conspiring and opposing thoughts combined
May lengthen out the struggle for awhile,
A day, a week, a month, perchance a year ;
But the intense, and, aye persistent will,
Breaks through the sorry phalanx of weak man
That quails between it and success.

[*Re-enter MICHELOTTO.*]

Mich. 'Tis true.

Cæsar. I feared 'twas so.

Mich. I had no need to walk
Beyond the grassy bank that gives a view
Of all the camp beyond, for thence I saw
The hushed, deserted quarters. Not a man

On guard ; no busy hum, no hurrying crowd
Of soldiers bustling through their morning tasks,
No horse caparisoned beside the tents ;
Blank silence beat upon the empty place,
And eloquently spoke of this dark flight
Of all the traitor troops.

Cæsar. I feared 'twas so.
But note it, Micheletto, they must die,
Or my poor Sovereignty expires unborn,
And all our honours fade into the air,
Like smoke that circles from a dying torch
Beneath the wide extent of sombre skies ;
And you slip back into the waste of men,
Who count unhonoured minutes all their days.
Yes, they must die.

Mich. More honest men die daily,
And make no noise. Why should these curs be spared ?
Let us devise the means to baffle them ;
Match fraud with fraud. Must we be scrupulous
When traitors bark about our heels ?

Cæsar. The law,
Not I, decrees their doom. I can be mild,
Aye, clement as the man who turns his cheek
Towards his smiter with a look of love,
Provided I, and I alone, am hurt ;
But these are traitors to the Holy Church,
And yet we must be merciful. My friend,
A man may get into so ill a pass
That death itself becomes a welcome thing
And merciful. [*Thunder heard.*] Ha, thunder, rumble out
Heaven's wrath against them. They must die.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE II.—*A Room in JULIA'S House.*JULIA *and* LUCRETIA.

Luc. Draw nearer; sit beside me, you are pale;
Be comforted. What is the worst you fear?
That these revolting barons will step in
'Tween Cæsar and the crown he hungers for?
O, heed it not.

Jul. Talk thus to cloistered nuns,
Who take no interest in the world without,
Or to some sickly anchorite, whose life
Is plastered up with visionary bliss,
But not to me.

Luc. My mother, say not so.

Jul. I do. I must say so. What! shall these lords
Of some few dunghills in the conquered states,
Keep back the tide of fortune?

Luc. Heed them not,
'Tis heaven that intervenes. Let us be schooled
T' accept whatever it sends, though hard to bear;
Yes, hard, perchance, for you, not hard for me;
So shall we gain the peace of which 'tis said,
It passeth understanding.

Jul. Fools talk so;
No peace for me until the crown is won;
You were a Borgia once, but are become
A useless dreamer in a busy world,
A tiresome utterer of dyspeptic texts.

[*Enter* MANUEL.]

Man. A letter from the Duke.

Jul. Thanks, Manuel, thanks. [*Exit* MAN.]
A letter from the Duke. This speed bodes well;
And yet I hesitate to break the seal,

Like one who dreads her own surmise, and shapes
 Calamitous events to come. Look, girl;
 Within this missive may be precious words,
 That soon will medicine my grief, and chime
 To the great hopes that now o'ersway my thoughts:
 Be bolder, girl. You seem disconsolate.
 Well, there are men who, by their previous life,
 And that successful issue of their aims,
 In whatsoever they undertake or do,
 Become reputed as infallible:
 The world makes favourable prophecies
 Ere the result of what they've done is known;
 So large a confidence success creates,
 And such a man is Cæsar. Break the seal;
 Read me what's written there.

[LUCRETIA *breaks the seal and looks through the letter, then
 hands it back to* JULIA.]

Luc. For you, not me,
 My brother wrote this message.

[*Exit.*

Jul. Merciful Heaven!
 So may our prayers be blest! Let me repeat
 His vow, "You shall be mother to a King."
 'Tis near fulfilling. See—

[*Reads.*]

The sudden rising of Baglioni and those who joined his faction has, in the event, made my cause the stronger, and removed from my path those who would ever have sought means to destroy me and our house. As they would have betrayed me in the hour of victory, so I by a device, suggested by the Florentine, Machiavelli—that man of rare devices, to whom I am much beholden—got them into my power at Siningaglia. They will trouble us no more. I shall be in Rome upon the heels of the messenger who bears this. There is no further obstacle to our prayers.

No obstacle!
 Another fountain of most royal blood

Springs forth in Italy, and our quick pulse
Will quicken with its current. All is well :
This was a height beyond the reach of Gandia.

[*Enter CARAFA.*]

My dear Lord Cardinal and trusty friend,
Be you the bearer of good tidings, now,
From me unto his Holiness.

Car. Lady,

What you would say, he knows ; e'en whilst I speak
Cæsar is cloistered with the Pope alone.

Jul. Thank heaven ! he has not loitered. I should
fear

Some accident, had he not soon arrived.
Go, good Carafa, bid him hasten here ;
Tell him what sleepless nights I've past, ere he
O'ercame this mutiny. No, no ; not that ;
But bid him hasten to me for the love
He ever bore his mother.

Car. Pardon me !

I should have told you that his first request,
Ere I had ceased congratulating him,
Was that a messenger should straightway haste
To inform you he would visit you to-day.
I told him I would see you in the hour ;
Then half-a-dozen questions quickly poured :
" How had she braved the excitement ? Was she well ?
What news of her ? " So on, until the Pope
Received him into audience.

Jul. I am proud.

Is he not famous throughout Italy ?

Car. There is no man in Rome but envies him
For that large wealth of glory he has earned
In council and in war. When he arrived
A noise of cheering followed at his heels :
Men stood uncapped as he passed on, and girls

Gazed at him with awe-stricken eyes. What King
Should be more proud than one whose throne is built
By his own innate and unaided power.

Jul. Cæsar has no throne——

Car. To-day.

Jul. Be on our side
Should this be mooted. Should his Holiness
Propose the Kingship——

Car. Trust me ; have no fear ;
This night it will be mooted.

Jul. How ? Say on.

Car. To-night the Cardinals, and many more
Of rank and eminence within the States,
Will meet the Pope at old Cornato's house.
Before the banquet there has been begun,
His Holiness will find a means to sound
The Cardinals. Trust me, they will befriend
The hopes of Cæsar. Julian has returned ;
He would have influence, had Cæsar fled
Before the men whom he has overcome ;
For such disasters would have been strong winds
To fill the sails of Julian. But, in truth,
The name of Cæsar has become a sound
To call forth admiration, yea, and fear.
He must be King.

Jul. He has done wondrous deeds !

[*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*Outside the Vatican—Early Morning.*

A Number of Citizens gathered before the Entrance.

1st Cit. Some say the Duke is dead.

2nd. What, Cæsar ?

1st. Yes.
Killed at the table by a drunken lord
Whom he had dispossessed in Tuscany.

3rd. My masters, you are wrong. 'Twas Cæsar
killed
The Tuscan lord.

2nd. My friends, you cannot both
Be in the right. Was this last eve?

1st. It was.

2nd. I heard that he was poisoned at the camp.

1st. No, no. I saw him yesterday.

3rd. And I.

[*Enter PIETRO.*]

Pietro. This is not decent;
Good sirs, do not block up the gateway so.
His Holiness died suddenly last night.
Go to your homes. What is there to be seen. [*Exit.*

1st Cit. Pope Alexander dead!

2nd. His Holiness!

3rd. I said it was not Cæsar.

2nd. Tuscan fool!

Remember what you said, sir!

1st. What a world,
Where man is snatched from banquets in the night,
Like any starveling from his famine hole,
And packed below. To leave good wine
So hastily!

4th (coming forward). Who said the wine was good?
'Twas poisoned.

1st. Who says so?

4th. Sirs, please you, I.
My nephew Giacomo told me that.
Perhaps you know him, gentlemen, as smart
A lad as ever spurred a horse. He served
The Cardinal Carafa; has a tongue,

But rarely wags it ; yet he told me this,
Then rolled his head, and seemed so very wise,
And swore he would not speak another word.
He has rare ways, he has, and, when he will,
Can puzzle sharper men than his old uncle.

2nd. Where is he now, old man ?

4th. Not long ago
I left him at my house across the Tiber.

1st. Come, lead us to your house. Take this.

4th. Thanks, sir ;
But let me tell you, sirs, 'tis easier, sirs,
To free a grain of corn that's tightly wedged
Between two millstones than to pluck from him
What he would not unbosom.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.—*Before the Vatican.*

JULIA and CÆSAR.

Jul. Our shield and our protector is no more,
And that bright star which men call hope has sunk
Into the troubled bosom of despair
Beneath the black horizon.

Cæsar. Coward hearts
Use such sad words ; the poor and nerveless things,
Who once bewildered in the sloughs and gloom
Of their dark minds, hob-nob with coward phantoms
Begotten of despair. The strong man's shield
Is his own strength, the inborn consciousness
That spirits him 'gainst all external blows,
Until they fall about him like slant hail,
Whose impact stings unheeded. Let us hope
That these storm-threatening clouds o'er yon dim skies,
The sometime azure calm of other days,

Which overhang our destinies, may pass,
Nor pelt us with their dangers. Shall we crawl
And sink beneath our fortunes like worn men,
Who, wearied with the long and tiring course,
Totter upon their sore bruised heels, and droop
Even at the final stage? No, mother, no!
Nay, do not in this sudden grief forget
What I have done; how strong in friends, in arms,
In victories, and in that unseen power
Of prestige, which confounds our enemies
Before a single standard is unfurled.
Trust me.

Jul. Our hour is come. You have no friends,
No arms, not any power.

Cæsar. Be resolute,
If only for my sake and yours.

Jul. Alas!
What can you do? His Holiness is dead.
He was the tree from whence flowed all the sap
That coursed through all your branches. He is dead,
Ere any shoot of power has taken root.
You have not taken root and clasped the earth,
Like those old monstrous trees, whose branches bend
And thrust their rooting fingers in the soil;
Or cling unto her bosom with strong mouths,
That suck forth very life and sustenance,
Until what once was branch becomes a tree.
But you, alas, within this fair domain
Of Italy, must wither like a branch
Cut off from falling timber.

[*Enter CARAFA.*]

Carafa,

Are these not miserable days?

Car. I fear
There will be worse. Gonsalvo and Colonna

Are hovering about ; and here and there
 Within the city gates your enemies
 Begin to show their coward heads and cry,
 "Down with the Borgias !"

Cæsar. There's no time to lose.
 Be at San Angelo, Carafa, soon—
 Within the hour.

Car. I will. [Exit.

Jul. 'Tis as I thought.

Cæsar. I am too strong for any power in Rome.
 Too strong.

[Enter MICHELOTTO.]

Mich. We must bestir ourselves ere long.
 The men whom you made crouch like beaten dogs
 Are shaking off their terror at your name ;
 And secret words are spoken, traitors meet,
 And many Cardinals are plotting deep
 Against you.

Cæsar. Come with me, friend, let's to San Angelo.
 Carafa's gone before. We must observe
 What treachery's afoot, and be prepared.

Jul. Before we meet again—O, my sick heart !—
 Before we meet I shall have visited
 Ferrara with your sister. I am weighed
 With this our trouble and bereavement. Know
 It is my loss that colours what I think
 And what I say ; for life has lost its life,
 And I would give what'ver ambition dreams
 For some brief portion of the past. Perchance
 I shall be my old self again. Farewell.
 You have a spirit, Cæsar, I would choose
 Were I a man.

I shall be stronger soon. This recent grief
 Distracts me. Let me know what happens here
 When I am gone. Be Cæsar still !

Cæsar. Cæsar,
Or nothing. Fare you well.

Jul. And you—and you,
Don Michelotto.

Mich. May your journey bring
All health and mitigation of your grief.
Farewell! if one may say so in these times.

[*Exit* JULIA.]

Shall we not hasten to San Angelo;
Carafa will be waiting you?

[*Exit.*

Cæsar. What means
This lethargy that creeps o'er me? Have men
Some prescience of unborn catastrophies
That must o'erwhelm them? I must act, act, act,
Or I shall fall into mere foolishness
When life depends on action. I have roots
That clasp the very heart of Italy.

[*Exit.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—JULIA'S *House at Rome.*

JULIA and LUCRETIA.

Luc. The beautiful broad heavens are sometimes
black
With thunder-laden vapours, that discharge
Dim ruin earthwards blindly; wingless fires
That burn and raven innocence and guilt,
And gentle forms of tree, or bird, or flower,
Promiscuously; and with strange uproar rouse
Recumbent fears that lodge within the breast,
Which startled, wake a thousand other fears;
And souls the most unstained are sometimes vexed
With the wild burst and stormy vehemence

Of passion, whose short turbulence o'erpast,
 They grow again as calm as summer skies,
 And gain their former light and purity.
 O we, my mother, are not lost! O no!
 The ills of this cold world, each victory
 Over our passionate, tumultuous hearts,
 Make purer the sweet waters of our life.
 We'll not despond, but by our lives and deeds
 Make some addition to the good of men;
 The wretched men who have not learnt to see
 Beyond the cruel present. Mother, rise.

Jul. Bring me good news of Cæsar; 'twill suffice.
 I have no thought for other men.

Luc. Alas!
 What can I say? There is none. His untamed
 And fiery spirit—

Jul. Yes, I know the rest.
 Let us leave Rome. We should have gone before.
 As well seek down upon a granite couch
 As kindness here. Rome has become a cell.
 Only the news of Cæsar's victories
 Would sweeten it, as that same thunder roar
 Of which you spoke makes sweet the atmosphere
 We breathe.

Luc. We will not talk of Cæsar. Come. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*Before the Vatican.*

CARAFÀ and COLONNA.

Car. Nay, sir, he was not such a villain. Men
 Report unkindly of his life.

Col. When I
 Was last in Rome, men muttered fearful things
 Of all the Borgias—father, mother, son,
 And daughter, too. Some tales were horrible,

And such as you and I would scarcely dare
To touch upon.

Car. Colonna, here in Rome,
Reports are seasoned by the swinish minds
That feed on what's polluted. Virtue's face
They care not twice to look at; let them see
The sensual, flushed, and loathsome form of vice,
They wallow in a bestial, vile, content,
And ask no more.

Col. I speak not of such men,
Nor of the dreary crowd of those who drink
Impure and trivial gossip with great zest.
You know there were strange rumours in the mouths
Of many reputable men—strange tales
Of every vice that links humanity
With devils, monsters, beasts, and things inhuman.
There was that death of Gandia, unexplained,
And most mysterious. Cæsar showed some haste
To make renunciation of his vows
And take his brother's place.

Car. You do him wrong.
His Holiness was urgent. Cæsar? No,
He was obedient only.

Col. Nothing more?

Car. No more. I heard it from his Holiness,
Who loved his eldest son so well; be sure
He had no cause to imagine ill of Cæsar,
Or Cæsar would have felt his father's wrath
And never risen to favour.

Col. Cæsar hushed
Inquiry, checked all search.

Car. You do him wrong
Again, Colonna; Cæsar was unmanned
When Gandia died, and would have used all means
To find the murderers out, had not the Pope,

For reasons which were ne'er disclosed, given strict
And peremptory commands that every search
Should be abandoned.

Col. This is very strange :
I cannot follow here.

Car. Some men have guessed,
From observations Cæsar dropped at times,
And casual words when he was unrestrained,
That Gandia died in some mere lewd dispute.
'Tis probable. But tell me, where is Cæsar ?
One day 'tis said he has a crowd of troops,
Another that he wanders fugitive
And unattended, fearful for his life.
Some days ago a captain of the guard
Said he was shipped for Spain.

Col. That tale is true.
He was too dangerous to the public peace
To be allowed his liberty, at least
For some brief time to come. King Ferdinand
Gave orders to Gonsalvo to arrest
The plans of Cæsar, and convey him straight
Unto the Castle of Medina, placed
Amongst the solitary wilds of Spain,
Else be assured there would be restless days
For all the States of Rome.
I took him to that fort. Of me or mine
He was no friend, yet 'twas a mournful task
To mew his tameless spirit up, and clip
His mighty wings, that stretched o'er Italy.

Car. So low has Cæsar fallen !

Col. To-morrow I
Set out for Spain again, and shall, once there,
Revisit him. The danger we foresaw
Is past. I take him his release. 'Tis here.
We'll see him soon in Italy.

[*Enter SERVANT.*]

Serv. My Lords,
The lady Julia died last night—last night! [*Exit.*]

Car. Her heart was set to Cæsar's. She is dead!
Her troubles were too many, and her breast
Was full of anguish lately. May she find
The peace she found not on this restless world.

[*Enter GONSALVO.*]

Gon. The old she-wolf is dead!

Col. Nay, sir, let us
Be merciful. It is a common fault
To love our children's vices more than all
The virtues of mankind.

Gon. Well, let her rest.
Lucretia, what of her?

Car. O, she has given
Her life and thought to sweet austerity;
And mingles with the world like men who've past
Through fires that purified and softened them,
Until they grow considerate to their kind.
The vices of her youth, that promised once
To make the name of Borgia wholly curst,
Have burnt clean out, and her old age bids fair
To be that blessed and enduring calm,
Whose waters are not swept by any wind
That mars the face of heaven mirrored there:
We shall not see her more at Rome. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*A Dungeon in the Castle of Medina del Campo.*

CÆSAR alone, lying upon a Couch.

Cæsar (*starting up*). Help, Michelotto! help! Be-
gone! begone!
Fiends! torments! devils! Gandia! What, Gandia!

O, turn those staring eyes away. See! See
He bleeds to death! O fly! Who are those fiends
That tug me by the throat? O! O! O! O! [*Pauses.*
This unrefreshing sleep is agony.
The phantoms are all gone. I am alone:
Alone with solid walls and ironed doors
Between me and that melancholy plain
Where my tired spirits wings were faint and weak
To beat their passage through the stubborn air.
What shapes were they that hounded on and vexed
My heavy limping thoughts o'er bloody plains
Which stretched beneath the shadowy haunt of sleep?
The pains of hell may visit us in sleep,
And hold our reason in such tyranny
That all within is pandemonium—all.
O, 'tis a blessed thing to wake from dreams
That shut within their portals many a fiend
And torments worse than purgatorial pains.
O, blessed then!
To gain the sanctuary of consciousness,
To hear, and see, and breathe e'en thus alone,
Immured within a solitary cell,
Forgotten by the world of living men.
I have known men whose faces caught as 'twere
The glow of heaven from solitary thoughts,
Angelic contemplations of divine
And holy things. We cannot all be angels—
Thou grim-eared fiend, away! O, 'tis my curse
When I'm alone to be incapable
Of inward contemplation that uplifts
Heavenward. Whene'er I chance to look within
This boundless something which we call "ourselves,"
I see fierce eyes, and looks of men who died;
Some suddenly by poison or the knife,
Others who lingered out some tedious years
In prison, e'en as I am doing, then died;

And women, whom I loved, give me such smiles
As touch me with remorse.

[*Enter* JAILER.]

Jail. Fal! lal! lal! lal!
Good news may break a prison wall. Cheer up,
You'll soon be singing songs.

(*Sings*) A pretty maiden sighed to hear
Her love was caged in dungeon gloom.

All is arranged,
And for to-night; this very night.

Cæsar. To-night?
Then I'll interpret dreams by contraries
In future; for this scarce past night I dreamt
Such dreams as shorten life. There are such dreams.

Jail. A touch of nightmare, sir. Why, my old wife,
After a heavy supper, moans and groans
Like one in tribulation, 'tis her way.
The nightmare brings such dreams as cry and shriek.

Cæsar. Few prisoners e'er complain of nightmare, man,
The diet's too medicinal for that;
And yet your fare's been good enough for me,
Who want few luxuries. But speak, man, speak.

Jail. This job may cost my neck. 'Tis nothing, sir.
I'll make you out to've been a very devil,
One that could find his way through these thick walls;
And that may put them off the scent. Now, sir,
Attend to what I say. Some minutes hence
The guards will visit you. Let them retire,
Then seize the occasion promptly.

Cæsar. How friend, say?

Jail. Well, listen. Here are well-made duplicates
Of the two keys I use to lock the doors
That stand 'tween you and liberty. Take them,
It cost me much to find a man discreet
And capable. But you have paid me well.

Cæsar. And will do tenfold more when I return
To Italy. Ask Cæsar Borgia then
For any favour, privilege, or gift
Within his power. I pledge my word 'tis yours.
Remember me.

Jail. I'll not forget, sir, no.
But waste no time. Good luck be yours!

[*Exit.*

Cæsar. Good-bye.
It was a knavish trick of that old fox,
Gonsalvo, to decoy me here by fraud
And simulated friendship—but with these
I have a passport into Italy.
My name will bring me many a veteran;
My star will flame anew. I'll visit first
Viana, aye, and join the siege. My sword
Is rusty grown, or haply labelled up
In some fat armourer's shop, for sale or show,
"This was the sword of Cæsar Borgia, Duke."
Not King as yet! There's time, there's time for't—Ha!
How fresh the breezes blow, more than their wont,
Through yon high dungeon hole! What, are they changed
So suddenly? O, no! 'Tis I am changed.
This breeze of liberty, be't rough or smooth,
Boisterous or summerlike, is ever fresh,
And sweeter, too, than all the sickly winds
That hopeless pris'ners breathe. 'Tis I am changed,
Not they, for these same keys come not alone
Into this dismal cell, but with them bring
Some impulse from the outer world. O, now,
There is no fiend or vision that I dread;
And Cæsar checked, not mated, moves again.
I hear the guard. Behind this loosened stone
The keys are safe, and I, at last, am saved.
I'll feign to be asleep.

[*Falls back on the couch.*

SCENE IV.—*A Plain. The Castle of Medina del Campo
in the distance.*

[*A number of Peasants pass by singing. After them enter
MICHELOTTO and PIETRO.*]

Mich. We need no further guide. Our journey ends.
Stop, Pietro, let us rest. See, yonder lies
The Castle of Medina, where my friend
Lies dungeoned. Now we must devise in haste
How best to aid him.

Pietro. That's a task, indeed.
For if we are not careful, sir, the knaves
Who seized my master may imprison us.

Mich. Let them do what they may. I will risk all
For Cæsar: life or hope, or whatsoe'er
My birth has blest or curst me with.

[*Enter SOLDIERS, as in pursuit.*]

Sol. Stand, sirs,
Have you seen any man pass by?

Mich. We saw
Some score of peasants.

Sol. When?

Mich. They've barely past
Two minutes' space. They went towards the town.

Sol. No others?

Mich. None. Who is it that you seek?

Sol. The Italian, Cæsar Borgia, has escaped,
And gone towards Viana, where his friends
Are now besieged. [*Exeunt SOLDIERS.*]

Mich. We must gain entrance there,
Besieged or not. Thank heaven! he has escaped.
Our journey lengthens out, and we must buy
Both arms and armour ere we reach the place.

He has ta'en refuge in Viana. Come,
We must make haste to follow there, Pietro.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V.—*Before Viana.*

[*Enter CÆSAR and Soldiers, armed.*]

1st Sol. Are you Italian, Perez?

Cæsar. I? You'll call

Me Frenchman next.

2nd Sol. What matters it to us?

He is no fool in arms. Cease, Lopo, cease;
Our comrade does his duty well.

Cæsar. By birth

I am a Spaniard.

1st Sol. There's no quarrel, man,

We're proud to have you with us, Perez.

2nd Sol. Yes;

And may you be our comrade when the hand
Of Time's swift messenger shall make your hair
Snow-white. It is an ancient wish, not worse

For being old. I think the company

Will join in it.

Soldiers. Aye, aye! Hurra! Hurra!

Cæsar. Good friends and comrades, this is generous.

I would that I deserved those hearty cheers.

I thank you all. I was a stranger once

Amongst you, now we're brothers all.

Soldiers. We are.

Cæsar. My comrades who set out to join the camp
Were captured by the enemy.

1st Sol. It is

The chance of war.

Cæsar. Were it not so, you would have gained two
men

Far abler soldiers than myself.

2nd Sol. No, no ;
When we have ta'en this town, we'll set them free.

1st Sol. A storm is brewing in the sky. Was that
A flash of lightning ? See again. Big drops
Begin to fall. Take shelter, men. These trees
Are almost deluge-proof.

[*CÆSAR walks forward.*]

Cæsar. Shall I disclose
My name ? To do so may be dangerous yet.
In this rude camp may be some wrathful man
Whose heart is turned against me. Perez still
I must remain, until I hear from Rome.
How loud it thunders, crack on crack, flash, flash ;
Now, now, for shelter like the rest.

[*Enter MICHELOTTO and PIETRO in the distance, armed.*]

Mich. Pietro,
In this loud storm we may slip by the guards.
Keep close ; let not your head appear above
The shrubs and bushes. Like a landrail, down.
Ha ! look beneath those trees, be wary now.

Pietro. I see them there, one, two, a score or so.
This storm is our best friend.

Mich. Hush ! What is that ?

Pietro. I heard nothing, except the wind and rain
Breaking against the trees. But see, the storm
Has ceased.

Mich. Move cautiously. Look to your sword.
Is't loose within the scabbard ?

Pietro. Yes, sir, loose.

Mich. Ere many minutes more, we shall have gone
Quite past the camp. Be ready for a rush
Across the open ground beyond. Hark ! Hark !
Lie close. Who comes ? Ha !

[*CÆSAR advances.*]

Cæsar. Who goes there ?

Mich. Friends.

Pietro. Friends.

Mich. We'll finish him and fly. Rush upon him.

[*They rush upon CÆSAR, who in the struggle kills PIETRO; but is himself stabbed by MICHELOTTO. CÆSAR falls, and in falling loses his head-piece, and is recognized by MICHELOTTO. In the meantime the soldiers run up.*]

My master, friend, and comrade, Cæsar, speak!
O, speak! O, say that you forgave the blow
Which one who loved you better than he loved
Himself, or aught beside, has given you. O!
No word! no sign! no look! dead, dead!

Soldier. Come, sir,
Defend yourself.

Mich. Would I had killed myself.

Sold. Rise, or I spit you on the ground.

Mich. Slay me.

Here is my sword; thrust through me till you reach
My heart. Nay, stand aside, man, stand aside.
O Borgia, that same hand which took thy life
Shall take mine also [*stabs himself and dies*].

1st Sold. Lift our comrade's head.

2nd. He breathes, but heavily.

3rd. Gently, gently.

2nd. See, see! his eyelids move! Run, run, you men!
Return with our best surgeon. Haste! to save
So brave a soldier. Hasten! spare no pains.

[*Enter COLONNA and Attendants.*]

Col. One needs a beaver's skin t' endure this rain.
The blue zig-zagging lightning blinded me.
'Twas very fierce. What is this place?

Attend. 'Tis near
The camp where Cæsar hides, under the name
Of Perez; so our spy reported.

Col. Fate
Thou hast transformed him.

[*Whilst they speak they advance gradually towards the soldiers around CÆSAR.*

Surely 'tis the place!

See! see!

1st Sold. He speaks, but seems unconscious still;
His eyes look not at anything.

Cæsar. Hush! —sh!
Peace—mother—O—O—Gandia—O I'm weak—
My mother's hand—there—there—'tis better—O—
This blood—this blood—mine—whose else—say liar
say—
Unhand me—go—go—go [*dies*].

[*In the meantime, COLONNA has come up and recognized CÆSAR. The Surgeon and Soldiers come up too.*

Col. 'Tis pitiful;
And yet he has done many a villain deed.
[*To Surgeon*] This patient is past cure. Sir, walk with
me

Towards the camp. He was a man whose name
Was great with kings and princes. Now he lies
Obscure, known only by a false coined name,
Dead. You and these good soldiers will be moved
When you shall hear his chequered history.
But pardon me awhile; I am o'ercome.

THE END.

VIOLA'S SONG.

Viola. My father had a daughter loved a man,

Duke. And what's her history ?

TWELFTH NIGHT, II., IV.

The bloom has left her faded cheek,
 No light dwells in her eye,
 The gossips say her heart will break,
 And she must die.

For love, in the spring of the joyous year,
 Crept into her bosom, she felt no fear,
 And made his soft nest in her virgin dreams,
 And bathed her young heart in bewildering streams
 Of rapture and misery ;
 But the rapture has fled, as flees
 The music of birds, the blossom of trees,
 As day to the purple abyss of the sea.

The radiance of bright smiles no more
 Breaks sunlike from her brow,
 Her wild rich song doth ne'er outpour
 In sweetness now ;

The air that has drunk of her lofty strain
 Is mute when she walks o'er the once loved plain,
 Or down through the vale where the brooklets run,
 Close-hid from the glare of the burning sun ;
 And hushed is the throstle's song
 To her ears, to her ears, alone ;
 No sound she makes, O pain, but a groan,
 A groan for the faith, for the love, that was strong.

The blue veins like sweet violets
 Creep round her temples pale,
And, on her brows, a sorrow frets
 The weary tale ;
A tale of vain dreams and of languid hours,
Of hearts that are parched like unwatered flowers,
Whose leaves are all red with a drought in June,
Whose stems whistle shrill to a reedy tune,
 Lone, lone, as a nightingale.
Who will cry for thy grief, O maid ?
O deep is thy secret sorrow laid,
So deep there are none, none, whose tears can avail.

Her love first grew in tangled shade,
 Like flowers in forest gloom,
In the shade in her young heart made
 By an early doom ;
Unknown and unseen long it lingered there,
Aye paining her heart with a vague despair ;
She never dares breathe of the fire that burns
Her soul with desire, with a love, that yearns
 For love to smile on her love ;
And her cheek is pale and ashen grey,
And faintly she wakes to face the day :
O Love ! from thy heaven to her fly like a dove !

She keeps the empty night awake,
 Or slumbers fitfully ;
The gossips say her heart will break,
 And she must die ;
O not if thou comest, O Love, O sweet !
O not if thy lips with her lips shall meet ;
O Love, thou art strong, in thy strength make glad
The love in her heart that is sad, so sad.
 O come, for she pines for thee ;
Like a wind from a realm divine,
O come and make fair the cheeks that pine,
And blow, from her brow and heart, this misery.

VALENTINE'S SONG.

Val. There is no music in the nightingale,
Unless I look on Silvia in the day.

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA, III. I.

The song that was winged with delight
I hear no more ;
Like an arrow's swift flight,
Like a star that divides the blue night,
The note of deep joy has sped, is faded and o'er.

I fly o'er the bosom of earth
With night dews chill ;
And I hear the faint mirth
That in laughter and revel has birth,
Come forth like a pain set free and roll down the hill.

The night in her cavern of gloom
Enfolds the day ;
And the flowers of rich bloom
Seem to breathe forth a sweeter perfume,
But here in my songless despair I wither away.

ROMEO'S SONG.

As a flower, in the frost of night,
Hangs its head,
Or droops in the cold azure light
Till its petals and leaves are dead ;

As a song on the lips of the dumb
 Imprisons a thought divine ;
As a lute whence no sounds come,
 As emotions where Love cannot shine,
Are dead to the voice of delight,
 So I falter and droop and die,
Unblessed by the warmth of thy love, the light of thine
eye.

When the beauties of Spring awake
 On the earth,
Cicalas chirp low 'mid the brake,
 The lark's song in the sky has birth ;
When the leaves and the fields and the trees
 Are glad with the life renewed,
And the hawthorn fills the breeze,
 And the hyacinths blow many-hued ;
O Love, am I glad for the sake
 Of the sights and the sounds of joy
That gladden the brow of the earth, as a child with its
toy ?

Not for those am I glad alone,
 Yet for those
Transfused with the radiance all thrown
 From the deeps of my heart's repose,
That are fed by the fountains which flow
 From thee to my soul, sweet rose ;
E'en gray winter's sky doth glow,
 And I feel not the burden of woes,
When thou murmurest " I am thine own."
 When the words of thy mouth are sweet,
When scorn and distrust, O my Love, lie dead at thy feet.

CICELY ;
A LYRIC OF BEGGARY.

God knows how true the parson's tale !
The words of love he spake aloud,
When late I shivered through a gale
Into a church so cold and proud :
He made the silken hearers start
Like men who take a sudden fright,
When, from the heart of darkness, dart
Unthought-of visions, glaring white.

The organ scarce had ceased to sob
Along the weirdly wailing aisles,
And the loud anthem's dying throb
Had filled the air with angel smiles ;
When rising, clothed like some pure saint,
Whom earth's dark passion cannot stain,
He blessed us, so that, free from taint,
We all might hear the heavenly strain.

Then from the Holy Word he read
Divinely, " Blessed be ye poor ;"
And soon, by wakened fervour led,
Soared, till the Heaven's great golden door
Stood like a glory circling him :
Methought he beckoned me to rise,
The bleak gale changed into a hymn,
And azure flushed the sodden skies.

“ O come, beloved, come,” he cried,
 “ Come from yon world of weariness ;
Behold, here shall your tears be dried,
 Here sounds no voice of wretchedness :
O come, ye outcasts, sorrowed lives,
 Whom man turns coldly from and scorns,
Heed not your rags, your spirits’ gyves,
 A crown awaits you without thorns.

“ O come, beloved, ye whose hearts
 Are heavy-laden with all woes,
And thou whose creaking body smarts,
 On tottering feet, to fortune’s blows ;
Come, welcome as a wedding guest,
 The long-loved bosom friend of years,
Whose outstretched hand is warmly prest,
 While love’s own song fills both his ears !

“ O come, beloved, come ! behold,
 A triumph to the end of time :
On earth, ye have no store of gold,
 On earth, pale want is like a crime :
Behold the mansions, dazzling bright,
 Darken the lustre of rich gems,
For you this flood of heavenly light,
 For you supernal diadems.”

Then as a river that has flowed
 In gliding streams through sun and shade,
'Neath boughs that bend with summer’s load,
 Past level sweep of thorp and glade,
Breaks deafening down a precipice
 Wild and tempestuous, so he
Gave all his turbid soul release,
 And the fresh gale roared mournfully.

“Hark! there is shrieking in the gloom
 Of dim Gehenna’s hellish vale,—
 The fire-drawn agony and doom
 Of phantom spirits rent and pale;
 Hark to the louder, shriller shriek
 That startles thro’ the sulphurous air,
 ’Tis Dives; lo! no vulture beak
 E’er tortured like his huge despair.”

Then wandering thro’ many a verse
 That strews the leaves of sacred lore,
 He thundered like a living curse
 Against the arm that grinds the poor,
 And with his face upturned he prayed;
 And loud the storm-wind moaned and gasped,
 Whilst the rare sunlight glanced and played
 About his fingers jewel-clasped.

He told how Christ had loved to dwell
 Amongst the lowly sons of men;
 How deep the love, as from a well,
 That fountained o’er the ages then;
 Voice-sinking soon to low, sweet notes,
 He dallied with the gentle theme;
 Like birds that swell their liquid throats
 In song-time, sang the rich wind-stream.

“O wealthy poor, whose footstep tends
 To richer things than Ophir’s gold;
 O happy sorrow whose amends
 Are joys unmeasured, manifold;
 O poor rich man, thy treasures fail
 When docks and dog-grass o’er thee wave,
 When thou, within thy leaden mail,
 Art mute as thy deep burrowing grave.

“ O better is the ear of corn
That barely stays a foodless pain,
Than dainties poured from brimming horn
To dull the heart and clog the brain ;
O better to be lowly born,
And do the ready mite of good,
Than, scarlet-vested, in the morn
Prepare the hatch of evil brood.”

He ceased, and soon the organ blew
A tumult of melodious sound,
That rose and fell and rose anew,
Like waves in caverned moonlight drowned ;
Without, the sun was high and clear,
And calm now locked the gale out-worn ;
Sweet calm was in my heart, and fear
Had fled like some dark shape forlorn.

I saw the parson as I past,
I thought he turned to speak to me,
He only looked whilst hurrying fast,
To join a lord of high degree ;
A peer through all the county known
For haughty ways and looks of scorn,
Save when a 'scutcheon dimmed his own,
And marked a lineage higher born.

I turned into a quiet lane,
Green-bending under fruited trees,
I prayed that from long years of pain
Might grow the flower of endless ease ;
Across the golden-belted sky,
And down the distant faint-blue moor,
Come ringing, with soft melody,
The glad words “ Blessed be ye poor.”

A WINTER DIRGE.

Fancies that have lived with me,
Days and months so cheerfully,
Do not die ;
Like a vision bright and fair,
Like our moments free from care,
Like the soft light flushing high
Ere the night broods o'er the sky.

See the year is cold and dead,
And the summer to him wed,
Gone, gone, gone !
Snowy white upon the ground
His few hairs are shed around,
And the windy trumpets drone,
While the bare trees quake and moan.

Long ago within my breast,
Since the maiden spring made nest
'Mid the trees,
Ye beheld your summer height,
Ere the swallow took his flight ;
And ye heard sweet melodies
Ere the heavens began to freeze.

Ere the heavens began to freeze
Ye were like a swarm of bees
Honey-girt ;
For ye bore, beneath the wing,
Some rich nectar, solacing
More than was my fair desert,
Till I felt no common hurt.

Now, around the cold dead year,
Like wan mourners round a bier,
 Hushed ye stand ;
And across the chilling snows,
Cometh that white-bosomed rose,
Your pale mother, she whose hand
Reared you in some favoured land.

Lo! she frowns and ye are dead,
From my bosom banished,
 Rent and torn ;
For the year I mourn nor weep,
This his death is but a sleep ;
Short-lived fancies, ye I mourn,
Ye are dead and I forlorn.

TO MISERY.

The gray eyes of morning are dim
 With tears,
And swift rolls the thunder's loud hymn,
 Like the clashing of wind-driven spheres,
 'Mid tempest and storm ;
And wan as a plague-stricken form
 Cast forth on the sea,
Glares thy motionless eye, O wild misery !

I look on the world's strong heart,
 Thy prey,
 Where rankles the barb of thy dart,
 Where our life flows in anguish away ;
 Shall loveless despair
 Pollute and destroy what is fair ?
 O winged with sharp pain,
 Who hath builded that thou alone mightest reign ?

I hear a sweet song in the sky :
 " Be glad,
 For Spring will be here by-and-bye,"
 Sings the thrush, like a thing never sad.
 No sigh of despair
 Makes gloom in the caves of the air ;
 Thy strength is all shed,
 And thy brood of black thoughts, behold ! they have fled.

I hear a sweet voice by my side,
 Not thine,
 Breathe joy through the rough winter-tide,
 And the tresses of morning entwine
 Their light o'er the clouds ;
 But dark grow thine eyes in their shrouds,
 O pale misery ;
 For the voice that I hear is Love's ; flee, O flee.

O flee with the speed of desire,
 O flee,
 More swift than the flashing of fire
 That breaks on the lightning-winged sea ;
 Be thou but a name ;
 Leave thou but the breath of thy fame,
 And fade to our sight
 Like a vapour that burns, then dies, in dim night.

THE BARD'S SONG,

The beacon on the height,
Roars down the tawny night,
And bickers through the mist,
With flames that roll and twist
To the heaven's hidden face, like creatures full of life ;
With joy and giant might
It dances to our sight,
And shakes its fiery hair
In the sullen, sunless air,
Like demons that portend the coming of the strife.

Like demons fell and fierce,
Like dreams that rush, and pierce
The loneliness of sleep,
And make the dreamer weep,
In the bitterness of dark prophetic woe ;
Like thunderbolts that smite,
Like blasts that burn and blight,
Like portents that impress
With a wasting, bleak distress,
May yonder lurid fire glare to the morrow's foe !

The gloomy vale beneath
Shows not its purple heath,
But seems a blackened thing,
Like ravens on the wing,
When swift night hurries on at the waning of the year ;
All silent now it lies
Beneath the vielèd skies,
Though tramp of armèd men,
Through the scarce-awakened glen,
Will be heard on the morn ere the stars disappear.

Behold, a ruddy glow,
Bursts from the lofty brow
Of many a mountain peak!
Like the red, golden, streak
That rises in the east when the morning is at hand;
O God! the coming light,
Will cheer the eager sight
Of men who never pale,
And of men who never wail,
When the waves of battle rush like a torrent o'er the land.

The marcher, in his tent,
Laughs at our discontent;
And the soldier jeers and rails
At the few men of Wales,
Whom the spear and the bow have left to guard the land;
They laugh aloud and shout,
They have no fear or doubt,
They swear, beneath the heel
Still to crush, with weight of steel,
The flower of our troops and all our warrior band.

Ah! little do they know
How warm the spirits flow,
How strong the pulses beat,
How welcome death, and sweet,
When Freedom from her heights to her sons begins to call:
Though life is ever dear,
Of death we have no fear;
Swift on the English horde,
Draw, and wield the bloody sword,
That never fails to slay where vengeance bids it fall.

THE CAPTIVE.

A poet, who had drunk pellucid streams
Of poesy, and ripened to great themes,
Took captive a bright Love—
An earthly Love, all-radiant as the sun ;
Upon his bosom he caressed it like a dove,
Whilst the hours fled swiftly one by one ;
With that fair presence near his heart,
He went into lone woods apart,
Singing deep melodies
Of grief-consuming and ambrosial ease,
Such as the old world loved ;
Then slumbered under pleaching trees,
Far from the noiseful crowd removed.
 Whilst there he slept, a weird wild dream
Stood o'er him, fumbling at his lyre,
Loose-strung and songless. From his heart leapt the
 swift fire
Of anger, and he turned, with wrathful gleam,
Exclaiming, for he saw not, " Who art thou ?"
Then saw 'twas Death, but heard not, " It is I !"
And, Fear soon blowing slumber from his eye,
He woke and cried, " O, Love ! by our sweet vow,
Bend hither thy fair head ;
I dreamt of Death ; stretch hither thy soft wings."
Then shrieked ; for lo ! entangled in the lyre's hushed
 strings,
The captive Love lay still and dead.

MAIDENHOOD.

A maiden through a garden went,
 Gold-brown her hair and brown her eyes,
In artless smiling languishment,
 She saw the martins dip and rise ;
And as she went a song she sang,
 A simple song to simple notes,
While round her path, like echoes, rang
 A floating sound of dulcet throats.

“O fair and fairer grows the rose,
 And deeper spreads the crimson dye,
And sweeter on the west wind blows
 The scent of hawthorns blooming nigh ;
And up the hill and o’er the glade,
 The voice of love is pulsing high,
In greening brake and cooler shade ;
 O wherefore should I grieve or sigh ?

“O gentle bird in quiet nest !
 O happy song amid the leaves !
O sweetest passion in the breast,
 Though sweetest passion oft deceives !
O golden youth of golden prime,
 When blood is warm and thought is free,
Haste, haste, the richly blossomed time,
 When love and I may link with thee.”

RICH HOURS.

Rich hours ! how rich they seemed to be,
The hours, sweet Love, I spent with thee,
But rich no more, no more, to me.

How rich ! too rich, when thou and I
Filled each the other's heart and eye ;
So deaf we were to Nature's sigh !

So deaf ! we heard no other song
Than that I piped the Summer long ;
A heart-drawn measure, wild and strong.

Our world was but a little dell,
Where thou and I alone could dwell ;
So narrow, yet it served us well.

So narrow, that we could not see
The world's broad belt of misery ;
So narrow, yet content were we.

My songs I sang for thee alone ;
Nay ! can I call those songs my own ?
The fiery seed by thee was sown.

For thee, alone, I sang, O, sweet !
Now thy calm heart has ceased to beat,
My lyre I lay at thy cold feet.

A WOMAN'S PORTRAIT.

Her eyes are full of that soft light
That speaks of inward happiness,
Serene and cloudless as the flight
Of hours that know no weariness.

Nor is she wanting in the charm
That comes of hue and graceful form ;
The well-turned head, the rounded arm,
Are hers ; her heart withal is warm.

Her forehead some might deem too low
For intellectual beauty's queen ;
But should they view her face, I know
They'd say a nobler ne'er was seen.

Meek eyes are hers, that seem to gaze
Into some purer world of life ;
And, gazing, drink the blessed rays
That heavenward leading, end all strife.

She walks amidst the multitude,
And blesses with those tender eyes ;
She breathes no sleek beatitude
Whose sound rolls off the tongue and dies.

A holy calmness hangs around
Her chastened brows, her sweet soft smile,
Her glance, that clings not to the ground,
Nor toys with glances that beguile.

It is the charm of innocence,
Of selfless thought, of modest grace,
Of dove-like, gentlest influence,
That marks the beauty of her face.

LOVE AND GRIEF.

Love wandered, like a lonely dream,
Into a silent wood,
And sat upon a sorrel bank,
Face-bowed, in pensive mood.

The birds had ceased to sing, and faint
The weary sun now shone ;
The green light clutched the leafy trees
Above and round his throne.

He sang ; O tender was the strain,
Full of a rare delight ;
But sadder, wilder, grew the song
Upon the coming night.

O then he sobbed and wrung his hands,
And wept like one distraught ;
And all the bliss of life seemed lost,
And all the bliss of thought.

Young Love beheld not by his side,
Beneath the round white moon,
Grief's shrunken eye and faded brows ;
O love must see them soon !

E'en as a flower turns to the light,
 So Love turn'd to his woe ;
 The song had left his quivering lips,
 And Grief sighed soft and low.

Love said, " O pale and wasted form,
 Why cling'st thou to my side ?"
 Grief answered, " Thou art lonely, Love,
 As some forsaken bride.

" I saw thee wandering here alone,
 I nestled in thy heart,
 My form may fade away, but thence
 No more shall grief depart."

WAITING.

The shadows creep across the east,
 The western glory dies away,
 And down the sullen gates of night,
 Swift flies the day.

Beneath the folding star he sighs,
 The man of sturdy limbs and free,
 With brown hands clasped, and sunburnt face,
 In agony.

Beneath the folding star he waits,
 For one whose eye is false and fair ;
 For one who mocks the trusting heart,
 That waits her there.

She like a siren smoothed her song,
And like a fowler spread her nets;
And he, O heart that madly loved,
And ne'er forgets!

And she will sigh for one who steeps
A puny nature in things vile,
And barter love and hope and peace,
For his false smile.

PARTING.

The softly breathed fare-thee-wells,
Awake the white hyacinth's bells,
And stir the azalea's repose,
And break the first sleep of the rose.

Beneath the fresh odorous night,
I pass with a new-born delight,
And tread through the shadowy ways
Where moonless the faint stars gaze.

The peach-blooms that fire the walls
Ere night on the still world falls,
Awake, and sigh, as I pass
With feet on the soft dewy grass.

And, low 'mid the sleeping ferns,
The primrose wakens, and burns
With vague yet shadowless bliss,
Or dreams 'neath the warm wind's kiss.

To night the white violet's heart
Seems touched with some piteous smart ;
For, bent to the earth, they stare
At the roots lying brown and bare.

I walk like one in a dream ;
Whose face through the night doth gleam,
Whose cheek soothes the night near mine,
Whose lips that are sweeter than wine ?

Again, from the casement deep
We see the broad twilight sweep ;
And the hills, all purple and black,
Stretch out like a storm-cloud's wrack.

So quickly my soul flits home !
As spray, from the billowy foam
Cut off by a windy blast,
Falls into the waves at last.

STANZAS

WRITTEN NEAR THE WORM'S HEAD.

The hot light falls upon the sea,
A purple halo scarfs the hills,
And 'neath my feet melodiously
The long low waves swell ceaselessly ;
As though some joyous passion thrills
The bosom of our mother earth,
That pants, beneath her azure girth
Of innocent waters, till they smile,
Then leap in laughter round yon headland isle.

Sublimely there the islet stands,
 Raised like a lonely feudal hold,
That overawes the shrinking lands
Of princes, chieftains and their bands ;
 Deaf, to the music deaf, and cold
For all the Summer in the air,
For all the wealth of sunlight there,
Yet steadfast, in its solitude,
As some pale hermit in ecstatic mood.

No 'wildering hum of man is heard
 From this green height of sloping turf ;
No voice, unless some unseen bird
By nature's deep pulsation stirred,
 Answers the song of wave and surf :
I see no form of living thing
Couched 'mid the grass, or wandering
On land or shore. I only see
Yon rock, this earth, the expanse of sky and sea.

So clear the air, so bright the scene,
 So rich the hue of yon deep skies,
My thoughts seem hovering, aye, between
Realms where the year is ever green
 And gateways of some paradise,
Where the breathed air brings ecstasy :
Who would not hither stray, to flee
Mean-thoughted care, for some short space,
To see this world's great beauty face to face !

I hear an echo make reply,
 The burden of a worldly tune :
"Such dreams make barren husbandry,
Keep thoughts awake had better die,
 And spoil the promise of our June."

As if the sight of bat, or mole,
Were made the standard for the whole
Of things that see! Yon sapphire glow
Of heaven might then be vested like a crow.

Away with thoughts that creep and breed
 Within the darkness of the mind!
Here sun, and sky, and ocean, lead
To loftier impulse in my need:
 Too soon, alas, are we resigned
To view, with careless eye and heart,
These splendours fail, these joys depart;
To close each sense to every call
Save interest's voice—the meanest of them all.

IN ARCADY.

For all a summer in the West,
Where many a mountain ridge extends
Along deep-branching vales,
I breathed the peaceful sylvan rest
Which lingers o'er each stream, that bends
Swift waters to soft gales.

Beneath the huge o'erhanging brows
Of sky-ascending crag and rock
I loitered in the shade;
Or, from beneath green-tangled boughs,
I watched the snow-white browsing flock
Move slowly down the glade.

An aged man I oft had seen
Beside the solitary streams,
Which flashed through banks of fern ;
His was no stolid-peasant mien,
Nor his the eye that never seems
With tender thought to burn.

One day, whilst down a rivulet
That gurgled with fresh mountain songs,
I fished in solitude,
By chance upon the banks we met ;
We met and spoke, such use belongs
To anglers in the mood.

His converse showed a mind that moved
Within a circle pure, refined,
Whose centre was great love ;
Not cold vague love for things removed
And abstract—for he loved his kind,
And life in field and grove.

He talked like some philosopher,
Who found within the founts of peace,
Of love, and cheerfulness ;
No wind of envy e'er could stir
His heart to tempest, or make cease
His quiet happiness.

When near the dusty road, I turned
And prayed that he would sup with me,
I pressed and welcomed him ;
I think he knew how much I burned
To hear his simple history,
That breathed an earnest hymn.

He thanked me with a natural grace ;
We gained the jasmine-scented room
And ate our humble fare ;
Then, whilst upon his noble face
The flying twilight fell in gloom,
He laid his life-stream bare :—

Here's your good health, you'll pardon me,
If now I linger here awhile,
And smoke my evening pipe ;
I need not take life hurriedly,
Like men who have no time to smile,
Because their schemes are ripe.

I have no schemes and I am old,
Long years are trembling in my hand,
Mist gathers in my eye ;
I do not hope to hoard rare gold
Or own an acre of broad land
Of all beneath the sky.

Look, think you I have ever felt
The breath of warm enthusiasm,
And showers of ecstasy
Fall round me, till in thought I knelt
Like one beside a widening chasm,
O'erpowered by fantasy ?

What dreams were mine in far-off days ?
My thoughts were one perpetual roll
Of lovely forms and strange,
That gambolled, under golden rays,
Through brakes and uplands of the soul,
Where shapes ideal range.

The visions of my early years,
The impulse of sweet ecstasy
That thrilled through all my veins,
Ne'er faded like a young bride's tears,
Or like the cricket's melody
Amidst wide-deluged plains.

I grew as restless as a cloud,
Before my tongue had learnt to frame
Fit symbols for the things
Which thronged my vision in a crowd ;
The things which feed the poet's flame
With rich imaginings.

In youth I lived 'midst lonely hills,
The haunt of storm and rolling cloud,
Possessed with wild desire ;
And trampled down past hidden rills,
Or heard the thunder pealing loud,
And saw the welkin fire.

The budding trees became my friends,
And communed with me in my walks ;
It was a blessed time ;
I felt the bliss that Nature sends,
I loved to hear the long dry stalks
Of wind-blown rushes chime.

I clambered where the ravens build ;
For hours I drank the lark's divine
And deathless melody,
Until my very heart was filled
With music, till it seemed a shrine
To lodge such rhapsody.

At night were pictured on my mind
The shapes and colours of the day,
So clear they lived again ;
I felt that Nature ne'er designed
To breathe into our common clay
Creative power in vain.

Perhaps in that ecstatic time
I held the seeds of lofty things
Obscurely in my breast ;
The element which makes sublime
The genius, by whose spreading wings
Life, hope, and love are blest.

For Nature, partial to no rank,
May plant her noblest, richest gifts
In men of lowliest kind ;
Whose fathers toiled in meadows dank,
Or 'midst the storm of wintry drifts,
With unambitious mind.

I know I breathed an atmosphere
Of some diviner, subtler birth
Than that of chymic air.
And music, too, I seemed to hear
Break from the panting heart of earth
And lips of dead despair.

I looked within, and saw the flow
Of outward objects interfused
With changeless deep delight ;
I marked the new ideas blow
With od'rous flowerets, that diffused
Clear rays of inward light.

Then, o'er the soul's wide boundless deep,
I gazed like one to whose glad eyes
A bright new star appears ;
And saw the broad ethereal sweep
Of weightless clouds through summer skies,
That change not with the years.

My twentieth summer scarce had died
Beneath the trampling of the hours,
That breathe on Autumn's car,
Ere lessening means to me denied
A studious ease, in dreamy bowers
Removed from man afar.

'Twas better so—for what avails
A fruitless luxury of thought,
Contemplative repose,
That ends, self-centered e'er, and fails,
Less fruitful in a world distraught
Than perfume of the rose ?

Thus, from the dreams of youth aroused,
I marvelled where to gain my bread,
And do some active good ;
Yet hold the ideals in me housed,
The thoughts by living nature fed
As with ethereal food.

I lacked the hard, the earnest will—
The strength and vigour never tired—
To compass wealth and fame ;
Or make a hustings' audience thrill
With words, that roll as if inspired
To stay the country's shame :

To act the patriot, or worse,
Become a demagogue, who hates
The good beyond his reach ;
Who chews, and spits, the ready curse,
And, aye, self-seeking, devastates
Like storms that plough the beach.

I walked where gentler footsteps led,
Content 'midst humbler paths to stray
And drink of Nature's store ;
These hands procured my daily bread,
Until an ever-welcome ray
Dawned on my cottage door.

Aye, Nature fills me with delight,
And yonder village school, my charge,
My bodily wants supplies ;
I teach the young to love the sight
Of all around them, and grow large
In kindly charities.

And here in this fair Arcady,
More fair than Grecian bards have feigned
Or imaged fair in verse,
I dwell ; here drink the melody
That flows from all things good contained
In the great universe.

A life of pleasant ways, and calm
As summer on an azure lake,
Unruffled by bleak winds ;
Or ruffled only to a psalm
That seems from bending pines to break
Beneath the climbing hinds.

A life which riches cannot buy
With all their golden argosies
Or treasures of great price ;
Ambitious men in vain must sigh
To grasp the bliss that ever flees
Their arms and aching eyes.

And, in the years, I learnt to know
The secret that all great content
Must in ourselves be sought ;
That riches, place, and rank bestow
Uncertain joys, as quickly spent
As cloud-shapes vapour-wrought.

He ceased, we parted ; often since
I've seen him in his Arcady ;
A tender-hearted man,
Whose words and full-ripe years evince
A wondrous calm and sympathy,
A life of noble plan.

A noble life ; for he disdained
The dream of satisfied desire,
Whose world is selfishness ;
And natural love in him sustained
His human heart, and built a fire
To comfort and to bless.

And blest is he who so receives
The seedling of high thoughts and wise
In meet congenial soil ;
That winds, which blight the buds and leaves
Of weak desires, may vainly rise,
And vainly blow their coil.

ANTIGONE.

The Gods themselves are moved by deeds of love ;
Love, that upraises to their thrones afar
Eyes yearning ever for the blameless dead,
Torn from the light to roam the ways of gloom,
With wan-worn brows, that, under faded skies,
Are levelled, like the heads of lowing kine,
Straightening across a blank, unfolded plain,
Where sun, nor moon, nor stars, arise and cheer :
The mighty Gods, who dwell and reign unseen,
Within the cloudless spaces of thin air ;
The watchful guardians, haply, of all men,
Whom love, or loftier piety, impels
Boldly to meet and wrestle with the fates,
Tho' vain the contest with the invincible !

Behold me, Gods ! no boastful strain I speak,
Thus bowed in reverence to the voiceless earth ;
Me, whom this love so fashioned that the springs
Of fear are tim'rous streams, on thirsty sands
Outpoured and lost within me,—me, who scorned
All craven uproar, and the crowd that yelled,
“ Your brother wronged the King ; so let him lie,
A banquet for foul birds, 'tis thus ordained.”
As if this kinship were a puff of breath
Blown on the brightness of a blade of steel,
Quick come, quick gone, a blemish soon wiped out.

Here, sundered from the stir of life, even here
I trod the pastures of a lone despair,
Whose breath crept round me like a curse that slays ;
Here felt strange weakness shadowing o'er my brain,
As if my strength were palsied evermore,

And I might never stand, as now I do,
Thus fixed, thus pinnacled, upon the brow
And summit of impregnable content,
Above the ship of hope, that bared her sides
To jagged, surf-beaten rocks, touched, broke, and sunk
Beneath the drowning waters.

Hark, the wind
Storms, shrieks, and howls, and wildly to and fro
Batters the trees without, whose gnarled roots clasp
The sharp-edged stones that torture them. Howl, wind,
With all thy wailing wrath ; blow louder, blasts,
And herald me not conquered, dungeoned here.
Lo ! Polynices, he whose mighty arm
Worked not the promise of his shield's device,
By me alone being honoured of all born,
No longer droops, disdained and mocked, below,
For rites which, lacking, shame the dead who mourn,
A slighted shadow of the tombless slain.

Faintly the hours crawl on in agony,
Slow as the lame along a stony path,
That struggles with the halting feet, and maims
Them passing,—faintly and in agony.
Yet am I blest as with a joy, whose feet
March boldly, quiv'ring to a tragic song,
In that I dared obey the holy voice
That in the regions of hushed thought declares
The mandates of eternal right which reigns
Amongst just Gods, unchanged, unchangeable ;
Aye, blest as with a joy that comforts me,
Although in lonely hours, when sorrow falls
Upon the sufferer twice intensified,
My life has been like that of some bent reed
That shudders o'er a melancholy tarn,
Until it weeps to see its strength decay
In the cold horror rippling at its feet

How oft are scorned, despite of sayings old,
 All thoughts, all virtue, zeal and piety,
 That bring not forth a crop of wealth or power,
 Advantage in the visible show of life !
 So is it in the hollow ways of man,
 And in the world that laughs, because I pawn
 The scarce full-blossomed glory of my youth
 To bless my brother's shade, to bless—and die.

Peace, peace, the wind has ceased its uproar,
 peace!

Lo ! sweet fresh songs come from the world of light,
 Fresh songs of earth wing-tipt with tender pain,
 Full of the sadness of a vague desire
 That darkens like a shadow and is gone ;
 Full of the melancholy born of sounds,
 When music gives a tongue to yearning thoughts
 That hover voiceless in the mind tho' felt,
 And rouses from their unimpassioned sleep
 The flock of dim emotions locked in man,
 Too subtle for the grasp of human speech :
 Sweet sounds that wake again Love's sleeping lute
 Until th' old dream sweeps burning thro' my brain,
 And love grows sweeter in th' embrace of death.

O deep strong Love, O mightier than all else !
 Come, fold me to thy bosom ere I faint ;
 Fly where rich odours wait a happy bride,
 Where perfumes rise to music's silver voice
 That breathes and murmurs to the watchful stars,
 The blissful union of long-sundered lives !

What momentary weakness loosed my tongue
 To falter with a passion that is dead ?
 To hunger like Ismene for the spring
 Of glad rich years, faint and irresolute ?
 To breathe forth words at which my heart rebels ?
 Great Zeus, forgive me, if I paled and turned

Like one half-hearted in a noble chase
Where every pulse's beat is sanctified.

Thou, Œdipus, forgive me ; thou, whose days
Became a fold for pain and misery
Wherein to harbour ravening ; thou whose brows
All furrowed by the swift woe-laden hours
Showed like a barren hill-side trenched by storms
O'erpast, and mailèd arms of giant winds,
Wasted and desolate, yet not o'ercome
By might of men who die ! and thou, dear bond,
That knit me to content, my brother, thou,
Do ye forgive me pitying, if I sighed,
Beneath the press of dim mysterious thoughts
That flutter round the mystery of death,
And find no resting-place : if I have quailed
Like one whose eyes are full of rolling mist
Upon a lonely mountain, spectre-ridged,
In trackless realms where yawns the void of night,
Forgive me. For, behold, unawed I stand,
Save for the reverence due unto the Gods,
Upon the very threshold of a night,
A void, a gloom, a deep unknowable,
Bastioned in caverns black, and fathomless
To the keen vision of far-seeing thought :
Aye, conscious of the duties which, performed,
Are grateful to the Gods, and to ourselves
More precious far than heaps of amethysts,
And fragrant in the after-time, as flowers
That bud and blow then die, yet in their veins
Hold perfume that makes rich the air.

'Tis well.

Let Creon claim his victory, 'tis well,
For I am braced, resolved, content, nay proud
To leave a world of puny-thoughted things
Who crouch and quiver when the raised arm of might

Falls shattering prone through the rent wide-wandering
air,

Shattered itself, if but the Gods so will.

O gates of darkness soon to open wide,
To close behind me dying, though my name
May the just Gods permit to die not ever,
O, rather may it root and grow, a sign
Of fortitude 'mongst women. What is hid
In that dark realm ye fortress, who can tell
Of those who breathe this upper air and live?
None; for we cannot learn this thing and live.
Our eyes see nought beyond ye; but we hear
The garrulous faint echoes of old days,
Of old spent days when Gods conversed with man,
And heroes walked the nether world and lived;
Of grievous things, of shades and phantoms pale,
Ghosts eager hitherward to roam again
And forfeit all Elysium for this earth;
Of listless motions, hopes all anguish-eyed,
Woes, named and nameless, pains too hard to bear,
And toil of struggling spent in vain attempts;
But of keen joy, with ecstasy of youth,
Like springtide into blossom bursting, never.
Yet, ye wide gates of darkness, with no dread
I enter, but with love and calm full deep,
As though your portals were an arch upraised
Of flowering boughs to mark a victory,
Not ribbed and fashioned by the hand of death.

The Gods be thanked, I have not won to-day
A thing whose worth may be displayed in gold,
A bauble in the common mart of men;
But something nobler—the full sense of peace
That grows within the mind of one who dares
Cleave to the skirts of Duty, and obey
The motions of her lips that speak no wrong.

O reaper Death, put in thy sickle now
Amongst my years, that have not reached the prime,
Put in thy sickle now, O Death, and reap,
Like one who garners when the ear is green,
Like one who strips the vine-tree in mid June.
This Creon dooms me to a sluggard death,
But I will hasten to thee, as a bride
Who spends her breath in kisses on the cheek
Of her loved spouse, and will not let him go.
Put in thy sickle now, O Death, and reap;
I have not lived, I shall not die, in vain.
'Tis well : my brother will not feel the pangs
Of such as pine amongst the Stygian crowd,
Forlorn amidst a noise of shrieks and groans,
That roar until a myriad moons have set
Beyond this stretch of earth where tyrants reign :
And I forego some leaden hours that droop
Their weary wings and moan, "Farewell! farewell!"
My father, my dear brother, lo ! I come.

A RONDEL.

'Tis hard to sing a rondel true
Of words all fashioned of delight,
That murmur in the summer night
Old hopes that seem for ever new.

So quickly vanish from our view
The suns which flood our youth in light,
'Tis hard to sing a rondel true
Of words, all fashioned of delight.

We sing, we laugh, a happy few
 See pleasure ripen in their sight ;
 And yet for all that's fair and bright,
 And all the wealth from rain and dew,
 'Tis hard to sing a rondel true
 Of words all fashioned of delight.

RECONCILIATION.

They talked of older, calmer days,
 Whose light is lost in vanished moons ;
 And strained to catch thro' mist, the blaze
 Of far-off moons.

Far-off, far-off, so far away !
 Away where shadows spread and roam,
 Where light is mingled with the gray
 Of broadening gloom.

And thus like mariners who see
 A fog-bank spread across their wake,
 A cloud that hides the marge, the lea,
 And village lake ;

The lake and lea where they have spent
 Full many an hour of pleasantness,
 In wholesome toil, in merriment,
 In works that bless ;

So both stand facing that dim shade,
 And talk of older, calmer days ;
 And in their heart of thought they prayed
 For sunnier ways.

With graspèd hands that prayer they spoke,
And straight the misty vapour fell,
And splendours glimmered where it broke,
As by some spell.

WE SAT BENEATH A RUINED
WALL.

We sat beneath a ruined wall,
That once had ringed a castle's pride ;
We sat and listened to the call
Of rooks that brought the eventide
To us, to all.

A rivulet, beneath our feet,
Fringed with long-bladed moving grass,
Made rippling music, O so sweet !
The moonbeams hurried not to pass
Our mossy seat.

One star, with open lidless eye,
Beside the moon stood sentinel ;
The wings of night, across the sky
All sapphire-wrought, will throw a spell—
But by-and-bye.

Meanwhile we drink the lovely scene,
And hear the tiny torrent roar ;
And treasure feelings too, I ween,
Which after many years are o'er,
Will still be green.

So sickens the flower of delight,
So sorrow kills bliss,
When thou turnest away from my sight
And I see, in the mind's deep abyss,
No clear light.

STANZAS.

A bird sat on a withered bough,
A lonely bird with sunken eye ;
She sang no song ; but weird and low
Made moan and cry.

Her wings were drooping lank and torn,
And cold her head beneath her wing,
O weary bird ! in night forlorn
Thou canst not sing.

O weary bird ! in cheerless night,
The moss is cold, and sharp the sleet,
Too soon the fangs of winter smite
The summer sweet.

The stars are blind with sleety rain,
O silent bird, without a mate !
No song can blunt a lasting pain,
O desolate !

The sleet fell on the bough, and past,
And then the wind arose and fell ;
The rain-drops pattered thick and fast
On wood and dell.

O bird, that bosomed yon drenched bough,
And trembled till the storm was o'er ;
The rain may freeze, thou wilt not know,
O never more !

ON A WITHERED ROSE.

The roses, Love pilfered from you,
Were fresh with new-fallen dew ;
And full of a fragrance as sweet
As the lips of fond lovers that meet.

Love treasured them, till there is left
This relic alone of his theft—
Some leaves that are withered and dead,
As the leaves that in Autumn are shed.

Spring cannot restore their soft hue,
All fresh with new-fallen dew,
And full of a fragrance as sweet,
As the lips of fond lovers that meet.

For Time, with his charioted hours,
Has stolen the life of these flowers ;
And, reft of their beauty they lie,
Whilst the Seasons pass heedlessly by.

They die, yet no tear shall be shed,
For theirs no cold earthly bed ;
Though destined no more to awake,
Will not Love hold them dear for thy sake ?

Sonnets.

THE CORNISH LIONS.

A picture by Mr. BRETT, A.R.A.

Like couchant guardians of the neighbour land,
Seawards they gaze. The green waves roll below
Translucent, curved, save where they break and
flow,
Lengthening across a wonder of warm sand
Pierced with rich light. There, glimmering on the strand,
They linger in the calm. No loud winds blow
Wild fear amongst the loitering gulls. So slow
The white clouds rise, unmoved they seem to stand.
Long may ye gaze upon so still a sky,
And hear the solemn music of the sea
Pulsing deep anthems through the stormless air,
And on the waters may there never be
A form more woeful to the pitying eye
Than smoke of prosperous ship whose path is fair.

TO WALES.

Within thy wildly rich domain, is stored
A wealth of scene, fit matter for the song
Of laureate minstrel ; and to thee belong
The charms which make the varied earth adored

By men who reverence nature ; men who know
And love the beautiful ; whose hearts rejoice,
Upon the mountain heights, to hear the voice
Of God ! O, whilst the seasons come and go,
Thy dower forget not : be not thou enrolled
Amongst the nations that have lived in vain
With no undying chaplet crowned. Be bold
In lofty thought, nor Nature's lore disdain ;
So shall thy bards, like the great men of old,
Create what shall not pass like summer rain.

ON THE DECLARATION
OF THE
POPE'S DOGMA OF INFALLIBILITY.

Dark usurpation of divine free will,
Once more, in priestly domination drest,
Would'st thou with superstition bind man's breast,
And turn, from parching mouths, the silver rill
Of truth ? What, canst thou wither up and chill
Thoughts that are rooted through the living earth ;
Thoughts that are mightier than the giant birth
Whose sinewy hands uplifted hill on hill ?
Thou canst not ; thou art impotent and weak ;
Thy sable robes shroud not the sun's bright rays ;
Thy thunders thunder, but no lightning plays ;
Nor wilt thou learn 'tis Christ-like to be meek :
The world, whose bonds are loosed, no more obeys
The time-worn tones that in thy mandate speak.

KILSANOS.

Were thy green feet, Kilsanos, bubbled o'er
By lyric waters issuing from a fount
Bandusian, or the famed Thessalian mount,
Thou hadst been mighty in old verse ; the roar
Of wind that smites its wings against thy hoar
Rock-girdled brow, the shepherd boys who count
The bleating lambs upon thee, or dismount
Thy topmost crags, had grown a classic power.
But thou art silent in the haunts of song ;
Still as the musings of a thoughtful mind,
Though voiceful to the earnest inward ear ;
Yet, in the mid warmth of the ripened year,
Thou hast grown dearer to me, here reclined,
Than all the mountains that to Greece belong.

THE DREAM OF ST. HELENA.

A Picture by P. VERONESE.

No earthly vision hovers o'er that face ;
No dreams of love make riot there, or rise,
'Mid languor of sweet pain and amorous sighs,
Charioting the soul in an ignoble race.
She sleeps ; and, sleeping, breathes celestial grace ;
And in her dreams holds converse with the skies ;
For, lo ! two cherubs to her shadowed eyes
The all-conquering cross uplift in hushed embrace.

Immortal are the joys that hold in thrall
Her bodily motions, raptures which display
Hopes loftier than the hopes of pagan kind ;
For great thoughts thrill her, like a trumpet call
That heralds in the glory of a day
Whose light breaks cloudless on the new-born mind.

A MOUNTAIN TARN IN WINTER.

Black as the wild glance of a gipsy maid,
The wavelets tremble to a cloud-swept sky,
In changing lights and solitude. The high
Cliffs, sunset-smitten, pour a length'ning shade
To th' eastern shore, and loom—huge barriers made
By giant hands. A deep rill hurries by
The yellow herbage, to the boisterous cry
Of ice-winged breezes from no summer glade.
Meanwhile, the swift blood crimsons cheeks, that glow
Across the rolling sweep of treeless moor ;
And blue eyes light the inland solitude ;
And I, who ever loved the ebb and flow
Of Nature, love these lonely scenes the more
For those soft eyes and this sweet present mood.

WRITTEN IN THE VALE OF NEATH.

O'er yonder hill, now clad in summer green,
No tongue of wintry breezes bellows loud
To cliff and moorland waste: no shaping cloud
Rolls onward, like the ghost of what hath been
A living creature. Heather blooms between
The long coarse grass; and the great earth, endowed
By Nature's love, is beautiful—aye, proud
In this fair raiment as a new-made queen.
Yet I, more restless than my wont, still seek
In yon calm skies, or in my heart, repose,
And find it not. Haply the mornings break
Earthward 'midst sweet wild perfume of the rose,
And man is glad; but I, too sad or weak,
Have lost the mood that triumphs o'er life's woes.

A gentle beating of the heart;
What means it? Who can tell?
Shall love and hope no more depart?
Sweet thought! 'tis well.

O well it is that they are one;
O well that they are mine;
O now will rise a richer sun,
And fair stars shine.

Sweet thought, beat ever in the heart;
Flush to full ecstasy!
For love and hope, tho' friends depart,
Will never die.

THE CRY OF ISAIAH.

Who hath believed our report,
And plucked from his heart the despair
More keen than the tooth of the winds
When the hours are wintry and bare ?
Who hath believed our report,
And dared to gaze upward on high,
Or, led by the beacon of love,
Passed in through the veil of the sky ?
Who hath believed our report,
Nor lowered himself to the dust,
To grovel like swine in the mire
And level the God-like to lust ;
Nor bartered, for ignoble things,
The thought that ennobles and frees
From workings of abject desire,
That fret like the foaming of seas ?
Who hath believed our report,
And looked through the phantoms of earth,
Boldly, not blindly, upholding
The torch he received at his birth,
Which sparkles and burns thro' the shadows,
Storm-vested and fringed with dismay,
As morn, through the rack of dark vapours
That thundered the forehead of day ?
Who hath believed our report,
And turned to the anguish of man
Love, wide, universal, embracing,
All-folding as heaven's broad span,
Or fed, with the food of compassion,
Hopes foiled in the noble intent,
Or cheered with the dove-notes of pity
The brow that was haggard and bent ?

Who hath believed our report ?
The cry that was uttered in vain
From hearts overburdened, and girt
With the weight of a withering pain,
Now cries not in vain nor in gloom,
Nor rings on the frontlet of time,
Like clangour of iron-winged anguish,
Heard in a comfortless clime.

Who hath believed our report ?
A vision of what is to be,
Love brooding o'er earth and the sky,
And peace on the land and the sea ;
When vested in light, and arrayed
In the skirts of an ampler might,
The lamp-bearing virtues shall burn
Through the swift-fleeting shadows of night.

Who hath believed our report ?
'Tis no fire to enkindle the veins
Till the blood rushes swifter, and rages
A river of feverous pains ;
No thought to envenom the heart,
And place in the bosom a sting
To rend it, and tear it, convulsing
The haunt of each holiest thing.

No ; but the utterance of mercies,
The breaking of sword and of spear,
The voice as of Spring, when she cometh
To garland the opening year ;
'Mid life reappearing and sunshine
On lowland, on mountain, in grove,
The herald and parent of gladness,
Drenched deep in the music of love.

NEPTUNE GUARDS OUR NATIVE LAND.

Neptune guards our native land
From the tread of foreign foe ;
And the strong wave-lifting hands
Of his tempest-hurling bands,
Leagued invaders overthrow.

Britain is the favoured isle,
Where he keeps his proudest state ;
And he shields each rocky pile,
Where his murmurous waters smile,
Or his broad-winged surges break.

Patriots crowd her iron shore,
Noblest sons of noblest sires,
Ready, should invasion lower,
Or the storm of battle pour
Hissing in a thousand fires.

Time has decked her stately brow
With the crown of ample fame ;
Coward may she never know,
Nor her offspring fear to show
Dauntless fronts to armed shame.

Long may Britain take command,
Monarch of the spreading seas ;
With her tempest-hardened band
Proud and firmly may she stand,
Crowned with all her sovereignties !

PSYCHE.

O vested in garments of earth,
 And cradled with passion and care,
Thou weapest in desolate haunts,
 Thou mournest and yet thou art fair ;
Lo ! beauty is thine—not decay,
 And a glory burns over thy tears,
Sunlike, and rich with the splendours
 That beat on the desert of years.

Thou art sad and disconsolate now,
 In the shadows thy lustre has made,
Forgetful of song and of mirth,
 And the sweets of the meadow and glade ;
O rise from thy chamber of weeds,
 Queenlike as thou wert of old,
Not weeping, but mighty as sunrise
 When it clambers o'er mountain and wold.

Thine eyelids are moistened with tears,
 For the panting and burning of hearts,
All-fevered or languid and pained,
 Or smitten by merciless darts :
Time's current flows, brackish and swift,
 Past visions of sin and of shame ;
But thou art the life of our life,
 And bringest a life-giving flame.

Thou hearest the cry of the world,
 As it battles and quivers with pain,
Grinding the heart with despairings
 To the noise of a sorrowful strain ;
While passions and peace-killing furies,
 Like fire-clouds that frighten the night,
Ride on men's thoughts, and, wide wasting,
 Shake o'er them a feverous blight.

Men call thee a fountain of tears,
 A shadow of shadows that pass,
A bud of rich promise and odour
 O'erburd'ning the showerless grass ;
Or say thou art yoke-mate to sorrow,
 A wanderer in thickets forlorn ;
Beaten by tempests and tortured,
 A fugitive bleeding and torn.

But thou art not fickle or fleeting,
 No shadow or creature of time,
Beaten by tempests or servile
 To changes of season and clime ;
Thy beauty is not as the world's,
 The plaything of storm and decay,
Like the garlands of spring, and bright flowers
 That hang on the bosom of May.

All languor and phantoms of death
 Thou slayest when rising afar,
O'er silent and desolate darkness,
 Fire-pinioned and orb'd as a star ;
And thine is the green of the forest,
 The verdure of earth and delight :
And thine are the songs of the dawn,
 And mellower voices of night.

The world would be desert and wild,
And pallid the eye of the day,
And spring, like a frost-bitten isle,
On its bier would be haggard and gray;
The months would be squalid and blear,
And Nature would sicken and die,
And death and deep silence prevail,
If thou wert to wither or fly.

Shake from thy brow, then, its pallor,
And trample the cypress and sing;
Breaking the willow and plucking,
A rose from the rearward of spring;
With song not of Mænad or Bacchant,
Nay, mount to a loftier scope,
Give to the present a purpose,
And garland the future with hope.

A WILD BIRD SANG.

A wild bird sang on the top of a bough,
And the sky was dark and the tree-top bare;
But his eye looked not on the stream below
Through the drizzled air.

And the rain-drops fell with a moaning sound,
And the sky was dark and the tree-top bare,
And the bird's song rang like elf-notes wound
From a clarion rare.

And the morn rose bright o'er the eastern hill,
Though the sky was dark and the tree-top bare,
And the black clouds fled, and the song rang still
On the joyous air.

AT CATHEDINE.

Look! what a sylvan scene this tow'r unfolds,
Beyond the flow'ring lawn and orchard trees
That hold the space between us and the fields!
An amphitheatre of mountain heights,
And tree-fledged hills, turf-clad or heather-grown,
Girt with long stretches of ripe yellow corn;
And clover meadows, where the hand of eve
Shakes half the perfumes of the summertide;
And woods and hedgerows clasped with bryony
And woodbine fillets of most tender green,
O'erhung with gorgeous clusters of deep red
From thorn and mountain ash; and yonder, see,
Towards the right, how placidly the lake
We rowed upon this morning, lulls its waves
And plays around the solitary isle,
In murmurous ripples wand'ring here and there
Amidst the bending shadows of long reeds.
Yes, straight before us, climbs the wild steep ridge
Where grows the tallest bracken, and beneath,
Through shadowing hazels, creep the quiet lanes
That lead to one fair house of many a rose.

Come take this seat. I'll sketch in outline now
The portrait I have promised you so long.
There—talk? O! as you will; but do not turn,
You say great artists dive into the soul,
Present the real man; by line and shade
Show subtle depths of feeling, curbed desires
That struggled ere they fell, like giants prone,
Upon unseen arenas in the soul,
Leaving the mark of conflict visible
To men with eyes that see. Were those your words?
I have been posed myself with some such thoughts,
How far may man e'en dimly comprehend
What soars beyond him, or—and here's the point,—
How far an artist may depict a mind
In all ways greater than his own; how far
Must equal him he paints. To paint the great
In thought and action, men whose eager lives
Fill up the pages of Time's history,
Demands some greatness in the painter too.
'Tis so? But see, my task is almost done;
Another stroke—the outline is complete.
Next sitting we must choose a northern light.

TO WINTER.

Snow-vested mourner of the dying year,
Rustling thy garments through the naked woods,
Congealing with thy touch the pendent tear
That glistens o'er the mad, impetuous floods ;
I hear the winds, that rise at thy approach,
Sweep through the orchards with a wild delight,
Scattering the branches where thy wings encroach,
Frighting the red-breast from the leafless height ;
Bright holly decks thy frost-enchanted path,
And shining laurels gleam along thy snows ;
More bright-hued flowers luxuriant summer hath,
But none whose hue a gleam more welcome throws.
Lay gently on the earth thy snow-white cloak
Ere Spring's green tresses wander o'er the oak.

HARMONY AND BEAUTY.

Look on this glorious universe of life,
On all that fills the widest stretch of thought,
And learn that from the noise of seeming strife
A subtle-working harmony is wrought.
The moving streams and venerable trees,
The leafy foliage of the season's height,
The fruits and flowers and the spreading leas,
The sun and moon and stars of solemn night,
Are beautiful ; and in the mind of man
Are mirrored visions of this loveliness,
Of richer hues than gild the gorgeous span
Of rainbow floating bright and cumberless :
And linked from pole to pole, in endless chain,
Some forms of beauty ever live and reign.

A REVERIE OF YOUTH.

Shall the song be beauty's tresses,
Maidens' joys and soft caresses ;
Crested warriors' brave achievements,
Knights forlorn, and love's bereavements,
Doughty Mars, in casque and armour,
Breaking lance for secret amour :
Or brave-hearted Agamemnon,
Or Aurora's hymning Memnon :
Or King Arthur, dim as fable,
And the warriors of his table,
Helm'd and braced for some adventure
Bound with word of knight's indenture :
Or the exploits at Roncesvalles,
'Midst pale moonlight-haunted valleys :
Or, in laughter-tripping measures,
Bacchus and his clustered treasures—
Bacchus crowned with dewy flowers,
Plucked from ivy-mantled bowers,
And the satyrs round him dancing,
With red-bubbling must advancing,
Led by pinky-eyed Silenus,
Careless of the charms of Venus :
Or Idalia's green-leaved mazes,
Thick bestrewed with rose-lipped daisies,
Where the nightingale delighteth
When the moon her taper lighteth,
And the nymphs are hushed and sleeping,
And the night's soft tears are steeping
Hyacinths and meek primroses,
Violet beds and sweet musk-roses,

In rich odours, and faint showers
Perfumed with the breath of flowers ;
Or fair Danaë in her tower,
Fondled in a golden hour,
While Acrisius stands, unweeing
How a god, his wiles defeating,
Toys and wantons in his dwelling,
Moved by Cupid's old compelling :
Or the sea-sprung goddess virgin,
Like fair dreams of love that merge in
Ocean's winged and curling billows,
Circled round with cloudy pillows ;
Then in Zephyr's car transported,
By each amorous breeze escorted,
To green Cytherea's harbours,
Fringed with bloom of sheltering arbours,
Fanned and winnowed into sweetness,
By each Naiad's dove-like meekness :
Or the more than mortal pleasure,
Found in philosophic leisure,
Easeful thoughts and dreamless slumbers,
Soothed by wisdom's calmest numbers :
Or to mount to regions dire,
Where the clouds breathe living fire,
Where deploying dusky legions,
Grim as troops from Scythian regions,
Formed in squadron, square, and crescent,
Mars appals the simple peasant :
Or some antique-fashioned story,
Breathing full of ages hoary—
Huge Typhœus, hurled in wonder
'Neath the Cyclop's crooked thunder,
Seared and scorched by wingèd lightning,
Broad as sunrise o'er him brightening :

Or man's ways in some famed city,
Where the laughter-moving ditty,
Jostles with the ragged sigh
Of the outcast passing by ;
Where a myriad eyes are gladdened,
And a myriad hearts are saddened,
And the web of life is woven
Snapt, renewed, then quickly cloven,
And in turn again renewed,
Like the swift clouds many-hued ;
Where the thoughtful puzzling ever
Spend the time in vain endeavour
To resolve the soundless mysteries,
Prisoned in the soul's dim histories,
Whence we came and whither tending,
Wherefore here, and wherefore wending,
For our threescore years and ten,
Passion-tortured sons of men,
Blest with visions all too rare,
When we breathe diviner air,
Of a something nobler far
Than is home-bred on this star ?

HERMIONE.

The green of Spring is gone,
Hermione !
 And Autumn, past away,
 Has left the naked year
 To wintry winds a prey ;
 A weary pilgrim spent and lone,
 In solitary paths and drear,
 So grey the skies, so cold the heedless stars, appear.

O wintry is the day,
Hermione !
 And sunless is the hour
 When thou and I must part,
 And leave Love's roofless bower :
 The moon shows but a sickly ray,
 There is no pleasure in my heart,
 Ev'n life and nature seem to die save where thou art.

Once fonder hopes were mine,
Hermione !
 And visions, fancy-blest,
 Gave to each warmer thought
 An isle of tranquil rest ;
 Now hope and fancy ne'er combine,
 Nor are my dreams with bliss inwrought,
 The ample bliss that to the happy comes unsought.

I cannot hear the word,
 Hermione!
 More sweet than all songs sung;
 I cannot half declare
 The gloom about me hung;
 My thoughts are now a dreary horde,
 That darkens all the inner air
 With wide black wings and shapings of etern despair.

Where are the common joys,
 Hermione!
 That give to life its sweet?
 The dreams of blissful peace,
 That brood o'er love's chaste seat?
 Behold a chilling blight destroys
 The blossoms of all future ease,
 Like brackish winds that smite the buds of tender trees.

Though tears fill not mine eye,
 Hermione!
 I feel the deeper smart,
 A fierce and biting pain
 That gnaweth at the heart:
 I know my love can never die,
 Though I may live and love in vain,
 Though I may fade and wither to thy cold disdain.

I would not thou should'st grieve,
 Hermione!
 Or feel the woe I feel,
 Or know how cold despair
 Can make the heart like steel;
 Nay, never may blind sorrow weave
 A chaplet of harsh thorny care
 To bind, as with a cruel wreath, thy brow and hair.

A VAIN FAREWELL.

“Go, foolish muse,” I said, “and haste away;
Dream not of conquest where thy power is spurned
And nerveless, but depart!” and then I turned
My mind to other things, and thought alway
And evermore, to rid me of this sway.

Regretfully she went, on outspread wings,
In speedier passage than the bird that sings,
Past moor and mountain, to the opening day.

“No life can be,” I cried, “where thou art not.”
So thick a gloom fell on the natural world,
Saddening the day the muse went forth and fled:
She turned again upon that cry, and brought
Bright hopes and pleasant dreams, and soon unfurled
Youth’s sunshine o’er the hours else grey and dead.

AD MUSAM.

I.

As one who pants for what he loveth most,
Hungereth to see the unfruitful moments fly,
Thinking the time forlorn—too poor to boast
The meagre pleasures of uncertainty;

So have I longed for thee, with ebb and flow
Of feelings tremulous with alien fear ;
Sometimes despairing, lest the crimson glow
Of burgeoned hopes should turn to fruitage sere ;
Or groped with Memory through her quiet caves
For solace, in the volume of the past ;
But there huge shadows, 'thwart the sombre waves,
Thronged thick as leaves before October's blast :
Now all is changed, the shadows and despair
Fade like a vapour in hot July's air.

II.

Blest be the hour, that leads me to the place
Where thou dost sit, in silent thoughtfulness,
Shaping sweet phantasies, that interlace
Expressive motions on thy brow, and bless
The gazer till his heart grows one with thine ;
O face, subdued and gentle ! can distress
E'er come about thee, as the ivy-twine
That scarfs the doddered oak, or bitterness
E'er nestle in the breast of one so fair ?
Say, dost thou sorrow for the vanished time
I squandered like a spendthrift, without care,
Giving to dross, what might have been sublime ?
Then grieve no more that time doth vainly flee,
My hours are thine ; I give them all to thee.

III.

O sweet and sovran balm of poesy !
O tender healer of our human smarts !
O comfortable herald to lone hearts,
When cares or anguish bite relentlessly !

This night came Sorrow to my bed, and told
A mournful tale, of melancholy ring,
Blackening the promise of a tardy spring
With many a scrap of instance worn and old.
I turned, and looked into her lank drawn face,
And spake of all the treasure thou dost bring,
Richer than orient gems, more rare than gold
Or sceptred power that reigns in highest place ;
Thereat she fled, like bird on speedy wing,
Shuddering along a summit bleak and cold.

IV.

And thou, O Muse, art touched with just disdain
That purpose quivers like a breaking wave,
Whose crest mounts upwards to the sky in vain,
And then is whelmed within a restless grave.
O think how hard it is to strive, yet know
The wished-for shore is slipping still away ;
While damp winds smite, and reckless breakers flow,
Chilling the swimmer with benumbing spray :
Then wilt thou know why purpose flags and fails,
With lessening efforts of still-dying might,
Furling so soon its late-distended sails ;
As ships that float into a stormy night,
Where muffling clouds, and angry shadows, sweep
Like black-winged monsters o'er the troubled deep.

V.

Even as the sullen gloom of winter's sky
Is cheered by planetary orb and star,
That through the night winds pour on worlds afar
Resplendent rays of mingling brilliancy ;

So shines on after-times in stream as bright
The tideless effluence of high poesy,
Gracing the backward gaze of memory
With welcome beams of broad empyrean light.
And mighty they, the bards of old, who live
But die not—clothed with immortality ;
Who hover in our thoughts like pleasant dream,
Or music, or whatever else doth give
Sweet greeting, as we sail adown the stream
Whose waves roll onward to eternity.

VI.

The silent years are passing, one by one,
Away into the gloom where eyes see not ;
The lusty seasons fail, as doth the sun
Who burns the world and makes the mid-day hot ;
And with the years and seasons fades away
Full many a moulded scheme or subtle plan
Wrought by ambition in his youthful day,
As if to show how weak the will of man.
The years may pass away, and seasons fail,
And change will prey upon the heart of things,
Turning to weakness what was stout and hale,
Like sickness or despair, where no hope clings ;
But thou art ever one, and aye the same,
Nor time, nor change, nor death, can dim thy fame.

WELLINGTON AT WALMER.

The dying sunlight smites the clouds, and shakes
 Its glory on the waves beneath, in flakes
 Of crimson fire, and yonder casement whence
 An hour ago I watched the storm roll dense
 Glows warm once more.

To-day some inner grief
 Had touched me, that my years were drawing nigh
 Their close. 'Twas human weakness, but the sigh,
 The thought's sad voice, was soon repressed, and then
 I mused, "Thou art but one of mortal men
 In God's own season born upon the earth—
 Though death grows in them from the hour of birth—
 To work his purpose for the commonweal."
 And, lo! the touch of weakness past, I feel
 As one should feel whose work is done.

Yon change
 From storm to calm is like the mind's swift range
 From turbid thought to this soft-bosomed rest,
 That fills me; and, as from some mountain crest
 That proudly rises o'er the spreading plains
 Around its base, the wearied climber gains
 Far vision to the wide horizon's verge,
 Where earth, or sea, and sky together merge
 In one dim scene, e'en so my many years
 Before me roll.

The far-off prospect nears:
 Again I stand upon a lonely waste
 In distant Ind, e'en where, though now defaced,
 Her shrines and temples, minarets and towers,
 Are rich and beautiful.

The sightless hours
Have shed their malice, yet how beautiful
The scene! 'Tis midnight—lo! serene and full,
The orbèd moon uprisen like a globe
Of purest light. O'er earth and sky, a robe
Of silvery sheen floats glimmering; and the vast
Broad-fronted shapes of days unknown seem cast
In sculptured sleep. Columns, and architraves
Of ruined fanes, tall minarets, dim caves,
And dark cognitions of a primal race,
Are bathed in spiritual rays. The grace
Of an ethereal beauty reigns; and high
O'erhead, the deep and purple-coloured sky
Lies slumbering peacefully, and golden fires
Of star and planet burn, as o'er the sires
Of many a fallen race they burned, undimmed,
Unquenchable.

To dwell on rapture hymned
Within the mind's still haunts the hour denied,
And tumult that awoke, on every side,
All-armed. For mine no cloistered task to muse
On fallen dynasties, or changing hues
Of Indian skies; but onward to advance
Against the arms of India and of France
And shatter them. The martial shout that rang
From swart Mahratta hosts, the angry clang
Of cymbals and the drum's deep roll, the roar
Of war, stirred furious noise till heroes bore
Our flag from victory to victory,
And made the Gallic eagle droop, and flee,
From all the land, and bruised, and broke, the power
Of India at Assaye.

'Twas done. Meantime,
Another Attila had gained his prime,

And smitten Europe with a heavy hand
 And laid her prostrate. North and south, his band
 Swept conquering, and the people, tempest-scourged,
 Tossed wildly to and fro, and bent and surged,
 Like osier twigs that wrestle with a wind
 In gusty March. The mightiest nations pined
 Beneath his hand. And from the Baltic coast
 To Italy, and where the Spanish host
 Kept feeble guard on hill and plain, the cry
 Was for deliverance, and the patriot's sigh
 For freedom lost. Then shone the glorious star
 Of this fair isle again,—when, from afar,
 Iberia prayed her aid, and called her might
 Across the ever-foaming seas, to fight
 For liberty.

E'en thus my memory
 Dwells on the tumult and the misery
 Of the long years that followed; on the shout
 Of furious victors, when dismay and rout
 Became the portion of our foes.

How strong
 Each stubborn linesman, as he faced the throng
 That cheered Massena, or the brave Junot,
 Or fiery Soult or Marmont, with the glow
 Of native bravery that never yields
 The victory!

So battles raged and fields
 Ran red with blood from the first trumpet blast
 At Roliça, and ceased not till the last
 Loud note blared proudly, when the northern gate
 Was closed upon the enemy, who late
 Within the kingly palaces of Spain
 Held sway.

The nations longed, but longed in vain,
To rest. For as a swimmer in the sea
Strains every nerve, in his extremity,
To gain the shore that glimmers on the wave,
Or in the clouds, so he who madly brave
Had thundered with his legions at the heart
Of Muscovy, and made her people smart,
Again, remorseless, sought through seas of blood
The fleeting shore of empire. Britain stood
Between him and that shore, which vanished then
As mist or cloud-built mirage from the ken
Of wandering mariners.

And so he fell ;
The mighty warrior ! and the iron spell
That bound the nations till they writhed and groaned,
As in a tyrant dream, all fiery-zoned,
Was broken. And as frightened birds return
To leafy grove or bower, for which they yearn
In absence from their young, so Peace came back
And dwelt among the nations. But the wrack,
Of that fierce strife was with them long.

Nor slight
The task of statesmen when the after-flight
Of revolutionary thought bore fruit ;
And earnest-minded men began to bruit
The watchwords of Democracy, and claim
For man, as man, a nobler place, a name
Within the state.

Aye me ! I live again
The perilous times, when with a grievous pain
This mighty nation hungered for reform
And change with eager shout, when blood grew warm
And dangerous. The wisdom of the past
Sufficed for me, and where it jarred or clashed'

With newer thoughts (that held the multitude
And quickened them, and made the blunt and rude
Grow eloquent for larger liberty,)
I held it more than idle phantasy ;
And scorned the newer fire that like the glare
Of marsh-fed vapours glimmered in the air
Deceitfully. I trod the ancient ways
And scorned the cry that seemed the cunning phrase
Of agitation ; but ere long I saw,
Dimly, that progress marks the higher law
Of civic life ; and duty made me bend
Where else I had been stern.

Erewhile, the end
Of statesmanship, I held, was to restrain
With steady hand, and never-yielding rein,
All faction, and all movements in the state
That grew to head, and threatened, soon or late,
To change th' established order ; next, to mould
The people to the laws approved of old,
And sanctioned by the state ; and so to check
Restless disorder, and to save from wreck,
By popular violence and brute force,
The public life. But through the turbid course
Of many a stream of discontent that dashed
Against the vessel of the state, and lashed
The bulwarks, have I passed, and thereby knew
'Twas wise to take heed of the common view
And of the voice that rings straight from the heart
Of common folk, and, without aid of art,
Speaks in its bitterness.

One April morn
I well remember. Purpose, Titan-born,
Had ripened in the land and almost grown
To popular action. For the seed late sown

Of liberty, aye taking firmer hold
With shoot and root unseen, had made men bold ;
And England throbb'd, through all her arteries,
With passionate longings; with hopes that seize
And work into the nation's will. Awhile
Fear held me lest by blinding wrath, or guile,
O'ercome, the multitude should give loose play
To desperate passions and no more obey
The rulers of the land.

The bitter hour
Has passed away, and Britain, like a tower
Amid calm waters, when the summer glow
Is beautiful, and light-winged Zephyrs blow
From dell and woodland, seems the home of peace
And rest, amidst the tributary seas
That bathe her shores.

I rest. The sun sinks down
The western sky, and scarce-seen planets crown
The bluer height. In the still-darkening hours,
A silence steals o'er nature; and the flowers
About the walks I loved, with drooping head,
Await the moon. By some new influence led,
My thoughts rush swiftly with the setting sun
Far from the East, and leave the vapours dun
And dark, and see another morning break
Upon another world, clear as a crystal lake
'Neath cloudless skies. My heart, so faint its beat,
Gives presage that this life with swiftest feet
Is flying hence. This coming night may be my last,
My work is done, my day of toil is past.

TO FANCY.

Thou whose eyes are full of joy,
Blest with true ethereal fire,
Like the amorous-wingèd boy,
Maids and youths thou dost inspire.
Now, I see thy vocal car,
Glist'ring bright as wand'ring star,
Drawn by swans and snowy doves,
White as those fair Venus loves;
While, before, an eagle soars
To heaven's azure-girdled doors.
Clouds of odours wreath thee round,
Such as spurn our niggard ground,
And the zone that binds thy hair
Shoots a lustre through the air,
Tinged with glow of rubies bright,
Warmer-hued than eastern light,
Or the crimson eye of Mars
Trenched amid the golden stars.
Now my spirit mounts, and glows,
Moved by thine immortal throes,
And, floating with thy starry train,
Would sweep o'er mountain, sea, and plain,
O'er the woody Cyclades,
Bosomed in the Ægean seas,
And o'er scenes old poets loved,
Ere to happier isles removed.

Nurse and fount of poesy!
Thou canst sail o'er land and sea,
Through the vaulted heaven's treasures,
Wafted with seraphic measures

Lisp'd by music's soothest tongue,
And the sweet-mouthed smiling throng
Handmaids of the Muses nine,
Circling in the wild moonshine—
What delights before mine eye
Sweep in forms of beauty by!

THE DRAMA.

Poor things content us in these latter days ;
Things fashioned in no poet's realm divine
Of lofty inspiration. We entwine
A garland of coarse weeds, and vaunt and praise
Our puny art, as if its feeble rays
Glowed like a planet's in a cloudless sign
Of heaven, when clear frost makes the zodiac shine
Through the blue ether, with a golden blaze.
Upon our drooping stage, the kindling fire
Of genius burns but rarely. Ill-exchanged
Is nature's subtle play for rich attire
And tinsel furnishings correctly ranged ;
The simple grandeur of a noble thought
Excels the costliest scene that wealth e'er bought.

AN ODE TO THE MUSES

ON THE APPROACH OF SPRING.

O ye Pierian sisters, ye who round
The topmost grove of Helicon with dance
And vocal song, trip o'er the ground,
While Cynthia's steeds advance
Cleaving the sky with silver-mailed hoofs ;
Breathe on your reedy pipes, breathe soothest strains,
That die upon the air in rich melodious pains ;
Lo ! Spring's green banner crowns your forest roofs.
Away with notes of woe !
Bid Lydian airs in jocund measure flow,
And let your zones hang careless in the wind ;
Wreath coronals of budded eglantine,
And, round your temples, bind
The pensive flowers, wild and sweet,
That fringe some brook's retreat,
And steep in scent the day's decline.
Together join and arm in arm entwine,
And gaily move your grass-green sandalled feet :
Let Pan be near with all his sylvan crew,
And Echo tuning sweet :
For see, the moon's bright congregated dews,
Aurora's tears for starred Orion,
Gleam on the myrtles, gleam with richer hues,
Touched by the golden wand of Hyperion.

O ye loose-vested Muses, whose domains
Encompass earth, seas, ocean, and the sky,
The haunts of gods, and flowery-cinctured plains,
The hidden shades, and whatsoe'er we spy

Of burning spheres, stars, moons, and planets round,
From this small penfold of dull ground ;
Hark, how the fountains of new melodies
Shower down in liquid notes from sky and trees ;
Whilst dappled copses burgeon out
And shake, to many a thrush's singing bout.
O sing, ye Muses, sing,
Who is not fain to welcome Spring ?
See, see, the wakened Spring draws nigh, and sweeps
With dewy garments down the scented meads.
Favonius plays around her face
Aglow with softened bloom of maiden's blushing
 grace ;
And, lo, th' attendant queen no longer sleeps,
Whilst Zephyrus is bustling 'mid the reeds !
Each blithesome flower uplifts a brimming lip
Glistening with dew, as though 'twere wine
Of luscious taste, that Spring may sip
Beneath the dayspring's mist-consuming fire ;
While violet-posied nymphs entwine
Bud garlands, hyacinths inwoven bright
With moist-blown flowers, red, and yellow, and white,
And warm ranunculus, and green sweet-briar
About her smooth young brow :
O sing, ye Muses, sing ; it is not Winter now.
Behold, the skies are blithe and gay,
For all the garnered suns to come ;
And, round the hives, the brown bees hum.
The joys of life are many and sweet
Ere Autumn stamps with sunburnt feet ;
Many and sweet the joys, I ween,
Ere the lush grass shall lose its hue of green.
Chant now no dirge of hopes that fade and pass away.
 Who babbles in the dawn of Spring
Of hopes and visions unfulfilled ?

Ye stand averted in a ring ;
 Nor touch my lips with living fire.
 My tongue is weak, and nowise skilled
 To sing to so sweet-toned a lyre.
 Yet sing, ye Muses, sing !
 My years, too, now are at their Spring ;
 And I, like one whom Hope beguiles,
 Will cherish seldom-given smiles.
 I see you wave your hands uplift ;
 I hear your song through yon green rift :
 O sing, ye Muses, dance and sing,
 Old Winter now is dead as any ice-cold thing.

A HYMN.

O thou who crown'st heaven's golden-ridgèd steep,
 'Midst angel symphonies and harmonies divine ;
 Now whilst thy fiery planets shine,
 And the fixed stars their measured order keep,
 While the pale moon her tresses wan bedews
 In ocean's bosom labouring deep :
 Some noble thought or impulse high infuse,
 Meet to present in solemn silence mute
 Before the threshold bright of heaven's wide-ported gate ;
 What mean and mortal is, transmute,
 With touch so rare and chaste that time, and envious fate,
 No more may change, nor sin obliterate :
 So shall my soul's rapt ear
 Immortal strains of liquid music drink,
 More deep and low than orbèd sphere
 In the azure-winged realms of lustrous air may link.

THE POET TO THE MUSE.

Goddess! if thy purer fire
Human breast may yet inspire,
Let my soul with passion glow,
Warmed and moved with dulcet flow
Of celestial harmony:
And with thoughts that scale the sky
In big-hearted enterprise,
Where immortal poets rise,
High above the circling spheres,
High above the tread of years;
And to lazy-thoughted men
Mighty mysteries unpen.
Not for meed of quick-spent fame
May I breathe thy sacred name,
But as trusted with a gem
From thine own bright diadem,
Lent to shed a chastened light
O'er a brow in meekness dight:
Hear and answer if thy fire
Human breast may yet inspire.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.



REGINALD—A LORD MARCHER.

SIR IVOR, }
SIR PHILIP, } WELSH CHIEFTAINS.

VAYNOR—LORD OF VAYNOR.

TUDOR—SIR IVOR'S NEPHEW.

GOMER—SIR PHILIP'S SON.

SNAPPER, }
BOTTLES, }
QUICKSTEP, } OUTLAWS.

REYNOLD—SIR IVOR'S STEWARD.

DAVY.

EVAN.

REES.

SHENKIN.

LADY BLANCHE—SIR IVOR'S WIFE.

NEST—SIR IVOR'S DAUGHTER.

GWENDOLENE—SIR PHILIP'S DAUGHTER.

GUINEVERE—AN ORPHAN.

JOAN—NEST'S WAITING-WOMAN.

LORDS, BARDS, MUSICIANS, PEASANTS, SERVANTS, SOLDIERS
AND OUTLAWS.



SCENE—*South Wales.*

TIME—*Reign of Edward III.*

A FAIR REWARD.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Room in VAYNOR'S House.*

VAYNOR *alone.*

Vaynor. The tree that's newly rooted in the earth
May sooner hope to clamber up to heaven
With proud aspiring boughs, that slowly climb
Beneath the clouds, and wither in the winter gloom,
Than I to touch the heart of Gwendolene
With love. Are there no scheming knaves, who bend
Fair women to their will, and by a glance,
Nay, by their very imperfections, reap
More bounteous fruits of love than men whose souls
Are steeped in tenderness, who stand the top
And crown of merit in their proper art?
Such knaves in love! Pooh! 'Tis a common thing
To be in love, but commoner to feign
To be so, when there's something more at stake
Than that cheap bliss which wakes a poet's song—
As riches, honours, competence, respect,
Position, and the rest. This poor-house Love,
Shuts close his eyes, nor looks for fortune's smiles.
Ho, there! boy, boy!

[*Enter Page.*]

Where is Sir Philip, boy?

Page. In the courtyard with the Lady Gwendolene.

Vayn. Go : tell him I would speak with him.

O Love! [*Exit Page.*]

Thou finger-post to penury! We part
 At these cross-roads. One leads to Guinevere,
 To poverty, disgrace at Court, cold looks
 From men in power. The other leads me straight
 To many a hundred acres of fat land,
 Court-favoured knightly friends and Gwendolene.
 O mewling, puling, God of wasting sighs!
 How many are there, Love, who will not barter
 Thy unrich smiles for jewelled ugliness?
 Why should not I for beauty, wealth, and grace?
 Men, women, all are one in this—that gold
 Sucks out affection, as a salt sucks stains,
 Or makes a seeming-tender passion grow
 Into the semblance of most pure desire.
 All! No; she loved me purely. Let it be.
 'Tis foolishness to babble so, to muse
 As I have done; and yet 'tis exercise
 To trifle with the outward forms of love,
 To practise pretty speeches by the hour,
 And store them for occasions ripe. Sham fights
 Make ready soldiers. Ah! Sir Philip comes;
 Now for the lover's tongue—delusions sweet.

[*Enter SIR PHILIP.*]

Sir Philip! Sir, to you I would unfold
 A matter that must out—will I, nill I—
 I love your daughter and would seek her hand
 In honorable form.

Sir Philip. No better lot
 A maiden need desire, than to be loved
 By one whose virtues overtop the praise
 Outblazoned by the public tongue. Six years
 Have passed since her dear mother died, and she

Has been to me a solace in my grief
E'er since. 'Tis sudden, Vaynor, yet from you
I'll not withhold my daughter. Win her heart.
Although I'm loth to lose her from my side. •
Believe me, you will find no obstacle
In me.

Vayn. May I prove worthy of her love.

Sir Ph. Who doubts it, sir?

[*Enter a Servant.*]

Servant. The champion and the victors in the games
Are eager to address their thanks to you,
My Lord, for this day's pastime.

Vayn. Bid them enter. [*Exit Servant.*]

Our noisy combats cannot entertain
A maid. When next you bring sweet Gwendolene
To these sheep-pasturing hills, we shall have sport
More pleasant to her years and sex.

Sir Ph. Meantime,
You'll come and hunt the boar with us, and learn
How much we love your love.

Vayn. And she shall learn
To trust her to the depth of my affection.
I am no fashionable gallant, I,
Or trifling lady-killer.

Sir Ph. Trust me, sir;
She's far too wisely schooled to be entrapped
By simpering artful toys, by girlish men,
Who rival women with their scented hair,
Their jewelled dainty hands, and soft sleek skins,
Preserved from sun and storm. Your visitors!

[*Enter Champion, Victors, and Peasants.*]

Champion. The west'ring sun bids us make timely
haste,
Each to our several homes among the hills
Or sloping uplands. Ere we go, we all

Would tender thanks for hospitality,
 And for your presence, that inspirited
 Each combatant to show his greatest skill,
 Though I should scarce say so.

Vayn. I thank you all ;
 This hardy exercise preserves the race,
 And makes us strong for peace or war. I hope
 For many years to be amongst you here,
 And at these sports to see our strong-limbed youth,
 Whose days are passed in peaceful offices
 And pastoral toils, in watching sheep upon
 The windy moors, or else in garnering
 The oft uncertain crop, that hardly ripens
 In the still-shortening days, give good example,
 E'en to the soldiery.

Omnes. Hurrah ! hurrah !
 Long live the Lord of Vaynor.

[*Exeunt* Champion, Victors and Peasants.]

Sir Ph. We'll meet again. So, Vaynor, fare you well.

Vayn. Nay. I attend you, sir. [*Aside.*] Now
 Guinevere,
 A shadow in the memory—no more.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*An Open Space in a Forest.*

TUDOR and GWENDOLENE.

Gwendolene. It is the fashion of love's happiness
 To wrap the world around us in such bliss,
 That prosperous lovers readily believe
 There is more pleasure in the world than pain ;
 More joy than sorrowing, more love than hate ;
 Do you believe it, Tudor ?

Tudor. From my heart.
Pain, sorrow, hate, affliction, and the sum
Of that large care, which pens mortality,
From the dumb, anxious cradle to the grave;
Knots, crosses, twists in life, the crowd of woes,
The tangles, curses multitudinous;
Aye, all the miseries from youth to age,
Are balanced by the throng of blessed things,
That yield unnumbered hours of happiness
To sometimes too forlorn humanity,
Do you believe it, Gwendolene?

Gwen. O yes,
I love the thoughts that make me glad.

Tud. And I.
Look how the year is mellowing to its prime!
This morn there is a glory in the air;
A something more divine, and rapturous
Than all the glories of the brightest day,
That startles the fleet steeds of night, and spreads
A rosy glamour o'er the eastern wave,
Or floods yon mountain battlements with fire
To music from a world of wingèd song.
How Nature congratulates our new-pledged vows!
The winds have voices, love; the moving air
Brings perfumes on its cheek-caressing wings;
The flowers breathe incense to the shrine, where I,
A changeless worshipper, would ever kneel;
And every bird,
Leaf-cloistered amid green, melodious boughs,
That shower down the grass-grown, dewy aisles
A stream of soft, and ever-shifting light,
Is rich in benisons. Such happiness
Is mine, there is no sorrow in the world;
So large the characters that joy has stamped

Upon my heart, there is no room for aught
Beside. [*Pauses.*] You do not speak!

Gwen. Forgive me, dear.
The bliss of one who wakes in some new world
Of lovely, silence-working thought is mine.
This is no dream of night-fulfilling hours,
That folds its rainbow-wings, and dies at dawn;
No splendour fading on the summer sky
Into a joyless, mocking nothingness,
But such a draught of true felicity,
Drawn from the purest wells of paradise,
As turns all earthly bitter into sweet.

Tud. And we are dwellers in a paradise!
'Tis an enchanted spot where music falls
On our blest ears alone,
And fruit and blossom grow, invisible
To all but us, sweet Gwendolene!

Gwen. To all!
'Tis hard it must be so! Sir Philip's voice
Would startle this sweet dream.

Tud. Sir Philip's, why?
Gwen. Sir Ivor's, too. Have you not heard
The babbled rumour? Sweetheart, heed it not.

Tud. O rumours dull the eye of happiness.
How noble must your heart be, Gwendolene,
That shaped no evil thoughts of Tudor, when
You heard this false report.

Gwen. This false report!
Tud. 'Tis false, believe me. By my love I swear,
My cousin Nest is but my cousin still,
My second sister.

Gwen. Your cousin, Nest! strange!
Tud. Sir Ivor, who has been a sire to me,
No niggard uncle, often spoke of Nest

As one who, joined with me, should hold his lands
When he was gone, and so loose gossips blabbed
Their whispered nothings and their tattling tales
In the too credulous ear ; the hearer's brow
Went up, and, with a sapient nod, he swore
It was affiance—so the rumour spread.

Gwen. Oh, I have seen too deep into your heart
To heed the gossip-mongers.

[*Shouting and holloing heard.*]

Tud. The hunters draw this way. Come, let us
shroud

Behind this leafy clump until they pass.

[*SIR IVOR, GOMER, and Attendants pass by, followed
by SIR PHILIP and VAYNOR.*]

Sir Ph. This marriage may be solemnized at once.
You are not like a thriftless pair, whose hopes
Are all their fortune, and whose wedlock shows
The barrenness of hope.

Vayn. In that we are
Most fortunate, Sir Philip ; but what says
Your daughter, Gwendolene ?

Sir Ph. O, she will take
The husband I provide.

Tud. [*aside*]. Do you hear that ?

Gwen. [*aside*]. This is the tale of which I spoke ; but
list.

Vayn. She treats me with some scorn.

Sir Ph. Tush ! maiden coyness.
I would not have her show a boisterous haste
To leave her father's house. 'Twas ever so,
The privilege of woman is t' affect
Distaste for what delights them most. You will
Displease her most by falling in the rear
Of your intent. Therefore urge on your suit.

Tud. [*aside*]. This is a lesson in the art of love,
That comes too late for practice.

Gwen. [*aside*]. Let him learn
The scholar has not rightly conned the rule
Who overlooks th' exception.

[*Holloing heard in the distance. Exeunt VAYNOR
and SIR PHILIP.*]

Tud. Coxcomb Vaynor!

Gwen. Faithless, faithless man!
There is a word will quench this sudden flame,
Or turn it quite away;—and yet I fear
My father.

[*Enter REES.*]

Rees. I'll search no more.

Tud. Whom seek you?

Rees. Why, sir, my mistress. Sir Philip and his
guests are waiting her in a fine tantram. Tell her so if
you meet her. I'll go no further.

Gwen. We must be gone. [*Exit.*
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*A Room in SIR IVOR'S House.*

[*Enter SIR IVOR and REYNOLD.*]

Reynold. A messenger from Reginald, Lord Marcher,
Seeks instant audience with you, sir: he waits
Without.

Sir Ivor. His news is something of great weight.
Lord Reginald is not a man to lend
A false importance to a trivial thing.
Bid him come in. [*Exit REYNOLD.*

[*Enter Messenger.*]

How fares Lord Reginald?
Messenger. Sir Ivor, well. He bade me with all speed

Post o'er the intervening ground, and hand
This letter to you, sir, where'er you were,

[*Hands letter to Sir IVOR.*]

And then to hasten back with your reply.

Sir Ivor. This may require some thought. Reynold!
Reynold!

[*Enter REYNOLD.*]

Direct him to the kitchen—then return

[*Exeunt REYNOLD and Messenger.*]

Good news, I hope.

[*Breaks the seal and reads.*]

“An opportunity has arisen whereby I may serve you in the matter of your late request. At our last meeting you spoke of your nephew Tudor, and of your desire to place him with me when next I took the field. I promised willingly, knowing his good qualities and esteeming them the proper stuff from which good soldiers are moulded. I now redeem my promise. The King has summoned me to France. Let Tudor join me to-morrow, and he may win his spurs in the French war. The business is urgent; therefore delay not your reply, but send it by the bearer of this.”

This letter is most opportune.

[*Re-enter REYNOLD.*]

Reynold,

You know my thoughts about this English wave,
That ever flowed toward the west, and whelmed
Us in its tide.

[*Enter GWENDOLENE unobserved.*]

Rey. I oft have heard you say,
The torrent, fed by eastern seas, had grown
Too strong for our maimed hands to beat it back;
And that the Welsh, who have no feeders whence
To draw new strength, no teeming womb beyond
The moaning seas, to yield a ceaseless crowd
Of full-armed men to fill their gaping ranks,
As these thick-coming English had, should try
To hold their lands in amity and peace,

And sheathe the sword. Aye, that these stinging bees
Had swarmed our hive, and could not be dislodged;
So that 'twere better to make terms with them,
Than struggle longer for the mastery,
And lose our honey too.

Sir Ivor. To that effect.

But there are fiery spirits now among us,
Who groan, in secret, at our dwindling might,
And pray that soon rebellious fires may flash
Again, from hill to hill, whilst we have strength
To take the field. May better counsel reign.
Rebellion will but waste our youth and land.
'Twere better we became one mighty race
From sea to sea, conquered and conqueror,
Than waste our blood in internecine brawls,
And fierce tumultuous war. Our lords and princelings,
Like a close squeeze of sand, are held together
But by compelling and external force,
Which gone, all union goes, and government
Doth crumble, like a ball of dust discharged
Into the air.

Rey. 'Tis so.

Sir Ivor. Hence bickerings
And petty jealousies, in times of peace,
Use up our strength. The wiser of our race
Exchange these mountains for a wider sphere
Where they may prove their valour, as in France,
Beneath the banner of the English king!
I'd gladly see our Tudor do the same,
For he has mettle, and in all the games,
That test the eye and muscle, he is one
Among the first. And now Lord Reginald
Gives him good opportunity to win
His spurs in France. There is no time to spend

Deliberating on the pros and cons ;
I am resolved that he shall to the war. [*Exit GWEN.*

[*Enter TUDOR.*]

Tud. Good day, Sir Ivor.

Sir Ivor. Here's the very man.

Tudor, I was about to send for you,
Upon a matter which I have at heart.
Lord Reginald, who has, in sundry ways,
Shown his regard for you and for my house,
Now crowns his previous favours, for to-morrow,
So soon ! you may take service in the train
Of young adventurous spirits, whom he bears
To France, and there renown yourself and win
Your spurs. What say you ?

Tud. Why, that I give thanks
To fortune for this gift ; it tallies well
With my desires.

Sir Ivor. There spoke a gallant youth !
There was a time—'twas not so long ago—
When I could wish no better fate than this
To teach these English lords, that we of Wales,
Who live sequestered 'mid our homely hills,
Have all the warlike and impetuous might
That made our fathers' shout a thing of dread
Beyond the borderland, and shook the king
Upon his throne. A messenger awaits
Your answer. Reynold, come.

[*Exeunt SIR IVOR and REYNOLD.*]

Tud. Farewell awhile,
Farewell awhile to all the sylvan scenes, the glades
And woodland groves where I have lived and loved.
There'll be no lack of glades and groves in France ;
I know there cannot be another maid
So fair, so beautiful, as Gwendolene.
May I be worthier love, though never worth

The richness of affection that she pours
As lavishly as Indian suns their light,
When I have equalled these brave English youths
In feats of arms upon the battlefield.

[*Re-enter GWENDOLENE.*]

Gwen. God guard you, Tudor. Think of me, some-
times.

No day, no hour, will pass but I shall think
Of you.

Tud. Sweet Gwendolene, the hours will drag
With halting feet until we meet again.
My only solace will be those dear hours
We spent in honeyed converse. One long month
And we shall meet again. One long, long month!
When shall I e'er forget you, love? by day,
By night, you're beating at my heart.

Gwen. Hush! hark!
I hear approaching footsteps, Tudor, quick!
Farewell, farewell, send me swift news of you,
Good-bye.

Tud. By any ship that sails from France.
Good-bye, till I return, good-bye.

[*Exit GWENDOLENE.*]

[*Enter SIR IVOR, GOMER, NEST, REYNOLD, and
Attendants.*]

Sir Ivor. Haste Tudor, haste! there's not an hour
to lose

In preparation; Gomer, would that you
Went with him to the war.

Tud. I should rejoice.

Gomer. I love you, Tudor, from my very heart.
You sail to-morrow?

Sir Ivor. Gomer answer me.

Gomer. I cannot join this expedition, sir,

Or serve beneath this English lord. The why
And wherefore I'll relate. Ten years ago
I was a page about the English Court,
And there encountered many a well-born youth
Who plumed himself upon his father's name,
Or caught reflected glory from his deeds.
One day an empty-headed stripling, dressed
In all the gew-gaws of the fashion there,
Swelled up to me with a long strut of pride,
And swore, with lisping, balanced oaths, that Wales,
A little barren tract beyond the breath
Of fashion, could not show a name that grew
Beyond the bounds of littleness. I laughed
At such unpolished, pointless, shallow wit,
And said it was a logical conclusion
That little countries could not breed great minds,
And that short-sighted people could not see
Beyond their nose. Thereat the standers-by
Set up a laugh. Young whipper-snapper drew
And thrust at me. I parried, then disarmed
And threshed him with the broad side of my sword.
Like many others of high birth, he had
More influence than brains or skill, and I
Ere nightfall was dismissed beyond the pale
Of fashion, in disgrace: so I resolved
Thenceforth to keep within this barren tract,
And trouble not the English service more.

Sir Ivor. You were unfortunate. Come; we delay.
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.—*Another Room in the same.*

[*Enter* LADY BLANCHE *and* NEST.]

Lady B. How nobly Tudor sat astride his horse,
That bore him to the war! nobly! Methought

The great King Arthur made no braver show,
When setting forth with all his knights, across
The fields of Camelot.

Nest. He's brave enough.

Lady B. Aye, that he is, and will acquit him well,
There is no Frenchman can withstand his arm.
Heaven help the women !

Nest. What, will he destroy
Defenceless women ? Fie on such a war !

Lady B. You silly girl ! He will not conquer them.
Except with love's own arms : wherewith he's graced
By lavish Nature more than common men.
His soft bright eye that speaks a feeling heart ;
His full red lip that shows a joyous youth ;
His smile that is a passport to the heart ;
His laugh that echoes happiness itself ;
His form, more graceful than the Graces are,
Where Beauty may seek models for herself,
To please the sight of ordinary men,
Will charm the women, though he heeds them not.

Nest. But this Welsh Hercules and Ganymede,
May find his Omphale in France, and change
His weapon for a distaff. What a sight
For you, and for our mountain maidens too !

Lady B. You should not use your school-girl trash
to slight
His name. You cannot love him as you should.

Nest. I love him truly as a cousin should ;
Would you have more ?

Lady B. His love stands fixed on you.

Nest. His tongue has not been eloquent to speak
The passion that you feign in him.

Lady B. Well ! well !
There's time enough. 'Twould not be maidenly
To rush into his arms.

[*Exit.*

Nest. And yet 'twere so,
 Amongst the thousand beauties of poor France!
 How readily one bias moves our hearts
 Until we feel a passion that arrests
 The former power, and overwhelms it quite.
 'Tis strange, and yet such things are seen in life,
 And are as usual as our morning meals,—
 That when my mother's sole regard was fixed
 On Tudor's worth alone, she tricked him out
 With qualities that mark a demigod,
 A Hercules and Ganymede combined;
 A vision fatal to all maiden hearts.
 Yet mark how quickly when she thought of me,
 That bias swallowed in a warmer love,
 She grew inconstant to her mind's device;
 And, by the working of the stronger power,
 A mother's love, in me a force perceived,
 That armed me 'gainst his love-compelling form.

[*Soft music heard without.*]

What means this music? 'Tis some shepherd lad
 Piping among the lonely fields to keep
 Him company. Nay: for it sounds beneath
 My window. O, some reveller, o'ercome
 By this day's sad, proud parting, wandering
 To his dark rushy home across the hill,
 That slopes towards the eastern sky.

[*She throws open the casement and looks out.*]

O Love!

Stretch out thy widest wings;
 Protect him from the furious dragon eyes
 That glance not kindly on our love. Away!

GOMER [*underneath the window*] sings.

What painter, skilled in art divine,
 So deftly shed
 The lily's whiteness and the rose's red
 Upon those cheeks of thine?

Sure living art could not avail,
Nor studious patience, wan and pale,
Those natural hues to wed!

The golden waving of thy hair,
Thy blue, bright eye,
The hand of old Apelles would defy
To show their beauties rare;
And on thy lips, fair graces wait,
Sweet angels at a ruby gate,
Thy worth to testify.

But who hath heard thy silver tongue
And doth not link
Sweet unto sweet within his mind, and think
Such bliss before unsung?
Such pleasure from thy words doth flow,
That sorrow flies, and pain and woe
Before thee fade and shrink.

Nest. Good night! Good night! [*Exit.*
Throws out a flower.]

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Room in SIR PHILIP'S House.*

GUINEVERE *alone.*

Guin. How, like a creature strong and venomous,
Pain, clinging close between the wings of time,
Hampers and checks him in his onward flight!
In the eclipse of fortune, each tired day
Lags longer than a week of ecstasy.
How is it now with me?
My father, brothers, slain, and all our house
Compelled to fly the country, or remain
In peril of our lives, because we dared
Once more make trial with these English gyves,
That cramped our sinews up—this wooden yoke
That clasped our necks—and failed.
So bitterness came o'er us like a wave

That sucks the struggling mariner beneath,
And loads his clamorous tongue with brine, or twists
His salt-washed hair with melancholy weeds,
To the hoarse music of the wind-blown gulls,
With dread accompaniment of thundering surge,
That claps its hands in horrible despair.
And yet I was not all unfortunate :
For, in the darkest hour, dear Gwendolene
Became the sun that beacons me to safety ;
And he in whose great love——

[*Enter GWENDOLENE.*]

Ah, Gwendolene !

Gwen. What, Guinevere, alone ?

Guin. Hush, Gwen ! My name
Is Margaret.

Gwen. O, but you have strong friends,
Who soon will claim your pardon from the King,
And all your old possessions. The revolt
Being quelled, the English grow more merciful.

Guin. Till then let me remain your waiting-maid,
And Margaret simply to your friends—a poor
Relation. What you will.

Gwen. And Vaynor, Guin,
Must you be Margaret still to him ?

Guin. Alas !
Not Guinevere, or he would claim my hand
E'en at the risk of being outlawed, too.
Let us be patient for a little while
And then——

Gwen. O vanity ! he loves not you,
But me. He told me so an hour ago.
He spoke of you as of an angel love,
Who should be cloistered amongst holy nuns,
And said, on earth he wished a human love.
And then he feigned the lover, sighed and sighed ;

True, 'twas more like an actor on the stage
 Than one who truly loves; and when he spoke
 Of love, I spoke of you, and then he grew
 Uncomfortable, restless, taciturn,
 And looked through me into the empty air
 Beyond. Why should he trouble me?

Guin. Perhaps
 He thinks me dead. Let me not think him false;
 Not false, not false.

Sir Ph. [*Enter SIR PHILIP.*]
 Pray leave us, Margaret.
 [*Exit GUINEVERE.*]

The years that soften and attenuate
 The voice of grief which echoed through my heart,
 And woke a thousand sightless pangs, to roam
 Through all its chambers when your mother died,
 Have ripened you to womanhood, and led
 Me nearer to the sloping verge of life.
 Now, Gwendolene, my child, you touch the age
 When Fancy's tireless fingers are at work,
 Filling the future with all shapes of bliss,
 That cluster round some youth, who, proudly throned
 Within the heart, holds empire o'er the thoughts,
 And with his fancied virtues colours them,
 As rich-stained windows dye the waving light.

Gwen. Nay, father, I am of an age to love
 You better than all else——

Sir Ph. Tut, tut, my girl,
 What say you to our neighbour, Vaynor? Come,
 He's here to plead his cause with you, and ne'er
 Can say sufficient in your praise——

Gwen. I say,
 That I respect him as your friend and mine.
 He loves me not, or, if he does, I ne'er

Can be the first in his regard. There stands
Within his heart a holy shrine, where I
May never enter, sir. He loved a maid,
And loves her still, poor Guinevere! If he
And I should join our hands, and do your will,
And she returned, her glance would burn and melt
The bond that bound him to me, and unseal
His marriage vow.

Sir Ph. Nay, he is honour's self.
The Sun is not more certain to give light,
Nor Nature to preserve her changeless course,
Than he to check disloyal thought.

Gwen. I grant,
He may be honour's self, but honour's self
Is human still, and what is human grows
Corruptible.

Sir Ph. I will not bandy words.
He seeks your hand; enough. If he disclaim
All thought of her you name, your marriage day
Shall soon be fixed. 'Tis most unwise to lose
The rich expectancy of such broad lands
And plentiful addition to our name,
For some mere faint suspicion of unrest,
Which hourly troubles many a marriage life,
That set out boldly on the sea of love
With interchanged affection.

[*Exit.*

Gwen. Aye, broad lands,
And plentiful addition to our name;
The words, with others of like sort, that stunt
Our natural feelings, freeze the healthy sap
Of life, and dwarf affection, till it grows
A ragged shrub beneath an Arctic sky,
Whose graceless iron limbs are braced to fight,
In ceaseless conflict, with the elements;

Unlike the widely-spreading tree, whose boughs
 Are tender in the spring with buds, and full
 Of music in the mellow summer time.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE II.—*Sir Ivor's Garden.*

[*Enter NEST and GOMER.*]

Gomer. O Nest, I dreamt
 Last night of you, a strange fantastic dream,
 As you will say.

Nest. A strange fantastic dream?

Gom. 'Twas like this human life, a mingled draught
 Wherein the sweet and bitter alternate.
 I dreamt that I was stricken blind, unchanged
 In aught beside, and that by some fell power,
 The common hideous nightmare of our dreams,
 It was decreed that you and I should part,
 Preserving all remembrance of the past,
 Yet with no interchange of vow or speech,
 Save on one hard condition, which I scarce
 Could name, did it not sound the very depths
 Of love, and prove them bottomless. 'Twas this,
 That you should lose your human shape.
 At this Circean thought I was o'erwhelmed ;
 But you—so strange are dreams, that I, though blind,
 Could see—stood proudly up, and ere my tongue
 Could interpose, said, Aye, I'll be the dog,
 Will lead him safely through the crowded world,
 For dogs are faithful to the blind. Thereat
 You clung about me and I woke.

Nest. A dog!
 What would the dream-books say?

Gom. Come, Nest, consent

That I may ask your mother's benison
Upon our love.

Nest. We can be friends without.

Gom. I cannot be content. To be a friend
Is to be one of many.

Nest. One of few
The world says. You are fortunate to find
'Tis otherwise.

Gom. But, to be one of few,
Is to be one of far too many. O——

Nest. Hush! hush! Be silent; 'tis my mother; see,
'Tis she.

[*Enter* LADY BLANCHE *and* Attendants.]

Lady B. What makes you look so thoughtful, Nest?
We have good news for you. Ah! Gomer here!
We'll see you soon. Nest, come with me.

[*Exit with* Attendants.]

Nest (to Gomer).

Good-bye. [*Exit.*

Gom. Be true. I see a tempest in the air. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*A Lawn near* SIR PHILIP'S *House.*

[*Enter* GWENDOLENE.]

Gwen. Now am I in as full perplexed a pass
As any seaman who set sail to run
Between two crags that guard a narrow sea;
For I must brave my father's wrath, and save
My friend's life secret, or, exposing that,
Divert my lover's importunity,
To Guinevere!
What if the current of his love has fled
The former channel, and no more will bend
Its stormy waters 'tween the murmurous banks,
That stretched their verdure through the lands in peace,

A welcome confine in the early days?
 Although I have not deeply read
 The human heart, I know there is a love
 That gains its strength, aye, almost existence,
 From very hopelessness, and there are men
 Whose love, first kindled through the eye, the ear,
 Or by delusion of the sense or thought,
 Or by some mercenary hope, receives
 A purer stamp through opposition;
 So that the later graft of love remains,
 Though that which moved their passion first, or gave
 It room to grow, is gone.

[*Enter* SIR PHILIP, GOMER, VAYNOR, *and* Attendants.]

Sir P. We have heard much of Tudor's bravery.

Vayn. He is not the first of our Welsh soldiers who
 has served the king bravely.

Sir P. True. [*To* GWENDOLENE, *who comes forward.*]
 What, Gwendolene! Vaynor has a message for you,
 which he can best explain.

[*Exeunt* SIR PHILIP, GOMER, *and* Attendants.]

Vayn. Were I Sir Tudor or the noblest knight
 That e'er returned with glory from the wars
 To win loud plaudits from admiring crowds,
 I'd give my glory for a smile from you
 And cherish it; aye, treasure every movement
 Of your face as an e'erlasting balm.

Gwen. O fie!

I thought you made of finer stuff than drains
 In flattery from the tongue.

Vayn. I flatter, I!

Look deep into my heart. The words I spoke
 Are rooted there.

Gwen. I would they were not so,
 But rather the mere courtier flourishes
 Of idle compliment. You should not waste

Your pretty speeches that were neatly turned
To please another ear. I pray you, sir,
Be silent. You offend my ears.

Vayn. Not so ;
My only wisdom is that I have learnt
To value you o'er all. Nay, Gwendolene,
Turn not away.

Gwen. Would you be constant ?

Vayn. Aye,
As is the air which when 'tis sundered soon
Is joined again.

Gwen. Though I lost home and kin,
And were compelled to live a banished life ;
Foregoing all exchange of courtesy
That gives a sweetness to our days ?

Vayn. Why, then
I should but seek you more.

Gwen. Less, less, I fear.
Three years ago I had a friend, alas !
That I should say I *had*, who was beloved
By one whom she did love with all the warmth
Of chastened young affection. They were born
Each other's complement, for he was brave
And she was beautiful, and both seemed true.

Vayn. Three years ago !

Gwen. Three years ago this youthful couple who
Had sworn a thousand times eternal vows
Were rudely parted. She and all her kin,
For some offence against the English laws,
Were banished and so lost to all their friends.
Awhile her lover was disconsolate,
Then proved as fickle as the summer warmth
Amid these hills, which dies in winter's arms
Before its prime.

Vayn. Nay, this is cruel ! Hush !

'Tis true I thought I loved her once. Thought? Fool!
My love was then a petty shallow stream,
'Tis now a mighty river.

[Attempts to take hold of GWENDOLENE by the
arm. She throws his hand off.]

Gwen. Perjured man!

Away!

[Enter SIR PHILIP, who motions VAYNOR to retire.]

[Exit VAYNOR.]

Sir Ph. These are hard words to use to one
Whom you must marry.

Gwen. Marry! Nay, not I—
Forgive me, sir, I did not mean to use
A disrespectful word.

Sir Ph. I can forgive
Much more than that—but you must marry Vaynor.

Gwen. I cannot.

Sir Ph. One concession will I make
One only, this, that you may name the time,
Provided 'tis not later than a week.

Gwen. I cannot.

Sir Ph. Then to-morrow be the day.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE IV.—*Another Room in the same.*

GUINEVERE *alone—(sings).*

Misery, when thou art nigh,
Like a dream doth fade and die,
Leaving neither mark nor trace
In its late abiding place.

There is pleasure in thy smile,
That doth charm the weariest while,
'Till it mellows into bliss,
Full of richest ecstacies.

Do not marvel, then, if I
Love to linger when thou 'rt nigh!
Living in thy light and blest
With such sweet and balmy rest.

[*Enter GWENDOLENE.*]

Gwen. What, singing, Guinevere!

Guin. 'Twas one of Vaynor's songs.

Gwen. I wonder, does he sing it now?

Guin. Why?

Gwen. 'Tis like all admirable love-ditties. It may be sung to twenty sweethearts, and will serve them all like a worsted glove or a fashionable shawl that fits every wearer.

Guin. You are satirical.

Gwen. Not I, in truth. It is no time to be satirical, when the marriage breakfast and all the wedding finery have to be prepared by the morrow.

Guin. What marriage breakfast? What wedding?

Gwen. Pardon me, Guinevere. Nothing will content your constant and true lover unless I marry him to-morrow. Sir Philip sympathises with him, and I, though as a dutiful daughter I should do so too, have resolved to flee from temptation for a while.

Guin. [*aside*]. He loves me not, indeed!

Gwen. I must avoid the peril, for my sire Already sees me seated in your place
By Vaynor's side. I am resolved to fly
Until this danger's o'er.

Guin. I'll follow you.
Upon the confines of your father's land
There is a wood that stretches far and wide,
Hard by the extremest skirt that overlaps
The solitary limits of the moor,
Across whose breast the traveller rarely strays.
The cottage stands where I lay safely hid,

When many chased me in the days gone by.
 Let us put on a simple peasant's dress,
 And there take shelter, till we may return.

Gwen. I know the place; a cottage, thick o'ergrown
 With jasmine and sweet-scented clamb'ring flowers;
 A poor man's paradise, the very home
 Of rest and quietude; where nightingales
 Make music in the darkening air, and fill
 With rapture all the solitude. To-night
 The moon is full. There's not an hour to lose.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Terrace before SIR IVOR'S House.*

[*Enter* SIR IVOR, GOMER, LADY BLANCHE, NEST, REYNOLD, *and* Attendants.]

Sir Ivor. A holiday is twice a holiday
 When heaven rejoices with us in our joy;
 And perfumed breezes move the clouds away,
 Disclosing universal azure skies
 Lit by the golden sun.
 O Tudor comes! with happy augury.

[*Enter* LORD REGINALD, TUDOR, *and* Soldiers,
with music.]

Welcome, Lord Reginald! welcome, Tudor!
 Our thoughts have been with you in France, and were
 For speedy victory.

Lord Reg. I thank you heartily.
 Your nephew won his way right soon to fame,
 And easily achieved a task that tried
 The flower of our troops, the veterans
 Of many a battle-field.

Sir Ivor. Good news, indeed.
The reputation that is won in youth,
Becomes a lamp and guide in after years.
Come hither, Nest [*NEST comes forward*]; you have a
cousin now
Of whom you should be proud.

Tud. My cousin Nest
Thinks little of a soldier's fame.

Lady B. Not so;
There never lived a maiden in the world
Who heard of warlike deeds, and was not moved.

Tud. I know my cousin Nest. Her worst words
breed

No discord in our friendship; do they Nest?

Nest. None; for you have a soul above the mob
Of aimless youths who live like butterflies,
And wave their colours in the summer sun;
Or, worse, drink endless rounds of heavy wine,
And so quite waste the morn and noon of life,
Quite, quite beyond recall.

Gomer [*coming forward*]. Lord Reginald,
To mark the day you bring my comrade back,
Which is observed a general holiday,
We have provided various sports and sights,
As wrestling, riding, archery, and all
The catalogue of manly games, with shows
To please the eye, processions and reviews
Of all who carry arms; and for the noon
A banquet of the richest and the best,
In wine and food, that these poor hills may bear,
Or we procure,—an open festival,
To which all comers, who are friends to you
And to our house, are free. These sports, reviews
And festivals, will scarcely seek to claim
Your wonder; nay, we dare not hope t' excel

The English court, whose pageantry outshines
The pride of France.

Lord Reg. I cannot speak to that ;
But this I know, that your stout men of Wales,
Whose bravery is known throughout the land,
And chronicled, without a doubting voice,
Have many gifts that are denied to us,
Though we have proved us stronger in the field
By weight of numbers ever crowding on.
Our men-at-arms have not the poet's fire ;
No rapt Tyrtæus rouses them to fight,
Or fans a furious courage in their souls,
To brave unnumbered foes and fight and die,
Unarmoured men against full-armoured foes ;
Our smiths are wrapt in their mechanic art,
Our weavers weave not to the Muse's song ;
Our masons dream but of their bricks and stone ;
Our ploughmen think not of an Arcady,
Where toil is sweetened by a poet's lays ;
With you, imagination is a power
Diffused amongst the humblest cottagers,
Who sing and work and work and sing all day.
Therein this Wales has much to glory in,
And may be proud. When I was but a lad
I fought against your countrymen and learnt
How valiant they—how much more cultured too
Than men of their degree amongst ourselves,
Where art scarce has a name, and where the mass
Would rather bait a bull or arm the spurs
Of pugilistic fowl, than spend an hour
With any slighted Muse.

Sir Ivor. 'Tis rare to hear
An Englishman so speak of us. We live
Remote and, for the most part, use a tongue
Quite alien to your ears. It is a tongue

We cherish as our nationality,
 The tongue in which our greatest minds have framed
 Their thoughts and uttered them. Did we but use
 Your language and adopt it as our own
 We should be in the van of English thought
 For years to come. But, pardon me, if I
 Have wearied you. We trust that you will grace
 Our joyful celebration.

Lord Reg. Readily,

Sir Ivor. [*A procession of Bards and Minstrels appears
 in the distance—the Bards walking singly.*]

But tell me, who are they, so reverend all,
 With snow-white locks and flowing robes?

Sir Ivor. These are our ancient bards, come forth to
 greet

You and my nephew.

[*First Bard crosses towards the gate of Courtyard.*]

Lord Reg. Who is he that crosses
 O'er th' pathway now?

Sir Ivor. O, that is Meyrick; look!
 An amatory poet he, who sang
 A tender melancholy strain that wakes
 Sweet echoes in our maiden's hearts, and wraps
 Them in Elysium.

[*Another follows.*]

Lord Reg. Who is he that follows?

Sir Ivor. The darling of our soldiers, one whose song
 Leaps from their lips in thunder, in the rush
 And tumult of wild war.

[*Another follows.*]

Lord Reg. The next is younger.

Sir Ivor. His verse is like a gentle sylvan scene,
 Where Nature reigns beneficent o'er all,
 And blossoms into kindness.

[*Another follows.*]

Lord Reg. See, the next
Is of a sober cast——

Sir Ivor. Nay, nay, not so ;
He has the trick and very salt of humour,
Though, like true humorists, he rarely laughs
At his own pleasantries. The sports will soon
Begin. Let music sound and lead the way. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*A Room in Sir IVOR'S House.*

[*Enter Sir IVOR, TUDOR, LADY BLANCHE and GOMER.*]

Sir Ivor. If friendship is a thing of worth, what held
Sir Philip from our sports and festival
To-day ?

Lady Blanche. And where was pretty Gwendolene ;
And Vaynor, too ?

Gomer. They send a brave excuse.
This morning, when the silver-wreathed horns
Were blown about the thoroughfares, and filled
The whistling, joyous air with welcomings,
That made the youths and maidens bless the day,
With Tudor's name upon their busy lips,
A messenger came battling through the crowd,
Fast gathering in their holiday attire,
And surged towards me, where I stood, and said,
“ Sir Philip bade me seek you out, and say,
To-day there will be joy within his house ;
The greatest joy that happens in man's life
Will keep him from this merry festival.
The occasion was expected, soon or late,
Though fortune, as it haps, has fixed it soon.
To-day there is a marriage in his house,
Where happiness must follow haste. Pray tell
Sir Ivor, and excuse him.” Guess ! now guess !

Name the new-linked couple. You'll never guess.
Whom say you, Lady Blanche, and Tudor, you,
And you, Sir? Guess.

Lady B. No fox more cunningly
Conceals his wiles than lovers who have passed
The prime. Well, well, I've guessed aright, be sure.

Sir Ivor. Sir Philip! Oh! a widower, when he weds,
By woman should be crowned, for bachelors
Must follow when he leads.

Tudor. The lady's name?

Gom. No, no! I am no step-son yet. I said
You could not guess.

Lady B. It must be Gwendolene
And Vaynor, then, for whom the bells will ring.

Gom. Yes.

Tud. You said not they were married.

Gom. True, again,
And yet they are.

Tud. This is Sir Philip's jest.

Lady B. O, marriage is no jest, as you will know
When you are married, Tudor. Married? True
'Twas often spoken of as like to be,
For Vaynor was her shadow for some time;
He had no dumb affection, such as sighed
And moped in silence, like a chidden girl;
Such sickly passion cannot win our hearts.
He gave his liking tongue, which often breeds
Mutual regard and willing sympathy.
I have observed it oft.

Tud. But Gwendolene
Rejected him!

Gom. Not so.

Sir Ivor. But what of that?
Rejected suitors show more warmth than e'er,
Or baulk anticipation. I myself

For wooing coldly was rejected once—
The lesson was not lost. What say you, Blanche?

Lady B. Nonsense.

[*Exit.*
[*Exit.*

Tud. Was there no change in Gwendolene;
No sudden change?

Gom. No other change than springs
From fondness slowly ripening in the heart.
Her love grew out of her indifference
Beneath the ardour of his passioning,
As early primroses, that front the sun,
Ere winter has departed, open out
Their tender flowers to meet the god of day,
Whose fervour warmed them into life.

[*Enter NEST.*]

Nest. Gomer,
What is this I hear about your sister, say?
I wish her joy: the knowing gossips think
She could not make a wiser, better match.
O, Tudor soon will follow Vaynor's lead;
Whatever fortune happens in the field
Most soldiers are invincible in love;
At least they'd have us think so.

Gom. Tudor, sad?
What grieves you?

Tud. Nothing; I was only thinking.

Gom. What, thinking? O, to think is tedious work.
Aye, thought is sad, action is merry. Hence,
A hearty laugh amongst philosophers
Is rare as black game on our southern plains;
Yet I have known philosophers who laughed
As loud as any mirthful simpleton.
You should not leave your gaiety in France,
Where 'tis not wanted, if what's said is true;

Though I prefer our native cheerfulness
To all the surface sparkle there.

Tud. I, sad!

Pray, why should I be sad?

Gom. Perhaps some Norman beauty won your heart,
And played you false. Ah! you are changing colour.

Tud. [*smiling*]. Say, rather, one of my own country-
women;

Then haply would you be more near the mark.

Nest [*aside*]. More near the mark! O, what
Does Tudor mean?

Gom. Cease this jesting, come;
We meet you, Tudor, at the dance anon,
Till then, farewell. [*Exeunt GOMER and NEST.*]

Tud. How vain are honours won,
And all the fruits of soldierly success!
They count as nothing when the heart is wrung
With that great grief to which all grief is light;
When friendship proves a painted sepulchre,
Or love becomes like ashes in the heart.
Married! I'll not believe the slanderous tale
Upon this unsubstantial evidence,
The veriest hearsay tattle. Wretched hope!
Even Gomer thinks 'tis true. Should he not know?
"Her love grew out of her indifference."
If she is false—No; that I'll not believe
Until I hear it from her very lips;
For she was ever like a crystal globe
That holds no hidden substance.

[*Re-enter LADY BLANCHE.*]

Lady B. Have you heard
Sir Philip will be here to-morrow morn,
Accompanied by certain of his friends,
And Gwendolene and Vaynor, so 'tis said?

Tud. Then Gomer's news is true?

Lady B. Assuredly.

Is she not fortunate? The story goes
That Vaynor has not married his first love;
Who does? I did,—but then, the lot is rare.
And Gwendolene, no doubt, has felt the flame
Which poets say love kindles, long before
This suitor won her hand and married her:
But men are poor observers of such things.

Tud. O poor, indeed! This room is like a furnace:
Come, will you walk upon the terrace?

Lady B. Yes,
'Tis cooler there. Come, Tudor, you look warm.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*A Meadow.*

DAVY, REES, EVAN, and a number of country people in
holiday costume, discovered dancing to music.

[*Enter GWENDOLENE and GUINEVERE, disguised as
peasants and wearing hoods that conceal their faces.*]

Gwen. How merrily they dance, as though this life
Possessed no greater happiness than that
They now enjoy!

Guin. And therein they are wise.

Gwen. O wise and happy both, nor are they
anxious,—
At least 'twould seem so from their merriment.

Guin. T' enjoy these simple pleasures heartily
Demands a mind at ease, and freedom, too,
From many biting cares that ever wait
On wealth and pride; and mark me, Gwendolene,
This hour is sweeter and more full of joy

To these glad country men and ruddy maids
Than all the pompous round of gaudy state
To men in power.

Gwen. Or this our weary life
Of hide and seek, to love-lorn wand'ers like
Ourselves. Come, Guin, for see the dance will soon
Begin afresh. For peasant girls we show
Too much indifference to the piper's notes
And th' wide o'erflowing ecstasy of sound.
See! here our partner comes; a rustic youth
Equipped and destined by the god of love
To fill the dreams of many a village maid,
And trouble Amaryllis in the field:
His posy flower would fill a good-sized vase
And put a peony to shame; his smile
Is most voluminous from ear to ear.
He looks an honest fellow none the less.

[*DAVY advances.*]

Davy. Will you not join the dance, ladies? We
have the best jiggers in the country here.

Gwen. Our partners have not yet arrived, good youth,
We promised to await them here.

Guin. [*aside*]. As clear a fib as one may hear at any
dance. [*The dance continues.*]

Here come some other lookers on.

[*Enter* LORD REGINALD, TUDOR, *and* Attendants.]

Tud. Let us rest here, and watch the peasants
dance.

Gwen. [*aside*]. O! Guinevere, 'tis Tudor—see.

Lord Reginald. Agreed.

These dancers will expect no niggard smiles;
But such as are an index, that the fame
You won has met with its reward, which does
Not always happen, e'en in England.

Tud. O,
I must confess that I was dull. I missed
Some of my friends, whom I had hoped to see
On my return.

Lord Reg. The fortune of all men
Who leave their country even for a moon ;
When we have struggled for the honoured palm,
Cheered with the hope of some approving smile,
And honour crowns us with her envied wreath,
The smile for which we sweat to us is lost,
Perchance for aye.

Guin. [*aside*]. But that is not his case.

Gwen. [*aside*]. Shall I declare myself ?

Guin. [*aside*]. Not yet—not yet—
There's time enough.

Gwen. [*aside*]. May be 'tis premature.
See ! they draw this way.

Lord Reg. You are most happy, Tudor, in your lot ;
Young, honoured, famed in war, and heir to rich
Possessions.

Tud. O, if heir, 'tis on condition.

Lord Reg. Yes, such condition as makes richer what
Is bound thereby—like frames of jewelled gold,
In which the diamond and ruby shine
With precious scintillation.

Tud. Ah ! my heart
Is not my own, or was not when I left
For France. Remember—this in confidence.

Lord Reg. Your true love married when you sailed ?
An old, old tale.

Tud. And this time true, I fear.

Gwen. [*aside*]. Here's more news, indeed ! His true
love married !

Guin. [*aside*]. 'Twas well you kept your secret. Who
is she ?

Lord Reg. [*advancing*]. Good morning, pretty maidens.

Guin. Good morning, sir.

[REGINALD and GUINEVERE converse apart.]

Tud. [*looking at GWENDOLENE*]. How like her shape to Gwendolene. I wonder is she like in aught beside—in thought, in speech, in any of the thousand things that rendered Gwendolene the paragon of women [*aside*]. [*Goes up to her and tries to look under her hood.*] I think I've seen your face before, my maid.

Gwen. Very likely, sir, if you have been this way before. My name is Dora, and this my sister Ellen. We live close by this wood.

Tud. Her very voice [*aside*]. O, then, 'tis some resemblance—my memory was deceived. Are you tired of dancing? What gallant youth has left you unattended?

Gwen. We came to look on; not to dance. 'Tis time we should return. Sister, come.

Tud. [*going amongst the crowd of dancers, who cheer him*]. Who is the leader of the dance?

Davy. I am, please you, Sir Tudor.

Tud. There is ample entertainment provided for all the company, old and young, in Sir Ivor's hall.

Davy [*turning to the dancers*]. Do you hear that? Hurrah for Sir Tudor and Sir Ivor.

Omnes. Hurrah! hurrah!

[*Exeunt* REGINALD, TUDOR, and dancers.]

[*Enter* Sir PHILIP and VAYNOR.]

Sir Philip. It is a serious matter.

Vaynor. 'Tis untrue.

Am I a man of honour, sir? The tale
Has no foundation more than underlies
The thousand baseless rumours of loose tongues.
I pledged to Guinevere! an outlaw's child!

Sir Philip, give me credit for some sense.
I liked the girl, as one may like a girl
And mean no more.

Sir Ph. But if she said you're pledged?

Vayn. What spite has she against me, to declare
What is not true?

Sir Ph. I take your word, my friend.

Vayn. As well call every vagrant fancy love,
As dignify, with that divinest name,
A man's unresting thought, which praises now
What soon will be forgotten. Gwendolene
Has all my heart alone.

Sir Ph. Would she were here.

[*Exeunt Sir PHILIP and VAYNOR.*]

Gwen. Perfidious wretch!

Guin. Cruel, cruel, dream!

It was not Vaynor spoke.

Gwen. Forget him, Guinevere.

Guin. All false, false, false!

Vows, pledges, protestations. O, all false!
Why are we fashioned so that one chance word
May ruin all our hoarded happiness;
Steep pleasure to the lips in misery;
Change the delightful visions of the past
Into a hideous gross deformity;
And through the troubled stream of life disclose
Our puppet hopes arrayed in misery?
O, Gwendolene!

Gwen. He is not worth your thought:
Such double-dealing wretches should be whipt.
In love with me? You are well rid of him;
A man, whose tongue and heart make dissonant,
Discordant music. Let him go.

Guin. To think
As I must think of one I loved, is hard:

Inconstancy may wreck our future peace,
Yet leave the past and blissful days untouched,
A haven in the storm of wretchedness.
For, in the very depths of misery,
'Tis pleasant to remember happy times,
That break the blank monotony of woe ;
To catch, across the tide of evil days,
Which roll behind us in the endless past,
A glimpse of that far-seeming happiness,
Which, once being real as the joys of heaven,
Becomes e'ermore a gracious memory.
But O, how miserable 'tis to know
The joy, the happiness, to which we turn,
With glance averted from the hideous "now,"
Was but a grinning mockery from its birth ;
The fumes of fancy only, all untrue ;
This bitter knowledge I have gained to-day.

Gwen. He is inconstant, Guin ; there, let him go.

Guin. Were he inconstant only, 'twere enough
For one weak heart to bear and not break down ;
And silent absence tries the constancy
Of many a man whose love was once sincere ;
But he ne'er loved me,—think of it—ne'er loved ;
And I betrayed, deceived, and trapped ; the dupe
And unsuspecting gull of my own faith !
O ! O ! Come Gwendolene, we must go hence,
My heart will harden to him, do not fear.
'Tis better to be told the worst at once,
Than live within a foolish paradise.
Innocent trust ! I have been sorely stabbed
Here, here, here !—Let us go.

Gwen. Poor lamb ; forget him.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*A Room in SIR IVOR'S House.*

[*Enter Sir IVOR and Lady BLANCHE.*]

Lady Blanche. This news is like a black and puffing storm

That clouds the twilight of a summer day,
Quelling the wingèd sounds of melody
Upraised before in pastoral merriment
By many cheerful voices.

Sir Ivor. Sudden, too,
As is the doubling of a hare that turns
Before an eye can wink.

Lady B. The visit, then,
Stands o'er, and Vaynor's promised marriage, too.
Who thought there was such temper in the girl,
That she would fly as swift, and hastily,
From her spurned bridegroom, as a dove before
A poisoning hawk?

Sir Ivor. Over-indulgence breeds
A wayward mood in man and woman both.
Let them have all they will and they will kick
At duty when it calls. Why, Gwendolene
Was as the apple of her father's eye,
Beloved by him above all other things,
And spoiled and petted like an only child.

Lady B. May Nest ne'er show this deep ingratitude.
Forewarned, forearmed, we must take heed of her.
I cannot say how her affection lies ;
She does not let her present thought ooze out,
But fences with me, if I talk of love,
With some new-fangled silly speech, to show
The folly of the world, that says the aim
Of every woman is to wed, or should be.
Whene'er I mention Tudor's name she laughs

And says he's brave, or quite the lady-killer,
And so converts whate'er I say to jest :
'Tis time you spoke to her.

Sir Ivor. I have observed
That in her speech there is a petulance
When Tudor's name is mentioned. 'Tis perchance
The chafing of her modesty that dreads
A quick surrender. For some lovers show,
Like anglers who are skilful in their craft,
Not rashly eager to secure the prize,
Like botching handlers of the rod and line,
They know the times to humour and to strike.
Maybe she feared to check her cousin's suit
By an excessive eagerness to please.
If so, 'tis well. But if this petulance
Means more than that, and is the outward sign
Of an intent to thwart our cherished hope,
We must, as wise physicians do, apply
A fitting remedy betimes, not wait
Until this disobedience takes deep root,
And kills, with its unholy influence,
Those pure affections that should check its course,
And twine their blossoms round paternal love
In warm luxuriance.

Lady B. Well, you must devise
The remedy. It will be wanted soon.
She has a will.

Sir Ivor. We must not threaten her
Too suddenly, for hastiness may spoil
Our hopes and stubborn her to violent
Resistance. If she prove more dutiful
Than you anticipate, we shall not need
To speak of remedies ; if otherwise,
T' avoid such pain as Gwendolene has brought
Upon Sir Philip and her kin, I here

Resolve that she shall cloister in the gloom
Of some near convent till her will conforms
To ours.

Lady B. The pure, chaste music of the place
Should curb all turbulent desire.

[*Enter* JOAN.]

Joan. The rooms are all tapestried, my lady, for Sir
Philip; the black oak has been set off with
crimson seats.

Lady B. Go, call
Your mistress here. [Exit JOAN.]

Black oak and tapestry
And crimson seats must serve another day.

Sir Ivor. Let's hope the day is near. It will be well
If you and Nest are left alone awhile;
At least until you've sounded her, and learnt
How far a daughter's natural gratitude,
Or such respect or warmth as she may feel
For Tudor's name, or both together joined,
Will tune her to our key, and so prevent
The joyless discord that must else prevail
And spoil our harmony. Whatever thoughts
She gives him, O be sure her liking springs
Not from the warmer depths of passionate
Full sympathy, where conjugal true love
Takes root and lives. As she is rich in love,
In filial tenderness, I have good hope
That she may change, and mould, and bend her liking
To our own. Use, Blanche, your fair endeavour; now
I shall retire. 'Tis better Nest should speak

[*Enter* NEST.]

To you alone. [Exit.]

Lady B. Commanding beauty sits
Upon those earnest features. Now must I
Be wiser than I was before, or she

Will vapour as she did before [*aside*]. Well, Nest,
You have not loitered on the way. Come, sit
By me. 'Tis pleasant, now the sun is hot,
To have a seat in the shade.

Nest. The sun is hot,
But, mother, did you send for me?

Lady B. I did,
My child. We'll talk of what I had to say
Anon. Where is Tudor, Nest?

Nest. Who? Tudor?
O what a question! I'll send Joan forth
To seek him.

Lady B. No, no; it does not matter now,
And yet I wish it did. We've but one aim—
To make your happiness secure: how best
And by what means has often exercised
Your father's mind and made him ponder, who
Is cheerful else as the glad mounting lark,
That carols on the broad expanding brow
Of some blue morn in May, uprising cloudless
From its eastern cave. In his good judgment, Nest,
Your cousin Tudor seems a man endowed
With qualities most brilliant in esteem;
With valour, that should make a man renowned;
With frankness, that should make a man beloved;
With wisdom, that would grace the council seat,
And guide us safely in the coming time.
Sir Ivor, having this opinion of him,
Is never weary of the speech—"I shall
Be happy when I see them one."

Nest. O, no!
It is impossible.

Lady B. What ails the girl?
When last I spoke to you I did not think

You were in earnest. Come, child, speak the truth,
In what he does displease you.

Nest. Truly, then,
In this. I do not like him as you mean
I should—as one affianced should—and yet
I like him well enough, and, for his deeds,
I should be loud as any in his praise,
Were he not Tudor and my cousin.

Lady B. Faults
That have no remedy. Time! time! well I
Was once a girl like you, and far too close
To chatter, or to publish to the world
The secret of each amorous thought. In truth,
You might have thought of me, as you may think
Of many a hard and stubborn-outlined man,
Who keeps his secrets under lock and key,
Yet shows his inner nature by his face;
The upper lip upon the nether closed
As tightly as a lid upon a box,
And in as true a line. There, there's an image,
Although I spoke at chance! It scarcely hits
The sense of what I mean; but never mind,
You will be kind to Tudor when he pleads.
We have not many like him in these days.
You cannot say him nay; ah, no! no! no!
Unless—no—that can never be——

Nest. O mother,
Do not stop at that “unless,” like one who fears
The shadow of her thought.

Lady B. Nest, Nest, I fear,
You have another love! What, girl! you blush!

Nest. In the sweet clustering hours, when you were
young,
Had you no thoughts that made the minutes pass
Like gold-winged messengers from heaven, who smiled

Upon you as they passed and crowned your dreams
With something far more precious than a wreath
Of rarest flowers that bless the fruitful earth,
Or all the gems that ray from yellow gold
A blaze of kingly and imperial light
Athwart the glories that surround a throne ;
With visions of a rare felicity,
That showed the very life of paradise ?
Such visions spring from love, and such were mine ;
And yet I have no more than cousinly
Affection for my cousin.

Lady B. See, this temper
Is a very will-o'-the-wisp, and leads
Through sighs and misery to worse. Who dared
Entrap you with that siren talk ? When I
Was young I listened to my mother's voice ;
To me it was a guide that never failed.
But you have filled your mind with balderdash,
The garish twaddle of romancing tales,
That deal in childish gay absurdities,
And plaster Nature with unnatural paint
To please the lower mind. You must be weaned
From these desires, a sour ungracious fruit
For all our care. Your father has resolved
To place you with some holy sisterhood,
To learn how truly gracious heaven delights
In filial resignation.

Nest. Heaven takes
No pleasure in cold-voiced, unwilling vows,
That grow like icicles within the heart
And chill the blood.

Lady B. Unwilling vows ! We ask
No vows, but such a change in the wild rush
Of your affections that hereafter, Nest,
Their stream may flow more evenly with ours.

Go to your chamber, Nest. [*Exit* NEST.] This is disastrous,

We're none too soon—none—none.

[*Re-enter* SIR IVOR.]

Sir Ivor. What said she, Blanche?

Lady B. Alas! you have a disobedient child;
Determined, too, I fear.

Sir Ivor. Well, she shall go. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*An Open Glade.*

GWENDOLENE *disguised as before*, and TUDOR.

Tud. Since the great mystery, with deepening shadows,
Crept round my Gwendolene, like some thick cloud
That comes between the gazer and the sun,
I felt no joy to hear a woman speak,
Until I heard your voice.
Were you not Dora, and a peasant girl,
You might be called another Gwendolene.
The faintest copy of such excellence
Is nobler than all other excellence.
O! she was Nature's most consummate work;
A combination of all golden means,
With warm affections, somewhat o'er the mean,
And spotless, too.

Gwen. I could embrace him, now,
For these sweet words—patience; the farce must run
Some minutes more [*aside*]. And were you not a knight,
Too highly born to mingle with our lads

As one of them, I'd say you were the youth
Who taught me first, and not so long ago,
To know perfection in a human form,
So like are you to him.

Tud. [*laughing*]. Come, come, well said—
Dora—a proper repartee—and yet
You should deal gently with my constancy,
For that most strange resemblance which I marked
In you, compelled me to your feet.

Gwen. And that
I marked in you brought me to yours.

Tud. I see
You are a mistress of quick sayings, too,
My little country maid. You know what's said
Of women's reasons——

Gwen. Women's sympathies
Are better guides than reason, in affairs
That touch affection. Cold, calm reason laughs
At your warm protestations, hedged all round
With ifs and thick provisoes.

Tud. Not more warm
Than true. 'Tis my misfortune to be bound
In honour to my cousin Nest till she
Unloose the irksome tie. It happened thus :
Sir Ivor, when he found that Nest, whose love
Flows down some hidden channel, would not list
To his weighed counsel, closed her in a convent
And told me then, as he has told me oft,
He wished I was his more than nephew, love !
And I, distracted with the sharp fresh news
That Gwendolene had married Vaynor, felt
A sickening emptiness within my heart,
And hunger to fill up the dreary void ;
So needs must ask Sir Ivor's leave to claim
The hand of Nest.

Gwen. And what of Gwendolene,
If she were found unmarried and still true.
Must she rank after Nest?

Tud. No, no! my love
Would strangle honour. Oh, that voice! that voice!
If you have ever felt the slightest throb
Of tenderness, resolve my doubt. The hour
Has passed for trifling. Let me see your face.
Remove this hood.

[GWENDOLENE *pushes back her hood and falls into*
TUDOR'S *arms.*]

By all my vows, 'tis Gwendolene! 'Tis she!
O pitying fates! 'Tis she!
The heavens are merciful to love! at last!
My hope, my life! at last we're joined again.
We will not part again for all the world.

Gwen. My Tudor, O!

Tud. Look up, brave Gwen. Safe! safe!

Gwen. Not wholly safe.
There is another trial kept in store;
Your honour's pledged.

Tud. Well, let them hold the pawn;
I'll stake the dearest thing I call my own,
Save you, save you.

Gwen. Tudor, 'tis foolishness
To value me above your honour. Nay,
You must not let dishonour touch your fame:
Let meaner men do that, who barter all,
Love, reputation, friendship, and their souls,
For some gross object of ambition;
Let politicians, who must please the mob
With promises that cannot be fulfilled;
Or lawyers, with a huckstering soul, who soil

A noble calling by mean arts—not you,
Not Tudor!

Tud. The folly is that I should risk
The soul and inmost heart of all my dreams,
The consummation of my purest hopes,
For something said in ignorant despair;
But I obey, and trust this self-denial
Will bring no evil fruit.

Gwen. None, Tudor, none,
For Nest is not a forward, eager Miss,
To rush into your tardy open arms.
If she suspect your tongue is insincere,
Your speech would sooner stay the blowing winds
That whistle round the brow of March, than bend
Her sympathy to you. Await me here.
I wish to see if Ellen has arrived,
She said she'd be by yonder red-rose tree;
Her story will surprise you. [*Exit.*

Tud. Gwendolene
Has given Nest her due, and my device
Must be to feign a surface love and speak
With languor what should sound divine. So, when
One reads in drowsy, apathetic tones,
The words that flew impassioned from the tongue
Of some great orator, who swept the chords
Of tremulous feeling till they swelled
Or died to silence to a mastering touch,—
Now clanging, like a myriad-throated storm,
Harmonious now as some light-fingered strain,
Heard in the languor of a summer noon,
When all the heavy-scented air is still;
The force of this full-compassed speech being spoiled,
The listener wearies of the spiritless,
Dull, mumbling, drawl, and yawns—Are these the words,
This hollow echoing monotony,

That clenched the fists and filled the flashing eyes
 Of all the hearers with swift answ'ring fire,
 Or that in softer mood made tumults cease,
 And iron features wreath their hardness
 In smiles, like deadly instruments of war
 Festooned and coloured with gay streaming flowers
 Of peace? Why such a reader shall I prove;
 And so recite the phrases of high love,
 So passionless, so droning, and so dull,
 In my rehearsal, that my cousin Nest,
 Fresh from the eager language of true love,
 Must surely prove a wearied listener too,
 And laugh at my dull, lifeless, honeyed words,
 The stuccoed copies of impassioned thought,
 And wooden models of the play of life.

[*Re-enter GWENDOLENE.*]

Come, let us seek the shade where those green trees
 Entwine their leafy arms above the grass;
 I've much to talk about.

Gwen. And I, too, Tudor.

[*Exit.*
Exit.]

[*Enter GUINEVERE.*]

Guin. What, no one here? I thought I heard the
 voice

Of Gwendolene and Tudor here.

[*Re-enter GWENDOLENE.*]

Gwen. Right, too;

I saw you coming, Guin.

Guin. Where's Tudor flown?

[*Enter DAVY unobserved. He hides behind a tree.*]

Gwen. Awaiting me behind yon copse. He lies
 Close by. I must rejoin him. Guin, I may
 Resolve to leave our cot. You know that Nest
 Was hurried to a convent for an act
 Most worthy of all gratitude from me.

Guin. The rumour reached me. So 'tis true?

Gwen. True? Yes.
 If it should seem expedient to me, Guin,
 To visit Nest, will you come with me?
Guin. Aye,
 Or further, Gwendolene; and where you will.
Davy [*aside*]. What if I tell Lord Vaynor, this?
Gwen. Before
 The sun sets, I shall meet you at our cot,
 T' explain this sudden plan. Ah, Guinevere,
 We have good luck in store.
Guin. Pray heaven, 'tis so.
 [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*A Room in SIR IVOR'S House.*[*Enter SIR IVOR and LADY BLANCHE.*]

Sir Ivor. Growing distempers that are promptly met
 Are promptly cured, and this conventual life,
 Being evidence that we do not neglect
 T' apply sharp remedies to curb the will,
 Perhaps has softened Nest. What say, you, Blanche,
 To my resolve, which is, accompanied
 By Tudor, and perhaps a friend or two,
 Whom we can trust, to take our lodging near
 The convent for some days? It well may be,
 His presence, working on her softened will,
 May make her complaisant.

Lady B. Most excellent;
 Have you surmised who has usurped the place
 That should be Tudor's in her heart?

Sir Ivor. You dream
 To speak of usurpation!

Lady B. Nay, not so;
 Have you not missed a most familiar face?

It vanished when our Nest was sent away,
And now is never seen.

Sir Ivor. Of whom speak you ?

Lady B. Of Gomer.

Sir Ivor. Yes, yes. Gomer has good cause
To keep away since Vaynor lost a bride.
A brother's fondness will not let him rest
Until he has discovered Gwendolene,
And rescued her if she is in distress,
As she may be. For Nature never made
A world, so far as any records tell,
Where unprotected loveliness might wear
Its blushing roses in the eye of day,
Or wander in the lonely shade of night,
Secure from rudeness and incontinence.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*A Wild Wood.*

[*Enter GOMER.*]

Gomer. There is no semblance of a path to the convent gates through these tangled bushes. I fear I have gone astray. This place is a well-known haunt of outlaws, who, to my mind, should rather be called a crew of robbers: for they spare nothing that comes in their way. My evil star is in the ascendant. Here they are: for surely no honest man would be so armed in times of peace, and in this spot. The most disreputable tail of all the gang, too, with crime written upon all their features. I may unwillingly learn something of their devilry; at any rate I cannot avoid them unless I take shelter. [*Goes behind a thicket.*]

[*Enter SNAPPER and BOTTLES, with Outlaws.*]
Snapper [*sings*—

Taffy was a Welshman,
Taffy was a thief—

A good song, mates, for gentlemen of the road to sing. Come along, Bottles, as for Quickstep, a man with such a name is sure to be a slow-stepper, just as your Salubrious Places and Paradise Rows have little of paradise or health about them. Come along, I say [*sings*—

Taffy was a Welshman,
Taffy was a thief.

Bottles. Snapper, though I can scarce say you have a sweet voice, 'tis like the nightingale's in one thing.

Snap. My voice like the nightingale's! Why, mates, here's flummery—though when I was a stripling, about so high, in the parish choir, I could reach what they call the upper B flat as readily as a duck could quack.

Bot. I said in one thing, and without flattery.

Snap. In one thing?

Bot. Yes, in one.

Snap. In what?

Bot. In this, that 'tis often heard when sober men are in bed.

Snap. Oh! oh! oh! Bottles, there is music in the song, though my voice is not good since I took to a country life and irregular hours. [*Sings*—

Taffy came to my house,
And stole a leg of beef.

Bottles, the man who wrote that ditty ought to have a monument or a statue.

Bot. 'Sh. Men worthy of a statue need none. Better give him a pension.

Snap. The spirit of the nation is against pensions ;

but he ought to have a monument, for this song raises a presumption de jury that we cannot rob a Welshman. After stripping your yeoman or lordling we can look virtuous, and sing it as loud as e'er a town crier.

Bot. Well, you ought to know most about the spirit of the nation, Snapper; but, as for the monument, you never saw two generations of Englishmen that had the same way of thinking about monuments or statues—one sticks them up in places of honour, the other wags the head and laughs at them, or does worse. Heaven defend me from being made a scarecrow in stone!

Snap. Bottles, you are a scarecrow in the flesh. [*Sings.*

An Englishman came by my house, ho, ho!
 What's this? said he, I smell a mouse, ho, ho!
 And then the mouse began to speak, ho, ho!
 Who ever heard so strange a freak?
 The mouse could talk as well as squeak,
 Ho, ho!

Rees [*in the distance*]. Holloa! Holloa, there!
 Holloa!

Snap. Here's some one wants assistance to carry what he has in his pockets. 'Ware, 'ware, sir! be careful, be careful, how you come through the bushes, for the thorns are prickly.

[*Enter REES.*]

Rees. Good masters, which is the best way out of this wood?

Snap. Stand and deliver; no better, no better—

[*Outlaws rush forward and seize REES. BOTTLES searches his pockets, and pulls out a roll of papers.*]

Bot. [*opening the papers*]. What have we here? why the villain is a poet!

Snap. If he's a poet, let him go, he's not worth searching.

Bot. Snapper, you're a fool! one would think you had not been in the world since King Adam died. Poets not worth searching! Why, there's many a one makes a fortune. Stop a bit. Why here's a protest against all makers of money.

[*Reads*]

Alas! we are not what we were of yore ;
A canker preys upon the nation's heart,
And spreading inwards, like a hideous sore,
Infects the blood and creeps thro' every part.
A mercenary impulse sheds o'er all
The sweetened firstlings of degeneracy :
Our fathers were not deaf to honour's call—
We barter honour for a paltry fee :
And life is fevered with the thirst for gain,
A poor sad pittance if not nobly spent;
Nor think we that a people's loftiest fane
Is built of noble deeds,—a monument
Sublime and fixed, whilst history portrays
With truthful hand the greatness of past days.

Here's another poem, signed, "Young Taliesin." Listen, mates, to Letter I. of the New and Complete Lover's Poetical Companion.

[*Reads*]

Love's fire had long been banished from my breast,
His glow, his passion, an unmeaning name ;
Nor had I felt sincerely the unrest
Whereby he adds new glory to his fame.

Fine words, fine words. He knows some English, he does.

[*Reads*]

Broke were the arrows and ensanguined dart,
His golden weapons pierce not adamant,
And trebly armoured was my rebel heart
Against his pow'r o'er mortals dominant.

But when I look into thine eyes' deep main,
 Love's still and boundless ocean I behold;
 Ebbing, and flowing, in unceasing chain,
 Laving his shores with lustre manifold;
 All vows, all utterings, I then revoke,
 Glad in thy rosy bonds to bear his yoke.

Take them, Snapper, you are the amatory, bibulous member of our company. [*Hands the verses to him.*]

Snap. Thank you, no. [*Tosses the verses back.*] I am a man of moderate desires; doggerel, doggerel, is good enough for me if my pocket is well lined.

Bot. Well, each one to his taste; here's something [*taking up another copy of verses*] a man of your musical power cannot resist. Listen to the Chief Harpist to the Muses—so the writer signs himself.

[*Reads*]

Music! then let it sound like gentlest wind,
 Such notes as unleaved saffron loves to hear
 Amidst the herbage creeping as entwined
 In sadness with the wan and fading year.

A most excellent description of your songs, Snapper—

[*Reads*]

Nay, let there be no hoarse or trumpet tone,
 No organ blast to jar so sweet a chime,
 But still, sad music, seeming all alone
 In still and veiled silence,—as sublime
 As loftiest Muse, or eagle's upward flight,
 Or broken lightning in a sea of cloud.
 I hear it now more sad, more soft, more light;
 Like echoes wakened by an elfin crowd
 Wandering beneath some green cloud-skirted hill
 Ev'n where the moon sits, wond'ring, lonely, still.

Snap. [*snatches the verses and throws them away.*]
 Come, come, Bottles, to business! to business!

Bot. Time enough when Quickstep is here—
 What, are you a poet or a bard, sirree? [*to REES.*]

Rees. Neither, sir; they are not my verses, though I sometimes write for our village meetings.

Bot. If you are not young Taliesin or Chief Harpist to the Muses, what sounding name have you?

Rees. As for sounding, I cannot say. All names that are spoken, sound, I s'pose, except to the deaf.

Snap. O a quibbler! [*Looks amongst the papers.*] O, here it is—"The Skylark of the Glen."

Rees. Ay, that is it.

Bot. A pretty Skylark, too; I have heard scholars call man a featherless bird, or something of that sort, and me and my mates know what larks are.

Snap. I should think so.

Bot. Who gave you that name, my exiguous rhymester?

Rees. Myself, myself, sir.

Bot. Good, now I understand why you gentry have so many skylarks and so few choughs and crows among you. Listen, mates, to this Skylark's most serious lamentations and condolences upon the marriage of Griffith ap Shenkin ap Thomas ap Lloyd. No, I'll not publish them. The Skylark's notes are poor. There was too much sunlight in his eye, when he sang them. We can be generous, can't we, Snapper, on proper occasions? Here, Skylark, take your verses. Have you no gold?

Rees. Not a penny.

Snap. [*Searching in another of his pockets.*] Holloa! what have we here? Another village ode, as I am an honest man. What a rogue to waste so much of your master's time [*brings out a letter and opens it*]! Why, boys, here's a free pardon for one Guinevere [*hands it to BOTTLES*].

Gomer [*aside*]. So Guinevere is pardoned. This is Gwendolene's doing.

Rees. I was entrusted with it to deliver it safe into the hands of my mistress.

Bot. A pretty caretaker you have proved. That is a bit of prose worth all your skylarks and woodcocks too.

Rees. Take all I have, masters, but give me back that pardon; it concerns a noble lady.

Snap. The more reason we should keep it till she ransoms it. Go, bring us twenty pieces of gold, and 'tis yours. It is cheap at that. Put him on his road. Off. [*Outlaws carry REES off.*] [*Enter QUICKSTEP.*] You are always behind, Quickstep, like the rear rank.

Quick. News, news, news; such news; such booty; such plunder. Never was the like—we are all made men.

Snap. Halt, halt; now your tongue runs too quickly, and gives conclusions without facts.

Quick. Briefly, then, an excellent company of money bags will travel this way soon. Sir Ivor, Sir Tudor, and others are going to visit the convent where Sir Ivor's daughter, who is to marry the Frenchified knight, resides. They must pass our way. Do you follow me?

Bot. Aye, aye, Quickstep. You are worth your weight in gold. We shall be ready.

Gomer [*aside*]. A plot. There's no time to lose. I must bring a rescue.

Snap. Come along, Bottles. Blower, set your belt straight; come along.

[*Sings*]

Taffy was a Welshman.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Room in SIR PHILIP'S House.*SIR PHILIP *and* VAYNOR.

Sir Philip. No news of Gwendolene! though I have sent

A score of men, who know the moors and woods,
And every thicket, and bush-hidden cave,
Tree-belted bottom, and deep-tumbling stream,
That dives between the shoulders of the hills,
And every straw-thatched cot, and reedy pool,
For miles around, to make close search, where she
Might chance to hide, or lie concealed. Had you
No better fortune, Vaynor?

Vaynor. No, not I.

My scrap of news has neither weight nor worth—
This morning, as I passed across the mead,
That spreads its greenness round your western bounds,
Where like a row of silver-panelled beams
That branch into a thousand leafy boughs,
A growth of beech trees crowns the sloping turf,
And makes a pleasant shade in summer time,
Amidst the soft sheen of the emerald grass;
A swineherd, bent and crooked like his staff,
With all the stress of seventy winters' snows
Imprinted on his weather-beaten face,
Which showed a healthy red on russet cheeks,
For all his years was eager to assist
Me in my search. 'Twas rumoured, so he said,
That Gwendolene was somewhere near disguised;
She had been seen; by whom, or when, or where,
He knew not.

Sir Ph. Such rumours have small value ;
We'll have this ancient swineherd here at once,
And question him ; may be, this new-sprung wind
Will bear us to our port.

Vayn. We may, at least,
Learn whence this wind of rumour sprang, and so
To call him, may advantage us.

[*Enter Servant.*]

Servant. There stands
A man without who says he has some news
Of great importance to Sir Philip.

Vayn. We'll see him here. [*Exit Servant.*]
This visitor, let's hope,
Has something to the point.

Sir Ph. See, here he comes.

[*Enter DAVY.*]

You wished to speak to me. What news—
What news? Speak! man.

Davy. I have seen your daughter, Sir Philip.

Sir Ph. Well—when? where?

Davy. A few hours ago, as I walked through the
woods near Sir Ivor's house; she was with another
lady—

Sir Ph. Margaret, no doubt. Go on. Was not my
daughter disguised?

Davy. Perhaps so, for her dress was more like a
peasant girl's than a daughter of Sir Philip would wear;
yet there could be no mistake, for I heard her name
called by the lady, whom your daughter named Guin—

Vayn. Guin?

Sir Ph. The fool is wandering.

Vayn. Come, lead us to the place.

Davy. Stop a bit, sir, we should be too late.

Sir Ph. Too late! you saw them this morning?

Davy. Aye, aye! but they spoke of leaving.

Vayn. For what place? answer quickly.

Davy. They spoke of going on a visit to the Lady Nest, Sir Ivor's daughter, and were for setting out at once for the convent where she is disclosed or inhabits.

Sir Ph. Nest in a convent! What does this mean?

Davy. Oh! they say she was placed there to learn obedience before she marries—a sort of schooling, some say; though I don't know, I'm sure.

Vayn. What convent, my man?

Davy. That I don't know. They said they were going to start before sunset.

Sir Ph. Here's money for your trouble [*gives purse to Davy*]. [*Exit DAVY.*] Vaynor, let us hasten to Sir Ivor's—there's some mystery abroad.

Vayn. We must unravel it. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*A Room in SIR IVOR'S House.*

TUDOR, LADY BLANCHE, *and* Attendant.

Lady Blanche. This present journey, Tudor, is most like

The deep sweet ending of some moving tune
Whose discords, rarely interposed amongst
The harmonious concourse of agreeing chords,
Have made the harmony that ends the strain
By contrast sound more pleasing.

Tudor. Oh, to me
This journey will be harmony itself
If it creates no discord in the close,
Like fiddles newly strung, whose strings lose tension
At the last bar!

Lady B. It will be as I say—
I am not wrong—and you will ever be

Loved, honoured, famed, the happiest of your race.
But I must seek Lord Reginald. Farewell. [*Exit.*]

Tud. Loved, honoured, famed, the happiest of my
race,
The common salutation of the street!
A synonym for all felicity!
I—I—a name to buzz from lip to lip
And lip to ear—and make bright flowers flush
From verdurous triumphal arches! Oh,
This is the irony of circumstance,
That I whom Envy chooses for her theme,
The lucky knight who's nursed in fortune's lap,
The warrior blessed by favourable chance,
Should, at the very summit of my flight,
Be thrice as wretched as the envier,
Since fame has trumpeted my name abroad.
I am like one bound for a pleasant port,
But, caught in some swift-travelling hurricane,
That drives the ship about and rends her sails,
Compelled to seek inhospitable shores
That frown a dreary safety o'er the deep.
This breath of honour is the hurricane,
My cousin Nest the inhospitable shore,
And Gwendolene the haven of my hope,
On whose blue waters many a halcyon broods
And charms the fury of the melting waves.
Sir Ivor!

[*Enter SIR IVOR.*]

Sir Ivor. Tudor, come!
Before the sunlight strikes the southern court,
We shall be on the road.

Tud. My saddle-bags
Are buckled up and ready for the sign
Of our departure. Will Lord Reginald
Be of our company?

Sir Ivor. Oh, he will join
Us at the halting-place, this side the stream,
Whose waters bend beneath the convent walls,
And grow into a quiet glassy lake,
O'erhung on one side, where a range of hills
Upreads its huge limbs from the pebbled beach,
By towering boulder rocks.

Tud. A silent spot
That rarely echoes to a human voice :
The haunt of solitary water fowl.
Come let us start, Sir Ivor.

Sir Ivor. Onward, then.

[*Enter LORD VAYNOR and SIR PHILIP.*]

Sir Ph. The privilege of friendship must excuse
Our hurried visit.

Sir Ivor. Welcome visits
Call for no excuse. Tudor and myself
Had hoped to see you at our festival.
We grieved to learn the cause of your delay.
We all were grieved.

Sir Ph. That cause has brought us hither,
We find that Gwendolene, my daughter dear,
Is harboured with your daughter Nest.

Sir Ivor. With Nest !

Vayn. With Nest !

Sir Ivor. The bird is trapped, and safely, too.
We were about to journey to the place
Where she is lodged, for reasons which at large
I shall explain hereafter to your ear.
Will you be of our company ?

Sir Ph. It suits
Our present purpose. Vaynor, shall we go ?

Vayn. Oh, willingly.

Sir Ph. And I.

Sir Ivor. Agreed, Sir Philip.
 We'll start at once—for we are all prepared—
 We'll have a brace of weddings ere the night.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*A Wood.*

[*Enter GWENDOLENE, NEST, and GUINEVERE.*]

Nest. Romances have not in their fabled scenes
 A tale more capable to draw the tear
 Than this of your adventures, Guinevere.
 I look upon you as a heroine,
 So bravely have you played your part.

Guin. My part,
 Which otherwise would have o'erweighted me,
 I safely bore, because I had a brave
 Supporter, one whose love threw out deep roots
 That were not shaken when the rising winds
 Of fate swept all my summer friends away,
 As sudden squalls beat down a leafy row
 Of elm-trees planted on a bed of clay.
 Ah! Gwendolene, in some more happy time
 I'll show my gratitude.

Gwen. 'Tis shown enough.
 The simple acts of love bear ample fruit
 And ask no gratitude. There never was
 In history or fable a more strange
 Conjunction of events than this, that three
 Most intimate and dear companions,
 Blest with true hearts, should each be crossed in love
 And be the other's enemy.

Nest. More strange that they should lodge beneath
 the roof
 Of one cold convent for a like offence,
 And be deserted by their loves.

Gwen. Fie, Nest!
'Twas only one short hour ago we saw
You locked in Gomer's arms.

Nest. You lynx-eyed puss!
Well, I am tired of this forlorn retreat,
For all the luxury of stolen walks
And secret meetings.

Guin. How much more am I,
Who have no solace such as you and Gwen? [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.—*Another Part of the same.*

[*Enter* SNAPPER, BOTTLES, QUICKSTEP, and Outlaws.]

Quickstep. Steady! Steady! [*goes up to a group of Outlaws*]. Now, my men, what's the good of staring and looking up into the trees and sky as though you were bird-catching? Our game will come along this path, this path, d'ye see?

Outlaws. Aye, aye.

Snapper. What dispositions shall we make of our forces, Bottles?

Bottles. Plant one or two up and down to give us notice of any approach. Let the rest take ambush here, provided they can keep from sleeping or drinking when they are out of sight.

Quick. That's a double intender for you, Snapper.

Snap. Oh, Snapper thinks that wit. Well, well, it's as good as some—as good as some—as good as one heard in better company, and don't hurt me—not a bit of it.

Bot. Now, Snapper—no harm done—let us place our scouts.

Snap. Here, Blower, you shall do duty on the outskirts. He's a safe man, is Blower, for he'll run in

mighty sharp if anything more than a mouse stirs when he is alone. If I were in the army I'd never place your brave men as sentinels. Why, they sleep in the face of danger. No, no! Your coward is the man, he'll alarm the main body. He's like the soft horns of a snail, that fall in smartly at the sound of a footstep.

Quick: That's generalship; let Wrinkle be out-post too, at the other end of the path. Fear will give him enough courage to keep awake; if there's any danger they won't catch him napping.

Bot. Place them at their posts.

[*Exeunt BOTTLES and QUICKSTEP with BLOWER and WRINKLE.*]

Snap. This will be the finest day's work we've done—the finest—plenty of money—plenty; that's the only thing that people care for in our day, whether they're honest like ourselves or not—a useful thing too. Lord, only to think what company I kept in the days of my prosperity! and all through spending my money like dirt, your common cheap dirt, which no man heeds. There was Squire Shadow, an excellent judge of a saddle of mutton, and strong ale—strong ale, aye, that was his failing; and old Squire Broadsides, who rose to meet his third bottle of Burgundy as valiantly as tho' it were a Frenchman on the field of battle, and vanquished it. I warrant you he'd rather be drowned in Burgundy than live on water, though it came from the river Jordan, and he was a good man, too. Well, well, those were merry times [*sings*]

O money buys a vote, a vote;
 O money buys a church, a church;
 O money stops a noisy throat,
 For money let us search,—
 Let us search, search, search.

Lord, what a thing is this root of all evil! How we preach against it and struggle for it! [*sings*]—

It gives us many a friend, a friend;
It saves us in a lurch, a lurch;
It cheers our life, it cheers our end,
For money let us search,—
Let us search, search, search.

Bless me! the longer I live, the worse my voice grows.

[*Re-enter WRINKLE running, followed by BOTTLES and other Outlaws.*]

Wrinkle. Here they are! Here they are!

Bot. To ambush! To ambush!

[*All hide behind the bushes.*]

[*Enter VAYNOR, TUDOR, SIR IVOR, and SIR PHILIP. SNAPPER and the other Outlaws rush out upon them.*]

Sir Ivor. Stand off, rogues.

Bot. Tie them hand and foot. [*They struggle.*]

[*Enter GOMER, with a number of armed men.*]

Gomer. A rescue! a rescue!

[*A number of the Outlaws fly. GOMER and his followers seize SNAPPER, BOTTLES, QUICK-STEP, and others. During the struggle SIR PHILIP and SIR IVOR recognize GOMER.*]

Sir Ivor. Sir Philip, see your son. [*Turning to GOMER, who advances.*]

We owe you thanks, indeed, and more than thanks—

A debt of gratitude. If there is aught
Within my power that comes within the bent
Of your desires, 'tis yours.

Gom. Before the night

There is a favour I may ask.

Sir Ivor. 'Tis yours.

Sir Ph. You came upon the nick of time; these
rogues

Were one too many for us, Gomer.

Tud. O,
Your action saved us ; but I'm at a loss ;
Come, tell us, Gomer, how you found us here—
You and your men.

Gom. The tale is long ; but first
Let these arch-roguers be searched ; I know not which
[*pointing to SNAPPER and BOTTLES*]
But one of them, has hidden in his dress
A document that nearly touches one
Who's dear to Gwendolene, and others, too—
Or so I used to think. The document
Shows Guinevere's full pardon.

Vayn. Turn them over.

Sir Ivor. Shake their pockets inside out.

[*SNAPPER and BOTTLES are searched.*]

Bottles [*struggling*]. Let me alone, Taffy ; I'll swear
I have nothing but a piece of stale toasted cheese in my
pocket.

Tud. Have you no letter, or document, or pardon,
for one Guinevere about you ?

Bot. None, none.

Tud. Turn out your pockets.

Bot. I swear I have none—not a scrap—not a blessed
scrap ; I swear it. Do you think I'd perjure myself, like
the people of these parts ?

[*TUDOR takes the pardon out of BOTTLE'S
pocket and examines it.*]

Tud. This is a pardon for my cousin's friend,
For Guinevere !

Vayn. For Guinevere ?

Sir Ph. No ! No !

It cannot be.

Tud. See for yourself. This seal
Is not a forgery. [*Hands pardon to SIR PHILIP.*]

Sir Ph. No forgery,
I see. Yet Guinevere is lost to us.
She's dead. She left the country years ago.
Gom. I saw her not an hour ago. 'Twas she.
Vayn. Where? Where? With whom?
Gom. With Nest and Gwendolene.
Vayn. [to SIR PHILIP.] A confirmation of the tale we
heard.
Gom. They told me they would take their morning
walk
Along the smooth bank of the meadow stream,
Whose waters, on their heaving bosom, wear
Reflected impress of the convent tower.
They knew not of your coming here to-day,
Nor of your seeming danger, which, when shown—
For I explained the reason of the arms
That round environed me with friendly steel—
Shook them with sudden fear that hardly fled
When I disclosed my means of aiding you.
Vayn. [aside]. So Guinevere is pardoned. Pardon
brings
Her old possessions back, and I may play
On either string, the old love or the new.
[*To Gomer*]. Let's seek them out.
Gomer. Time, time enough. I left
A guard to succour them in case of need,
And under promise to assemble here
Within the hour, in which short space I hoped
That I should rescue you.
Sir Ivor. More friends! more friends!
[*Enter* LORD REGINALD, LADY BLANCHE, GWENDOLENE,
GUINEVERE, NEST, and Guard.]
Reg. Congratulations to you all, a good
Escape—your daughter [to *Sir Ivor*] told me how it stood
With Gomer and these outlaws, and that he
Had such a following as must overbear

The pilfering crew that haunts this wood.

Sir Ivor. Gomer,
'Tis time that you should claim some token now
To mark our thankfulness.

Gomer [*placing his hand on NEST'S shoulder*].
Then, pardon me,
If I should claim the best of womankind.
What says Sir Ivor, now?

Sir Ivor. I cannot yield
My daughter; she and Tudor are as one,
Unless he gives her liberty.

Nest. He will!

Tud. What say you, Gwendolene?

Sir Ph. She's dumb to all this pleading—dumb and
deaf. [*To GWENDOLENE.*]

She is affianced, sir.

Gwen. See, here is one,
Who, so I think, will question what you say.
Lord Vaynor, here is Guinevere.

Sir Ph. This is
My daughter's waiting-maid.

Tud. Ha! ha! Margaret,
This gives you liberty to change your name
To Guinevere [*hands her the pardon*].

Vayn. And to accept my hand;
'Tis Vaynor, look, have you forgotten me?

[*GUIN. turns away from VAYNOR.*]
Gwen. Well, father, who will have your daughter now?
Your lover is inconstant.

Tud. Gwendolene!
By your good leave, Sir Philip, she is mine.

Gom. And I to make amends, Sir Ivor, claim
Your daughter Nest.

Sir Ivor. The fates will have it so.

Lady B. This is a happy ending to our toil.

Reg. The fair reward of love and constancy.

Sir Ivor. I said we'd have a brace of weddings soon :
'Tis better still ; we have a threefold joy ;
And happiness, that seemed but yesterday
Beyond the circuit of our hopes, again
Has nestled in our joyful families.
Come Vaynor, Guinevere, what discord's this ?
These lovers' quarrels bring me back my youth.

Guin. This is not Vaynor, my embodied faith,
But some weak perjured soul that wears his form,
And with the outside mask of constancy
Conceals a faithless and inconstant heart.
The world is full of such. Nay, do not speak ;
I do not know you, sir. Vaynor is dead ;
He died three years ago.

Vayn. Hush, Guinevere !
'Tis Vaynor speaks, thy love, by honour's soul
I swear——

Guin. Are you a man of honour, sir ?
You pledged to Guinevere, an outlaw's child !
Sir Philip, give him credit for some sense.
What spite have I against him ?

Sir Ph. This is strange !
His very words !

Gwen. Remember, sir——

Vayn. Nay, nay ;
Forget whate'er I spoke in hastiness.

Guin. Which is he, fox or butterfly ? I'd call
The Vaynor whom I knew to shame you, sir,
But he is dead, and I, alas ! am free.
Such men as you in love ! O fie, fie, fie !
As well call every vagrant fancy love.
Come, Gwendolene, you treat this gentleman
Severely, laughing thus ; I know him not.

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

LONDON :

PRINTED BY C. F. ROWORTH, GREAT NEW ST., FETTER LANE, E.C.

