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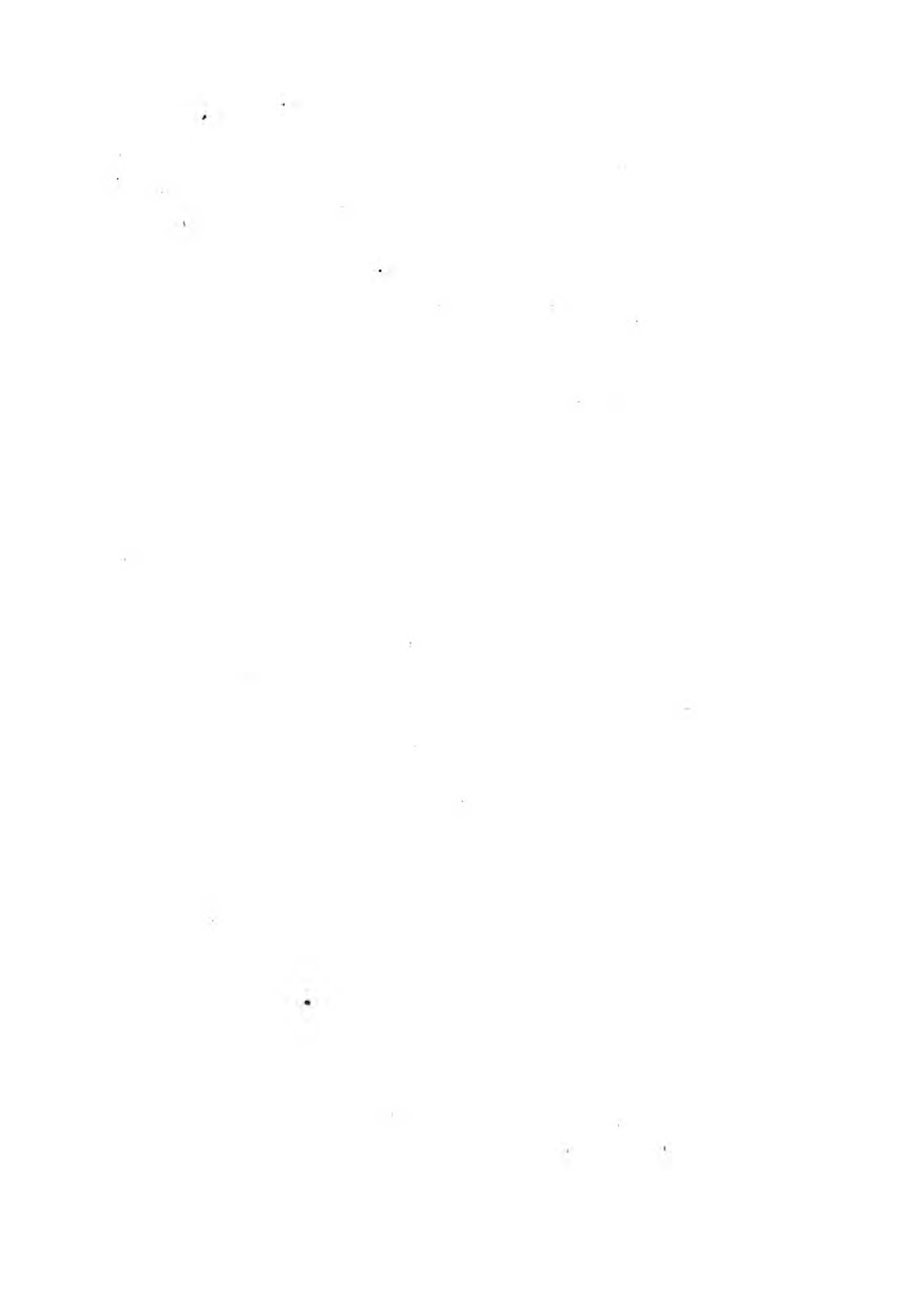
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ISABELLA



VILLEROY—HA! I AM DISTRACTED TOO! BIRON ALIVE.
ACT V. SCENE IV.

PAINTED BY WOODFORDE PUBLISHED BY LONGMAN & CO ENGRAVED BY GOLDING

ISABELLA ;

(1)

OR,

THE FATAL MARRIAGE ;

A TRAGEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS ;

BY THOMAS SOUTHERN.

AS PERFORMED AT THE

THEATRE ROYAL, COVENT GARDEN.

PRINTED UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE MANAGERS

FROM THE PROMPT BOOK.

WITH REMARKS

BY MRS. INCHBALD.

LONDON :

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, AND ORME,
PATERNOSTER ROW.



BAR.

T. Davison, Whitefriars, London.

REMARKS.

Southern, the author of this tragedy, was born in Dublin, in the year of the restoration, and received his education in the university there. He then came to England, and entered himself in the Middle Temple, as student of the law: but he neglected this study for the fame of writing plays, and soon after, wholly relinquished it for the adventures of the army. He was patronized by James the Second, when Duke of York, and served under that monarch, as captain, against the Duke of Monmouth.

Dryden being asked, whose genius, as a poet Southern resembled, compared him to Otway. Every reader will own the comparison just, for they have both unbounded force in the description of poignant grief.

The present drama, independent of its own worth, will be ever memorable for having introduced to the admiration of a London audience,—Mrs. Siddons.

Who will allege, that mental powers have no charm in the female sex? Mrs. Siddons performed on the London stage, in the prime of youth and bloom of beauty, yet was totally neglected: She came a few years after, with judgment for her aid, and was enthusiastically worshipped.

Woe, bitterest woe, must be gracefully imitated in the just performance of Isabella: but of such imitation, and of all those delightful sensations, which arise

from beholding fictitious sorrow, the audience of the metropolis had been for many years deprived, by the want of skilful tragedians, when she appeared,—she enchanted all the town by her “well painted passion,” and established in the dramatic world, the long lost prerogative of sighs and tears.

The characters which surround Isabella, are merely placed there by the author, to give effect to all she says and does. Insignificant as those personages are in themselves, they produce with her so happy a combination, that a most powerful tragedy is the result of their joint services.

Beyond the deepest pain, felt by an audience for Isabella's grief, there is a pang almost insupportable, which proceeds from her gratitude. The author has in no part of the tragedy more effectually wrung the hearts of those, who possess nice sensibility, than where this poor widow is overcome by kindness, to render herself additionally wretched, rather than be ungrateful.

“This generosity will ruin me”.—“I am contented to be miserable, but not this way.” These are sentences more pathetic to those, who feel acutely the weight of obligations, than any she pronounces.

Those very auditors are equally vivid in their sensations towards her faults, as her virtues; and shrink from the unjustifiable manner with which she treats men who come to demand their right; calling them “rav'ning bloodhounds.” A character, only half as amiable as the author meant her to appear, could not conduct herself towards her creditors, but with the most profound respect. Indeed was Isabella

largely indebted to any one amongst these men, and had not the means of payment,—moral argument, perhaps, could prove, she was bound as much in honour to marry *him* for value received, as to marry Villeroy.

This play is censured by some critics for its comic scenes;—the tragic are much superior, they want more of the last, and none of the first. But, more of Isabella, exquisite as she is, might cause satiety. The author in his work has given variety, and that variegated scene which nature gives.

Southern wrote no less than ten plays; of which, only this tragedy, and his *Oroonoko*, are remembered to the author's reputation.

He lived to the age of eighty-eight, and passed his latter days in retired serenity, having acquired, by his industry and strict economy, a considerable fortune. He was the first who increased the advantage of dramatic authors, by obtaining, in addition to the first, a second and third night for their emolument. He also raised the price of prologues, having given seven guineas to Dryden, on his demand of that sum, for a prologue, which, till then, had only been rated at five*. These occurrences gave occasion to the following lines of Pope:

“ ———Southern, born to raise
The price of prologues and of plays.”

* Johnson says only three. Cibber says seven was given. It has been thought proper here, to name the most dignified sum.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

COUNT BALDWIN	<i>Mr. Murray.</i>
BIRON	<i>Mr. Kemble.</i>
BIRON'S SON	<i>Miss Shotter.</i>
CARLOS	<i>Mr. C. Kemble</i>
VILLEROY	<i>Mr. Brunton.</i>
MAURICE	<i>Mr. Field.</i>
EGMONT	
BELFORD	<i>Mr. Claremont.</i>
GENTLEMEN	<i>Messrs. Sarjant, &c.</i>
OFFICER	<i>Mr. Atkins.</i>
SAMPSON	<i>Mr. Emery.</i>
SANCHO	<i>Mr. Truman.</i>
JUAN	<i>Mr. Wilde.</i>
TIPSTAVES	<i>Messrs. Street and Lewis.</i>
BRAVOS	{ <i>Messrs. King, Dubois, L. Bologna, &c.</i>
ISABELLA	<i>Mrs. Siddons.</i>
LADIES	<i>Mesdames Bologna, &c.</i>
NURSE	<i>Mrs. Davenport.</i>

OFFICERS, SERVANTS, MEN and WOMEN.

SCENE—*Brussels.*

ISABELLA.

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE I.

Street.

Enter VILLEROY and CARLOS.

Car. This constancy of yours, will establish an immortal reputation among the women.

Vil. If it would establish me with Isabella——

Car. Follow her, follow her: Troy town was won at last.

Vil. I have followed her these seven years, and now but live in hopes.

Car. But live in hopes! Why, hope is the ready road, the lover's baiting place; and for aught you know, but one stage short of the possession of your mistress.

Vil. But my hopes, I fear, are more of my own making than her's; and proceed rather from my wishes, than any encouragement she has given me.

Car. That I can't tell: the sex is very various: there are no certain measures to be prescribed or followed, in making our approaches to the women. All that we have to do, I think, is to attempt them in the weakest part. Press them but hard, and they will all fall under the necessity of a surrender at last. That

favour comes at once; and sometimes when we least expect it.

Vil. I'm going to visit her.

Car. What interest a brother-in-law can have with her depend upon.

Vil. I know your interest, and I thank you.

Car. You are prevented; see the mourner comes :
 She weeps, as seven years were seven hours ;
 So fresh, unfading, is the memory
 Of my poor brother's, Biron's, death :
 I leave you to your opportunity. [*Exit VILLEROY.*
 Though I have taken care to root her from our house,
 I would transplant her into Villeroy's—
 There is an evil fate that waits upon her,
 To which I wish him wedded—only him :
 His upstart family, with haughty brow,
 (Though Villeroy and myself are seeming friends)
 Looks down upon our house; his sister too,
 Whose hand I ask'd, and was with scorn refus'd,
 Lives in my breast, and fires me to revenge.—
 They bend this way.—
 Perhaps, at last, she seeks my father's doors ;
 They shall be shut, and he prepar'd to give
 The beggar and her brat a cold reception.
 That boy's an adder in my path—they come,
 I'll stand apart, and watch their motions. [*Exit.*

Enter VILLEROY and ISABELLA, with her Child.

Isa. Why do you follow me ? you know I am
 A bankrupt every way; too far engag'd.
 Ever to make return : I own you have been
 More than a brother to me, my friend :
 And at a time when friends are found no more,
 A friend to my misfortunes.

Vil. I must be
 Always your friend.

Isa. I have known, and found you

Truly my friend : and would I could be yours ;
But the unfortunate cannot be friends :
Pray begone,
Take warning, and be happy.

Vil. Happiness!

There's none for me without you.—
What serve the goods of fortune for? To raise
My hopes, that you at last will share them with me.

Isa. I must not hear you.

Vil. Thus, at this awful distance, I have serv'd
A seven year's bondage—Do I call it bondage,
When I can never wish to be redeem'd?
No, let me rather linger out a life
Of expectation, that you may be mine,
Than be restor'd to the indifference
Of seeing you, without this pleasing pain :
I've lost myself, and never would be found,
But in these arms.

Isa. Oh, I have heard all this!

——But must no more——the charmer is no more:
My buried husband rises in the face
Of my dear boy, and chides me for my stay:
Canst thou forgive me, child?

Vil. What can I say!

The arguments that make against my hopes
Prevail upon my heart, and fix me more ;
Those pious tears, you hourly throw away
Upon the grave, have all their quick'ning charms,
And more engage my love, to make you mine :
When yet a virgin, free, and undispos'd,
I lov'd, but saw you only with mine eyes ;
I could not reach the beauties of your soul :
I have since liv'd in contemplation,
And long experience of your growing goodness :
What then was passion, is my judgment now,
Through all the several changes of your life,
Confirm'd and settled in adoring you.

Isa. Nay, then I must begone. If you are my friend,
If you regard my little interest,
No more of this.
I'm going to my father; he needs not an excuse
To use me ill: pray leave me to the trial.

Vil. I'm only born to be what you would have me,
The creature of your power, and must obey
In every thing obey you. I am going:
But all good fortune go along with you. [Exit.

Isa. I shall need all your wishes—— [Knocks.
Lock'd! and fast!

Where is the charity that us'd to stand
In our forefathers' hospitable days
At great men's doors,
Like the good angel of the family,
With open arms taking the needy in,
To feed and clothe, to comfort and relieve them?
Now even their gates are shut against their poor.

[She knocks again.]

Enter SAMPSON.

Samp. Well, what's to do now, I trow? You knock
as loud as if you were invited; and that's more than
I heard of; but I can tell you, you may look twice
about you for a welcome in a great man's family, be-
fore you find it, unless you bring it along with
you.

Isa. I hope I do, sir.
Is your lord at home?

Samp. My lord at home!

Isa. Count Baldwin lives here still?

Samp. Ay, ay, Count Baldwin does live here; and
I am his porter; but what's that to the purpose, good
woman, of my lord's being at home?

Isa. Why, don't you know me, friend?

Samp. Not I, not I, mistress; I may have seen you.

before, or so; but men of employment must forget their acquaintance; especially such as we are never to be the better for. *[Going to shut the Door.]*

Enter NURSE.

Nurse. Handsomer words would become you, and mend your manners, Sampson: do you know who you prate to?

Isa. I am glad you know me, Nurse.

Nurse. Marry, Heav'n forbid, madam, that I should ever forget you, or my little jewel: pray go in [*ISABELLA goes in with her Child.*] Now my blessing go along with you, wherever you go, or whatever you are about. Fie, Sampson, how couldst thou be such a saracen? A Turk would have been a better christian, than to have done so barbarously by so good a lady.

Samp. Why, look you, Nurse, I know you of old: by your good will, you would have a finger in every body's pye, but mark the end on't; If I am called to account about it, I know what I have to say.

Nurse. Marry come up here; say your pleasure, and spare not. Refuse his eldest son's widow and poor child, the comfort of seeing him? She does not trouble him so often.

Samp. Not that I am against it, Nurse, but we are but servants, you know; we must have no likings, but our lord's, and must do as we are ordered. But what is the business, Nurse? You have been in the family before I came into the world: what's the reason, pray, that this daughter-in-law, who has so good a report in every body's mouth, is so little set by, by my lord?

Nurse. Why, I tell you, Sampson, more or less: I'll tell the truth, that's my way, you know, without adding or diminishing.

Samp. Ay, marry, Nurse.

Nurse. My lord's eldest son, Biron by name, the son of his bosom, and the son that he would have lov'd best, if he had as many as king Pyramus of

Troy. This Biron, as I was saying, was a lovely sweet gentleman, and, indeed, nobody could blame his father for loving him: he was a son for the king of Spain; Heaven bless him, for I was his nurse. But now I come to the point, Sampson; this Biron, without asking the advice of his friends, hand over head, as young men will have their vagaries, not having the fear of his father before his eyes, as I may say, wilfully marries this Isabella.

Samp. How, wilfully! he should have had her consent, methinks.

Nurse. No, wilfully marries her; and which was worse, after she had settled all her fortune upon a nunnery, which she broke out of to run away with him. They say they had the church's forgiveness, but I had rather it had been his father's.

Samp. Why, in good truth, and I think our young master was not in the wrong but in marrying without a portion.

Nurse. That was the quarrel, I believe, Sampson: upon this, my old lord would never see him: disinherited him; took his younger brother, Carlos, into favour, whom he never cared for before; and, at last, forced Biron to go to the siege of Candy, where he was killed.

Samp. Alack a-day, poor gentleman.

Nurse. For which my old lord hates her, as if she had been the cause of his going thither.

Samp. Alas, poor lady! she has suffered for it; she has lived a great while a widow.

Nurse. A great while indeed, for a young woman, Sampson.

Samp. Gad so! here they come; I won't venture to be seen. [*They retire.*]

Enter COUNT BALDWIN, *followed by* ISABELLA and *her Child.*

C. Bald. Whoever of your friends directed you, Misguided, and abus'd you——There's your way:

What could you expect from me ?

Isa. Oh, I have nothing to expect on earth !
But misery is very apt to talk :
I thought I might be heard.

C. Bald. What can you say ?
Is there in eloquence, can there be in words
A reparation of the injuries,
The great calamities, that you have brought
On me, and mine ? You have destroyed those hopes
I fondly rais'd, through my declining life,
To rest my age upon ; and most undone me.

Isa. I have undone myself too.

C. Bald. Speak it again ;
Say still you are undone ; and I will hear you,
With pleasure hear you.

Isa. Would my ruin please you ?

C. Bald. Beyond all other pleasures.

Isa. Then you are pleas'd—for I am most un-
done.

C. Bald. I pray'd but for revenge, and Heav'n has
heard,

And sent it to my wishes : these grey hairs
Would have gone down in sorrow to the grave,
Which you have dug for me, without the thought,
The thought of leaving you more wretched here.

Isa. Indeed I am most wretched—
I lost with Biron all the joys of life :
But now its last supporting means are gone.
All the kind helps that Heav'n in pity rais'd,
In charitable pity to our wants,
At last have left us : now bereft of all,
But this last trial of a cruel father,
To save us both from sinking. Oh, my child !
Kneel with me, knock at nature in his heart :
Let the resemblance of a once-lov'd son
Speak in this little one, who never wrong'd you,
And plead the fatherless and widow's cause.

Oh, if you ever hope to be forgiven,
Forget our faults, that Heaven may pardon yours !

C. Bald. How dare you mention Heav'n ! Call to
mind

Your perjur'd vows; your plighted, broken faith
To Heav'n, and all things holy; were you not
Devoted, wedded to a life recluse,
The sacred habit on, profess'd and sworn,
A votary for ever ? Can you think
The sacrilegious wretch, that robs the shrine,
Is thunder proof ?

Isa. There, there, began my woes.
Oh ! had I never seen my Biron's face,
Had he not tempted me, I had not fall'n,
But still continued innocent and free
Of a bad world, which only he had pow'r
To reconcile, and make me try again.

C. Bald. Your own inconstancy,
Reconcil'd you to the world :
He had no hand to bring you back again,
But what you gave him. Circe, you prevail'd
Upon his honest mind, transforming him
From virtue, and himself, into what shapes
You had occasion for ; and what he did
Was first inspir'd by you.

Isa. Not for myself—for I am past the hopes
Of being heard—but for this innocent——
And then I never will disturb you more.

C. Bald. I almost pity the unhappy child :
But being yours——

Isa. Look on him as your son's ;
And let his part in him answer for mine.
Oh, save, defend him, save him from the wrongs
That fall upon the poor !

C. Bald. It touches me——
And I will save him—But to keep him safe,
Never come near him more.

Isa. What! take him from me!
 No, we must never part.
 I live but in my child.
 No, let me pray in vain, and beg my bread
 From door to door, to feed his daily wants,
 Rather than always lose him.

C. Bald. Then have your child, and feed him with
 your prayer.

Isa. Then Heaven have mercy on me!

[*Exit, with Child.*]

C. Bald. You rascal, slave, what do I keep you for?
 How came this woman in?

Samp. Why, indeed, my lord, I did as good as tell
 her before, my thoughts upon the matter——

C. Bald. Did you so, sir? Now then tell her mine;
 Tell her I sent you to her.

Begone, go all together—I shall be glad to hear of
 you: but never, never see me more——

[*He drives them off before him.*]

ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE I.

The Street.

Enter VILLEROY and CARLOS, meeting.

Vil. My friend, I fear to ask—but Isabella——
 The lovely widow's tears, her orphan's cries,
 Thy father must feel for them——, No, I read,
 I read their cold reception in thine eyes——
 Thou pitiest them—though Baldwin—but I spare him

For Carlos' sake ; thou art no son of his.
There needs not this to endear thee more to me.

[*Embrace.*]

Car. My Villeroy, the fatherless, the widow,
Are terms not understood within these gates——
You must forgive him ; sir, he thinks this woman
Is Biron's fate, that hurried him to death——
I must not think on't, lest my friendship stagger.
My friend's, my sister's mutual advantage,
Have reconcil'd my bosom to its task.

Vil. Advantage ! think not I intend to raise
An interest from Isabella's wrongs.
Your father may have interested ends
In her undoing ; but my heart has none ;
Her happiness must be my interest,
And that I would restore.

Car. Why, so I mean.
These hardships, that my father lays upon her,
I'm sorry for, and wish I could prevent ;
But he will have his way. Since there's no hope
From her prosperity, her change of fortune
May alter the condition of her thoughts,
And make for you.

Vil. She is above her fortune.

Car. Try her again. Women commonly love
According to the circumstances they are in.

Vil. Common women may.

No, though I live but in the hopes of her,
And languish for th' enjoyment of those hopes ;
I'd rather pine in a consuming want
Of what I wish, than have the blessing mine,
From any reason but consenting love.
Oh ! let me never have it to remember,
I could betray her coldly to comply :
When a clear gen'rous choice bestows her on me,
I know to value the unequal'd gift :
I would not have it, but to value it.

Car. Take your own way; remember, what I offer'd
Came from a friend.

Vil. I understand it so.
I'll serve her for herself, without the thought
Of a reward. [Exit.

Car. Agree that point between you.
If you marry her any way, you do my business.
I know him—What his generous soul intends
Ripens my plots—I'll first to Isabella.—
I must keep up appearances with her too. [Exit.

SCENE II.

House.

ISABELLA and NURSE discovered. ISABELLA'S
Son at play.

Isa. Sooner, or later, all things pass away,
And are no more. The beggar and the king,
With equal steps, tread forward to their end:
The reconciling grave
Swallows distinction first, that made us foes;
Then all alike lie down in peace together. [Weeping.

Nurse. Good madam, be comforted.

Isa. Do I deserve to be this outcast wretch;
Abandon'd thus, and lost? But 'tis my lot,
The will of Heav'n, and I must not complain:
I will not for myself: let me bear all
The violence of your wrath; but spare my child:
Let not my sins be visited on him:
They are; they must; a general ruin falls
On every thing about me: thou art lost,
Poor Nurse, by being near me.

Nurse. I can work, or beg, to do you service.

Isa. Could I forget
What I have been, I might the better bear

What I am destin'd to. Wild hurrying thoughts
 Start every way from my distracted soul.
 To find out hope, and only meet despair.
 What answer have I?

Enter SAMPSON.

Samp. Why, truly, very little to the purpose: like
 a Jew as he is, he says you have had more already
 than the jewels are worth: he wishes you would
 rather think of redeeming 'em, than expect any more
 money upon 'em. *[Exit SAMPSON.]*

Isa. So:—Poverty at home, and debts abroad!
 My present fortune bad; my hopes yet worse!
 What will become of me!
 This ring is all I have left of value now;
 'Twas given me by my husband; his first gift
 Upon our marriage: I've always kept it
 With my best care, the treasure next my life:
 And now but part with it to support life,
 Which only can be dearer. Take it, Nurse,
 Take care of it:
 Manage it as the last remaining friend
 That would relieve us. *[Exit NURSE.]* Heav'n can
 only tell
 Where we shall find another—My dear boy!
 The labour of his birth was lighter to me
 Than of my fondness now; my fears for him
 Are more, than in that hour of hovering death,
 They could be for myself—He minds me not,
 His little sports have taken up his thoughts:
 Oh, may they never feel the pangs of mine!
 Thinking will make me mad: why must I think,
 When no thought brings me comfort?

Enter NURSE.

Nurse. Oh, madam! you are utterly ruined and
 undone; your creditors of all kinds are come in upon
 you; they have mustered up a regiment of rogues,

that are come to plunder your house, and seize upon all you have in the world: they are below. What will you do, madam?

Isa. Do! nothing! no, for I am born to suffer.

Enter CARLOS.

Car. Oh, sister! can I call you by that name,
And be the son of this inhuman man,
Inveterate to your ruin? Can you think
Of any way that I may serve you in?
But what enrages most my sense of grief,
My sorrow for your wrongs, is, that my father,
Foreknowing well the storm that was to fall,
Has ordered me not to appear for you.

Isa. I thank your pity; my poor husband fell
For disobeying him; do not you stay
To venture his displeasure too for me.

Car. You must resolve on something— *[Exit.*

Isa. Hark, they are coming: let the torrent roar:
It can but overwhelm me in its fall;
And life and death are now alike to me.

[Exeunt, the NURSE leading the Child.

SCENE III.

Antichamber in ISABELLA'S House.

CARLOS and VILLEROY, with Officers.

Vil. No farther violence—

The debt in all is but four thousand crowns:
Were it ten times the sum, I think you know
My fortune very well can answer it.
You have my word for this: I'll see you paid.

Offi. That's as much as we can desire: so we have
the money, no matter whence it comes.

Vil. To-morrow you shall have it.

Car. Thus far all's well——

Enter ISABELLA, and NURSE, with the Child.

And now my sister comes to crown the work. [*Aside.*

Isa. Where are these rav'ning blood-hounds, that pursue

In a full cry, gaping to swallow me ?

I meet your rage, and come to be devour'd ;

Say, which way are you to dispose of me ;

To dungeons, darkness, death ? -

Car. Have patience.

Isa. Patience !

Offi. You'll excuse us, we are but in our office.

Debts must be paid.

Isa. My death will pay you all. [*Distractedly.*

Offi. While there is law to be had, people will have their own.

Vil. 'Tis very fit they should ; but pray be gone.

To-morrow certainly—— [*Exeunt OFFICERS.*

Isa. What of to-morrow ?

Must I be reserv'd for fresh afflictions ?

Vil. For long happiness of life, I hope.

Isa. There is no hope for me.

The load grows light, when we resolve to bear :

I'm ready for my trial.

Car. Pray, be calm,

And know your friends.

Isa. My friends ? Have I a friend ?

Car. A faithful friend ; in your extremest need, Villeroy came in to save you——

Isa. Save me ! How ?

Car. By satisfying all your creditors.

Isa. Which way ? for what ?

Vil. Let me be understood,

And then condemn me : you have given me leave

To be your friend ; and in that only name

I now appear before you. I could wish

There had been no occasion of a friend,
Because I know you hate to be oblig'd ;
And still more loath to be oblig'd by me.

Isa. 'Twas that I would avoid—— [Aside.

Vil. I'm most unhappy that my services
Can be suspected to design upon you ;
I have no farther ends than to redeem you
From fortune's wrongs ; to show myself at last,
What I have long profess'd to be, your friend :
Allow me that ; and to convince you more,
That I intend only your interest,
Forgive what I have done, and in amends
(If that can make you any, that can please you)
I'll tear myself for ever from my hopes,
Stifle this flaming passion in my soul,
And mention my unlucky love no more.

Isa. This generosity will ruin me. [Aside.

Vil. Nay, if the blessing of my looking on you
Disturbs your peace, I will do all I can
To keep away, and never see you more. [Going.

Car. You must not go.

Vil. Could Isabella speak
Those few short words, I should be rooted here,
And never move but upon her commands.

Car. Speak to him, sister ; do not throw away
A fortune that invites you to be happy.
In your extremity he begs your love ;
And has deserv'd it nobly. Think upon
Your lost condition, helpless and alone.
Though now you have a friend, the time must come
That you will want one ; him you may secure
To be a friend, a father, a husband to you.

Isa. A husband !

Car. You have discharg'd your duty to the
dead,
And to the living ! 'tis a wilfulness
Not to give way to your necessities,
That force you to this marriage.

Nurse. What must become of this poor innocence ?

[*To the Child.*

Car. He wants a father to protect his youth,
And rear him up to virtue : you must bear
The future blame, and answer to the world,
When you refuse the easy, honest means
Of taking care of him.

Isa. Do not think I need
Your reasons, to confirm my gratitude;
I have a soul that's truly sensible
Of your great worth, and busy to contrive,
[*To VILLEROY.*

If possible, to make you a return.

Vil. Oh, easily possible !

Isa. It cannot be your way : my pleasures are
Bury'd, and cold in my dead husband's grave ;
And I should wrong the truth, myself, and you,
To say that I can ever love again.
I owe this declaration to myself :
But as a proof that I owe all to you,
If, after what I have said, you can resolve
To think me worth your love—Where am I going ?
You cannot think it; 'tis impossible.

Vil. Impossible !

Isa. You should not ask me now, nor should I
grant ;

I am so much oblig'd, that to consent
Would want a name to recommend the gift :
'Twould show me poor, indebted, and compell'd,
Designing, mercenary : and I know
You would not wish to think I could be bought.

Vil. Be bought ! where is the price that can pretend
To bargain for you ? Not in Fortune's power.
The joys of Heav'n, and love, must be bestow'd ;
They are not to be sold, and cannot be deserv'd.

Isa. Some other time I'll hear you on this subject.

Vil. Nay, then there is no time so fit for me.

[*Following her.*

Since you consent to hear me, hear me now ;
That you may grant : you are above

[*Takes her Hand.*

The little forms which circumscribe your sex ;
We differ but in time, let that be mine.

Isa. You think fit
To get the better of me, and you shall ;
Since you will have it so——I will be yours.

Vil. I take you at your word.

Isa. I give you all,
My hand : and would I had a heart to give :
But if it ever can return again,
'Tis wholly yours.

Vil. Oh, ecstasy of joy !
Leave that to me. If all my services,
If all that man can fondly say or do,
Can beget love, love shall be born again.
Oh, Carlos! now my friend, and brother too :
And, Nurse, I have eternal thanks for thee.

[*Exeunt NURSE and Child.*

This night you must be mine.
Let me command in this, and all my life
Shall be devoted to you.

Isa. On your word,
Never to press me to put off these weeds,
Which best become my melancholy thoughts,
You shall command me.

Vil. Witness, Heaven and earth,
Against my soul, when I do any thing
To give you a disquiet.

Car. I long to wish you joy.

Vil. You'll be a witness of my happiness ?

Car. For once I'll be my sister's father,
And give her to you.

Vil. Next my Isabella,
Be near my heart : I am for ever yours. [*Exeunt.*

ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE I.

COUNT BALDWIN'S *House.*

Enter COUNT BALDWIN *and* CARLOS.

C. Bald. Married to Villeroy, say'st thou ?

Car. Yes, my lord.

Last night the priest perform'd his holy office,
And made them one.

C. Bald. Misfortune join them!
And may her violated vows pull down
A lasting curse, a constancy of sorrow
On both their heads.

Car. Soon he'll hate her ;
Though warm and violent in his raptures now ;
When full enjoyment palls his sicken'd sense,
And reason with satiety returns,
Her cold constrain'd acceptance of his hand
Will gall his pride, which (though of late o'erpower'd
By stronger passions) will, as they grow weak,
Rise in full force, and pour its vengeance on her.

C. Bald. Now, Carlos, take example to thy aid ;
Let Biron's disobedience, and the curse
He took into his bosom, prove a warning,
A monitor to thee, to keep thy duty
Firm and unshaken.

Car. May those rankling wounds,
Which Biron's disobedience gave my father,
Be heal'd by me.

C. Bald. With tears I thank thee, Carlos—
And may'st thou ever feel those inward joys,
Thy duty gives thy father—but, my son,
We must not let resentment choke our justice;
'Tis fit that Villeroy know he has no claim
From me, in right of Isabella.—Biron,
(Whose name brings tears) when wedded to this
woman,
By me abandon'd, sunk the little fortune
His uncle left, in vanity and fondness:
I am possess'd of those your brother's papers,
Which now are Villeroy's, and, should aught remain,
In justice it is his; from me to him
You shall convey them—follow me, and take them.

[*Exit C. BALDWIN.*

Car. Yes, I will take them; but ere I part with
them,

I will be sure my interest will not suffer
By these his high, refin'd, fantastic notions
Of equity and right.—What a paradox
Is man! My father here, who boasts his honour,
And even but now was warm in praise of justice,
Can steel his heart against the widow's tears,
And infant's wants: the widow and the infant
Of Biron; of his son, his fav'rite son.
'Tis ever thus weak minds, who court opinion,
And dead to virtuous feeling, hide their wants
In pompous affectation—Now to Villeroy—
Ere this his friends, for he is much lov'd,
Crowd to his house, and with their nuptial songs
Awake the wedded pair: I'll join the throng,
And in my face, at least, bear joy and friendship.
[*Exit.*

SCENE II.

A Ball Room in VILLEROY'S House.—A Band of Music, with MAURICE, and other Friends of VILLEROY.

Enter a SERVANT.

Maur. Where's your master, my good friend?

Serv. Within, sir,

Preparing for the welcome of his friends.

Maur. Acquaint him we are here; yet stay,

[*Exit SERVANT.*]

The voice of music gently shall surprise him,

And breathe our salutations to his ear.

Strike up the strain to Villeroy's happiness,

To Isabella's—But he's here already.

Enter VILLEROY.

Vil. My friends, let me embrace you:

Welcome all——

What means this preparation? [*Seeing the Music.*]

Maur. A slight token

Of our best wishes for your growing happiness.——

You must permit our friendship——

Vil. You oblige me——

Maur. But your lovely bride,

That wonder of her sex, she must appear,

And add new brightness to this happy day.

Vil. She is not yet prepar'd; and let her will,

My worthiest friend, determine her behaviour;

To win, and not to force her disposition,

Has been my seven years task. She will'anon,

Speak welcome to you all. The music stays.

[*VILLEROY and his Friends seat themselves.*]

EPITHALAMIUM.

Woman. *Let all, let all be gay,
Begin the rapt'rous lay;
Let mirth, let mirth and joy,
Each happy hour employ
Of this fair bridal day.*

Man. *Ye love-wing'd hours, your flight,
Your downy flight prepare,
Bring ev'ry soft delight
To sooth the brave and fair.
Hail, happy pair, thus in each other bless'd;
Be ever free from care, of ev'ry joy possess'd!*

Vil. I thank you for the proof of your affection:
I am so much transported with the thoughts
Of what I am, I know not what I do.
My Isabella!—but, possessing her,
Who would not lose himself?—You'll pardon me—
Oh! there was nothing wanting to my soul,
But the kind wishes of my loving friends—
Where's Carlos now?
Methinks I am but half myself without him.

Maur. This is wonderful! married, and yet in raptures.

Vil. Oh! when you all get wives, and such as mine,
(If such another woman can be found)
You will rave too, dote on the dear content,
And prattle in their praise out of all bounds.

Enter ISABELLA and Child.

My Isabella! Oh, the joy of my heart,
That I have leave at last to call you mine!
But let me look upon you, view you well.
This is a welcome gallantry indeed!
I durst not ask, but it was kind to grant,
Just at this time: dispensing with your dress
Upon this second day to greet our friends.

Isa. Black might be ominous;
I would not bring ill luck along with me.

Vil. Oh! if your melancholy thoughts could
change
With shifting of your dress—Time has done cures
Incredible this way, and may again.

Isa. I could have wish'd, if you had thought it fit,
Our marriage had not been so public.

Vil. Do not you grudge me my excess of love;
That was a cause it could not be conceal'd:
Besides, 'twould injure the opinion
I have of my good fortune, having you;
And lessen it in other people's thoughts.

Isa. I have no more to say.

Enter CARLOS.

Vil. My Carlos too, who came in to the support
Of our bad fortune, has an honest right,
In better times, to share the good with us.

Car. I come to claim that right, to share your joy;
To wish you joy; and find it in myself;
For a friend's happiness reflects a warmth,
A kindly comfort, into every heart
That is not envious.

Vil. He must be a friend indeed,
Who is not envious of a happiness
So absolute as mine: but if you are,
(As I have reason to believe you are)
Concern'd for my well being, there's the cause;
Thank her for what I am, and what must be.

[*Music flourish.*]

I see you mean a second entertainment.
My dearest Isabella, you must hear
The raptures of my friends; from thee they spring;
Thy virtues have diffus'd themselves around,
And made them all as happy as myself.

Isa. I feel their favours with a grateful heart,
And willingly comply.

DUET.

*Take the gifts the gods intend ye ;
Grateful meet the proffer'd joy ;
Truth and honour shall attend ye ;
Charms, that ne'er can change or cloy.*

*Oh, the raptures of possessing,
Taking beauty to thy arms !
Oh, the joy, the lasting blessing,
When with virtue beauty charms !
Purer flames shall gently warm ye ;
Love and honour both shall charm thee.*

Car. You'll take my advice another time, sister.

Vil. What have you done ? A rising smile
Stole from her thoughts, just redd'ning on her cheek,
And you have dash'd it.

Car. I'm sorry for't.

Vil. My friends, you will forgive me, when I own,
I must prefer her peace to all the world ?
Come, Isabella, let us lead the way :
Within we'll speak our welcome to our friends,
And crown the happy festival with joy. [Exeunt.

SCENE III.

A Room.

Enter SAMPSON and NURSE.

Samp. Ay, marry, nurse, here's a master, indeed !
He'll double our wages for us ! If he comes on as fast
with my lady, as he does with his servants, we are all
in the way to be well pleased.

Nurse. He's in a rare humour ; if she be in as
good a one——

Samp. If she be, marry, we may e'en say, they
have begot it upon one another.

Nurse. Well ; why don't you go back again to your

old Count? You thought your throat cut, I warrant you, to be turned out of a nobleman's service.

Samp. For the future, I will never serve in a house, where the master or mistress of it lie single: they are out of humour with every body when they are not pleased themselves. Now, this matrimony makes every thing go well. There's mirth and money stirring about, when those matters go as they should do.

Nurse. Indeed, this matrimony, Sampson—

Samp. Ah, nurse! this matrimony is a very good thing—but what, now my lady is married, I hope we shall have company come to the house: there's something always coming from one gentleman or other upon those occasions, if my lady loves company. This feasting looks well, nurse. Odso, my master! we must not be seen. [*Exit.*

Enter VILLEROY, with a letter, and ISABELLA.

Vil. I must away this momont—see his letter, Sign'd by himself: alas! he could no more; My brother's desperate, and cannot die In peace, but in my arms.

Isa. So suddenly!

Vil. Suddenly taken, on the road to Brussels, To do us honour, love; unfortunate! Thus to be torn from thee, and all those charms, Though cold to me and dead.

Isa. I'm sorry for the cause.

Vil. Oh! could I think, Could I persuade myself, that your concern For me, or for my absence, were the spring, The fountain, of these melancholy thoughts, My heart would dance, spite of the sad occasion, And be a gay companion in my journey;

Enter CARLOS.

My good Carlos, why have you left my friends?

Car. They are departed home.

They saw some sudden melancholy news
 Had stolen the lively colour from your cheek——
 You had withdrawn, the bride, alarm'd, had follow'd:
 Mere ceremony had been constraint; and this
 Goodnatured rudeness——

Vil. Was the more obliging.

There, Carlos, is the cause. *[Gives the letter.*

Car. Unlucky accident!

Th' archbishop of Malines, your worthy brother——
 With him to-night! Sister, will you permit it?

Vil. It must be so.

Isa. You hear it must be so.

Vil. Oh, that it must!

Car. To leave your bride so soon!

Vil. But having the possession of my love,
 I am the better able to support
 My absence, in the hopes of my return.

Car. Your stay will be but short?

Vil. It will seem long!

The longer that my Isabella sighs:
 I shall be jealous of this rival grief,
 It takes so full possession of thy heart,
 There is not room enough for mighty love.

Enter SERVANT, bows, and exit.

My horses wait: farewell, my love! You, Carlos,
 Will act a brother's part, till I return,
 And be the guardian here. All, all I have
 That's dear to me, I give up to your care.

Car. And I receive her as a friend and brother.

Vil. Nay, stir not, love! for the night air is cold,
 And the dews fall—Here be our end of parting;
 Carlos will see me to my horse. *[Exit with CARLOS.*

Isa. Oh, may thy brother better all thy hopes!
 Adieu,

A sudden melancholy bakes my blood!
 Forgive me, Villeroy——I do not find
 That cheerful gratitude thy service asks:

Yet, if I know my heart, and sure I do,
 'Tis not averse from honest obligation.
 I'll to my chamber, and to bed: my mind,
 My harass'd mind, is weary.

[Exit.

 ACT THE FOURTH.

SCENE I.

*The Street.**Enter BIRON and BELFORD.*

Bir. The longest day will have an end; we are got home at last.

Bel. We have got our legs at liberty; and liberty is home, where'er we go; though mine lies most in England.

Bir. Pray let me call this yours: for what I can commands in Brussels, you shall find your own. I have a father here, who, perhaps, after seven years absence, and costing him nothing in my travels, may be glad to see me. You know my story—How does my disguise become me?

Bel. Just as you would have it; 'tis natural, and will conceal you.

Bir. To-morrow you shall be sure to find me here, as early as you please. This is the house, you have observed the street.

Bel. I warrant you: your directions will carry me to my lodgings. [Exit.

Bir. Good night, my friend.

The long expected moment is arriv'd!
 And if all here is well, my past sorrows
 Will only heighten my excess of joy;
 And nothing will remain to wish or hope for!

[Knocks again.

Enter SAMPSON.

Samp. Who's there! What would you have?

Bir. Is your lady at home, friend?

Samp. Why, truly, friend, it is my employment to answer impertinent questions: but for my lady's being at home, or no, that's just as my lady pleases.

Bir. But how shall I know, whether it pleases her or no?

Samp. Why, if you'll take my word for it, you may carry your errand back again: she never pleases to see any body at this time of night, that she does not know: and by your dress and appearance, I am sure, you must be a stranger to her.

Bir. But I have business; and you don't know how that may please her.

Samp. Nay, if you have business, she is the best judge whether your business will please her or no: therefore I will proceed in my office, and know of my lady whether or no she is pleas'd to be at home or no—

[*Going.*

Enter NURSE.

Nurse. Who's that you are so busy withal? Methinks you might have found an answer in fewer words: but, Sampson, you love to hear yourself prate sometimes, as well as your betters, that I must say for you. Let me come to him. Who would you speak with, stranger?

Bir. With you, mistress, if you could help me to speak to your lady.

Nurse. Yes, sir, I can help you in a civil way: but can nobody do your business but my lady?

Bir. Not so well; but if you carry her this ring, she'll know my business better.

Nurse. There's no love-letter in it, I hope; you look like a civil gentleman. In an honest way, I may bring you an answer.

[*Exit.*

Bir. My old nurse, only a little older; They say the tongue grows always: mercy on me! then her's is seven years longer, since I left her. Yet there is something in these servants' folly pleases me: the cautious conduct of the family appears, and speaks in their impertinence. Well, mistress——

NURSE returns.

Nurse. I have deliver'd your ring, sir! pray Heav'n, you bring no bad news along with you!

Bir. Quite contrary, I hope.

Nurse. Nay, I hope so too; but my lady was very much surprised when I gave it her. Sir, I am but a servant, as a body may say; but if you'll walk in, that I may shut the doors, for we keep very orderly hours, I can show you into the parlour, and help you to an answer, perhaps as soon as those that are wiser.

[*Exit.*

Bir. I'll follow you——
Now all my spirits hurry to my heart,
And every sense has taken the alarm
At this approaching interview!
Heav'ns! how I tremble!

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.

A Chamber.

Enter ISABELLA.

Isa. I've heard of witches, magic spells, and charms,
That have made nature start from her old course:
The sun has been eclips'd, the moon drawn down
From her career, still paler, and subdu'd
To the abuses of this under world!
Now I believe all possible. This ring,
This little ring, with necromantic force,

Has raised the ghost of pleasure to my fears ;
 Conjur'd the sense of honour, and of love,
 Into such shapes, they fright me from myself!
 I dare not think of them——

Enter NURSE.

Nurse. Madam, the gentleman's below.

Isa. I had forgot, pray let me speak with him ;

[*Exit NURSE.*

This ring was the first present of my love
 To Biron, my first husband: I must blush
 To think I have a second. Biron dy'd
 (Still to my loss) at Candy; there's my hope.
 Oh, do I live to hope, that he dy'd there?
 It must be so; he's dead, and this ring left,
 By his last breath, to some known faithful friend,
 To bring me back again;
 That's all I have to trust to——

Enter BIRON. [*ISABELLA looking at him.*]

My fears were woman's——I have view'd him all:
 And let me, let me say it to myself,
 I live again, and rise but from his tomb.

Bir. Have you forgot me quite?

Isa. Forgot you!

Bir. Then farewell my disguise, and my misfor-
 tunes.

My Isabella!

[*He goes to her; she shrieks, and faints.*

Isa. Ha!

Bir. Oh! come again:

Thy Biron summons thee to life and love ;
 Thy once lov'd, ever loving husband calls——
 Thy Biron speaks to thee.

Isa. My husband! Biron!

Bir. Excess of love and joy, for my return,
 Has overpower'd her——I was to blame
 To take thy sex's softness unprepar'd:
 But sinking thus, thus dying in my arms,

This ecstasy has made my welcome more
Than words could say.

Isa. Where have I been? Why do you keep him
from me?

I know his voice: my life, upon the wing,
Hears the soft lute that brings me back again;
'Tis he himself, my Biron.

If I must fall, death's welcome in these arms.

Bir. Live ever in these arms.

Isa. But pardon me,
Excuse the wild disorder of my soul;
The joy, the strange surprising joy of seeing you,
Of seeing you again, distracted me——
What hand of Providence has brought you back
To your own home again?

O, tell me all,

For every thought confounds me.

Bir. My best life! at leisure, all.

Isa. We thought you dead; kill'd at the siege of
Candy.

Bir. There I fell among the dead;
But hopes of life reviving from my wounds,
I was preserv'd but to be made a slave;
I often writ to my hard father, but never had
An answer; I writ to thee too——

Isa. What a world of woe
Had been prevented but in hearing from you!

Bir. Alas! thou couldst not help me.

Isa. You do not know how much I could have done;
At least, I'm sure I could have suffer'd all;
I would have sold myself to slavery,
Without redemption; giv'n up my child,
The dearest part of me, to basest wants——

Bir. My little boy!

Isa. My life, but to have heard
You were alive.

Bir. No more, my love; complaining of the past,
We lose the present joy. 'Tis over price.

Of all my pains, that thus we meet again——
I have a thousand things to say to thee——

Isa. 'Would I were past the hearing! [Aside.

Bir. How does my child, my boy, my father, too?
I hear he's living still.

Isa. Well, both, both well;
And may he prove a father to your hopes,
Though we have found him none.

Bir. Come, no more tears.

Isa. Seven long years of sorrow for your loss,
Have mourn'd with me——

Bir. And all my days behind
Shall be employ'd in a kind recompense
For :by afflictions— Can't i see my boy?

Isa. He's gone to-bed; I'll have him brought to you.

Bir. To-morrow I shall see him; I want rest
Myself, after this weary pilgrimage.

Isa. Alas! what shall I get for you?

Bir. Nothing but rest, my love! To-night I would not
Be known, if possible, to your family:
I see my nurse is with you; her welcome
Would be tedious at this time;
To-morrow will do better.

Isa. I'll dispose of her, and order every thing
As you would have it. [Exit.

Bir. Grant me but life, good Heav'n, and give the
means

To make this wondrous goodness some amends;
And let me then forget her, if I can!
O! she deserves of me much more, than I
Can lose for her, though I again could venture
A father, and his fortune, for her love!
You wretched fathers, blind as fortune all!
Not to perceive, that such a woman's worth
Weighs down the portions you provide your sons:
What is your trash, what all your heaps of gold,
Compar'd to this, my heart-felt happiness?
What has she, in my absence, undergone?

I must not think of that ; it drives me back
Upon myself, the fatal cause of all.

Enter ISABELLA.

Isa. I have obey'd your pleasure ;
Every thing is ready for you.

Bir. I can want nothing here : possessing thee,
All my desires are carry'd to their aim
Of happiness : there's no room for a wish,
But to continue still this blessing to me :
I know the way, my love. I shall sleep sound.

Isa. Shall I attend you ?

Bir. By no means :
I've been so long a slave to others' pride,
To learn, at least, to wait upon myself ;
You'll make haste after——

Isa. I'll but say my prayers, and follow you——

[*Exit BIRON.*]

My prayers ! no, I must never pray again.
Prayers have their blessings, to reward our hopes,
But I have nothing left to hope for more.
Oh, Biron, hadst thou come but one day sooner !

[*Weeping.*]

——What's to be done——for something must be done.
Two husbands ! yet not one ! married to both,
And yet a wife to neither ! Hold, my brain——
Ha ! a lucky thought
Works the right way to rid me of them all ;
All the reproaches, infamies, and scorns,
That every tongue and finger will find for me.
Let the just horror of my apprehensions
But keep me warm——no matter what can come.
'Tis but a blow——yet I will see him first——
Have a last look, to heighten my despair,
And then to rest for ever.——

BIRON meets her.

Bir. Despair and rest for ever ! Isabella !

These words are far from thy condition ;
And be they ever so. I heard thy voice,
And could not bear thy absence ; come, my love !
You have stay'd long, there's nothing, nothing sure
Now to despair of in succeeding fate.

Isa. I am contented to be miserable,
But not this way: I've been too long abus'd,
And can believe no more.
Let me sleep on, to be deceiv'd no more.

Bir. Look up, my love, I never did deceive thee,
Nor ever can ; believe thyself, thy eyes
That first inflam'd, and light me to my love,
Those stars, that still must guide me to my joys.

Isa. And me to my undoing : I look round,
And find no path, but leading to the grave.

Bir. I cannot understand thee.

Isa. If marriages
Are made in Heaven, they should be happier :
Why was I made this wretch ?

Bir. Has marriage made thee wretched ?

Isa. Miserable, beyond the reach of comfort.

Bir. Do I live to hear thee say so ?

Isa. Why, what did I say ?

Bir. That I have made thee miserable.

Isa. No: you are my only earthly happiness :
And my false tongue bely'd my honest heart,
If it said otherwise.

Bir. And yet you said,
Your marriage made you miserable.

Isa. I know not what I said :
I've said too much, unless I could speak all.

Bir. Thy words are wild ; my eyes, my ears, my heart,
Were all so full of thee, so much employ'd
In wonder of thy charms, I could not find it ;
Now I perceive it plain——

Isa. You'll tell no body——

Bir. Thou art not well.

Isa. Indeed I am not; I knew that before;
But where's the remedy?

Bir. Rest will relieve thy cares: come, come, no more;
I'll banish sorrow from thee.

Isa. Banish first the cause.

Bir. Heaven knows how willingly.

Isa. You are the only cause.

Bir. Am I the cause? the cause of thy misfortunes?

Isa. The fatal innocent cause of all my woes.

Bir. Is this my welcome home! This the reward
Of all my miseries, long labours, pains,
And pining wants of wretched slavery,
Which I've outliv'd, only in hopes of thee,
Am I thus paid at last for deathless love:
And call'd the cause of thy misfortunes now?

Isa. Inquire no more; 'twill be explain'd too soon.

[*Going off.*]

Bir. What! canst thou leave me too?

Isa. Pray let me go:

For both our sakes, permit me——

Bir. Rack me not with imaginations
Of things impossible——Thou canst not mean
What thou hast said——Yet something she must mean.
—'Twas madness all——Compose thyself, my love!
The fit is past; all may be well again:
Let us to bed.

Isa. To bed! You've rais'd the storm
Will sever us for ever.
The rugged hand of fate has got between
Our meeting hearts, and thrusts them from their joys.

Bir. Nothing shall ever part us.

Isa. Oh! there's a fatal story to be told;
Be deaf to that, as Heaven has been to me!
When thou shalt hear how much thou hast been
wrong'd,
How wilt thou curse thy fond believing heart,
Tear me from the warm bosom of thy love,

And throw me like a poisonous weed away !
 When I am dead, forgive and pity me. [Exit.

Bir. What can she mean? These doubtings will
 distract me :

Some hidden mischief soon will burst to light ;
 I cannot bear it—I must be satisfied——

'Tis she, my wife, must clear this darkness to me.

She shall—if the sad tale at last must come !

She is my fate, and best can speak my doom.

[Exit.

ACT THE FIFTH.

SCENE I.

A Chamber.

Enter BIRON and NURSE.

Bir. I know enough : th' important question
 Of life or death, fearful to be resolv'd,
 Is clear'd to me : I see where it must end :
 And need inquire no more—Pray, let me have
 Pen, ink, and paper ; I must write a while,
 And then I'll try to rest—to rest for ever !

[Exit NURSE.

Poor Isabella! now I know the cause,
 The cause of thy distress, and cannot wonder
 That it has turn'd thy brain. If I look back
 Upon thy loss, it will distract me too.
 Oh, any curse but this might be remov'd !
 But 'twas the rancorous malignity
 Of all ill stars combin'd, of Heav'n and fate——
 Hold, hold my impious tongue—Alas ! I rave :
 Why do I tax the stars, or Heav'n, or fate ?
 My father and my brother are my fates,
 That drive me to my ruin. They knew well

I was alive. Too well they knew how dear
 My Isabella——Oh! my wife no more!
 How dear her love was to me—Yet they stood,
 With a malicious silent joy, stood by,
 And saw her give up all my happiness,
 The treasure of her beauty to another;
 Stood by, and saw her married to another:
 Oh, cruel father, and unnatural brother!
 I have but to accuse you of my wrongs,
 And then to fall forgotten——Sleep or death
 Sits heavy on me, and benumbs my pains:
 Either is welcome; but the hand of death
 Works always sure, and best can close my eyes.
[Exit BIRON.]

Enter NURSE and SAMPSON.

Nurse. Here's strange things towards, Sampson:
 what will be the end of 'em, do you think?

Samp. Nay, marry, Nurse, I can't see so far; but
 the law, I believe, is on Biron, the first husband's side.

Nurse. Yes; no question, he has the law on his side.

Samp. For I have heard, the law says, a woman
 must be a widow, all out seven years, before she can
 marry again, according to law.

Nurse. Ay, so it does; and our lady has not been
 a widow altogether seven years.

Samp. Why then, Nurse, mark my words, and say
 I told you so: the man must have his wife again, and
 all will do well.

Nurse. But if our master, Villeroy, comes back
 again—

Samp. Why, if he does, he is not the first man
 that has had his wife taken from him.

Nurse. For fear of the worst, will you go to the old
 Count, desire him to come as soon as he can; there
 may be mischief, and he is able to prevent it.

Samp. Now you say something; now I take you,
 Nurse; that will do well, indeed; mischief should be

prevented, a little thing will make a quarrel, when there's a woman in the way. I'll about it instantly.—

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

A Chamber.

BIRON *asleep on a Couch.*

Enter ISABELLA.

Isa. Asleep so soon! Oh, happy! happy thou,
Who thus can sleep! I never shall sleep more—
If then to sleep be to be happy, he,
Who sleeps the longest, is the happiest;
Death is the longest sleep—Oh, have a care!
Mischief will thrive apace. Never wake more.

[*To BIRON.*]

If thou didst ever love thy Isabella,
To-morrow must be doomsday to thy peace.
—The sight of him disarms ev'n death itself.
And pleasure grows again
With looking on him—Let me look my last—
But is a look enough for parting love!
Sure I may take a kiss—Where am I going!
Help, help me, Villeroy!—Mountains and seas
Divide your love, never to meet my shame.
Hark!

What noise was that! A knocking at the gate!
It may be Villeroy—No matter who.

Bir. Come, Isabella, come.—

Isa. Hark! I'm call'd!

Bir. You stay too long from me.

Isa. A man's voice! in my bed! How came he there?
Nothing but villany in this bad world.
Here's physic for your fever.

[*Draws a Dagger, and goes backward to the Couch.*]

If husbands go to heaven,
Where do they go that send them!—This to thy—

[*Going to stab him, he rises, she shrieks,*]

What do I see!

Bir. Isabella, arm'd!

Isa. Against my husband's life!

Bir. Thou didst not think it.

Isa. Madness has brought me to the gates of hell,
And there has left me.

Bir. Why dost thou fly me so?

Isa. I cannot bear his sight; distraction, come,
Possess me all.

Shake off my chains, and hasten to my aid;—

Thou art my only cure—— [Running out.]

Bir. Poor Isabella, she's not in a condition
To give me any comfort, if she could;
Lost to herself—as quickly I shall be
To all the world—Horrors come fast around me;
My mind is overcast—the gath'ring clouds
Darken the prospect—I approach the brink,
And soon must leap the precipice! Oh! Heav'n!

[Kneels.]

While yet my senses are my own, thus kneeling,

Let me implore thy mercies on my wife:

Release her from her pangs; and if my reason,

O'erwhelm'd with miseries, sink before the tempest,

Pardon those crimes despair may bring upon me.

[Rises.]

Enter NURSE.

Nurse. Sir, there's somebody at the door must
needs speak with you; he won't tell his name.

Bir. I come to him. [Exit NURSE.]

'Tis Belford, I suppose; he little knows

Of what has happen'd here; I wanted him,

Must employ his friendship, and then— [Exit.]

SCENE III.

The Street.

Enter CARLOS, PEDRO, and three RUFFIANS.

Car. A younger brother! I was one too long
Not to prevent my being so again.

We must be sudden. Younger brothers are

But lawful bastards of another name,
 Thrust out of their nobility of birth
 And family, and tainted into trades.
 Shall I be one of them—Bow, and retire,
 To make more room for the unwieldy heir
 To play the fool in? No——
 But how shall I prevent it?—Biron comes
 To take possession of my father's love—
 'Would that were all! there's a birthright too
 That he will seize. Besides, if Biron lives,
 He will unfold some practices, which I
 Cannot well answer—therefore he shall die;
 This night must be dispos'd of: I have means
 That will not fail my purpose.—Here he comes.

Enter BIRON.

Bir. Ha! am I beset? I live but to revenge me.

[They surround him, fighting: VILLEROY enters with two SERVANTS; they rescue him; CARLOS and his Party fly.]

Vil. How are you, sir? Mortally hurt, I fear.
 Take care and lead him in.

Bir. I thank you for the goodness, sir: though 'tis
 Bestow'd upon a very wretch; and death,
 Though from a villain's hand, had been to me
 An act of kindness, and the height of mercy—
 But I thank you, sir. *[He is led in.]*

SCENE IV.

A Chamber.

Enter ISABELLA.

Isa. Murder my husband! Oh! I must not dare
 To think of living on; my desperate hand,
 In a mad rage, may offer it again;
 Stab me any where but there. Here's room enough
 In my own breast, to act the fury in,
 The proper scene of mischief.

[Going to stab herself, VILLEROY runs in and prevents her, by taking the Dagger from her.]

Vil. Angels defend and save thee!
Attempt thy precious life!
Lay violent hands upon thy innocent self!

Isa. Swear I am innocent, and I'll believe you.
What would you have with me? Pray let me go.
—Are you there, sir? You are the very man
Have done all this.—You would have made
Me believe you married me; but the fool
Was wiser.

Vil. Dost thou not know me, love?
'Tis Villeroy, thy husband.

Isa. I have none; no husband— [Weeping.
Never had but one, and he dy'd at Candy.
Speak, did he not die there?

Vil. He did, my life.

Isa. But swear it, quickly swear.

Enter BIRON, bloody, leaning upon his Sword.

Before that screaming evidence appears,
In bloody proof against me—

[*She seeing BIRON, swoons; VILLEROY helps her.*

Vil. Help there! Nurse, where are you?
Ha! I am distracted too! [Sees BIRON.
Biron alive?

Bir. The only wretch on earth, that must not live.

Vil. Biron or Villeroy must not, that's decreed.

Bir. You've sav'd me from the hands of murderers:
'Would you had not, for life's my greatest plague—
And then, of all the world, you are the man
I would not be oblig'd to—Isabella!

I came to fall before thee: I had dy'd
Happy, not to have found your Villeroy here:
A long farewell, and a last parting kiss. [Kisses her.

Vil. A kiss! confusion! it must be your last.

Bir. I know it must—Here I give up that death
You but delay'd: since what is past has been

The work of fate, thus we must finish it.
Thrust home, be sure. [Falls.]

Vil. Alas! he faints! some help there.

Bir. 'Tis all in vain, my sorrows soon will end—
Oh, Villeroy! let a dying wretch intreat you
To take this letter to my father. My Isabella!
Couldst thou but hear me, my last words should bless
thee.

I cannot, though in death, bequeath her to thee.
[To VILLEROY.]

But could I hope my boy, my little one,
Might find a father in thee—Oh, I faint—
I can no more—Hear me, Heav'n! Oh! support
My wife, my Isabella—Bless my child!
And take a poor unhappy— [Dies.]

Vil. He's gone—Let what will be the consequence,
I'll give it him. I have involv'd myself,
And would be clear'd; that must be thought on now.
My care of her is lost in wild amaze. [Exit.]

Isa. [Recovering.] Where have I been?—Methinks,
I stand upon
The brink of life,
But still detain'd, I cannot pass the strait;
Deny'd to live, and yet I must not die:
Doom'd to come back, like a complaining ghost,
To my unbury'd body—Here it lies—

[Throws herself by BIRON's Body.]
My body, soul, and life. A little dust,
To cover our cold limbs in the dark grave—
There, there we shall sleep safe and sound together.

Enter VILLEROY, with SERVANTS.

Vil. Poor wretch; upon the ground! She's not
herself:
Remove her from the body.
[SERVANTS going to raise her.]

Isa. Never, never—
You have divorc'd us once, but shall no more—

Help, help me, Biron!—Ha!—bloody and dead!
 Oh, murder! murder! you have done this deed—
 Vengeance and murder!—bury us together—
 Do any thing but part us.

Vil. Gently, gently raise her.

She must be forc'd away. *[They carry her off.]*

Isa. Oh! they tear me! Cut off my hands—
 Let me leave something with him—
 'They'll clasp him fast—

Oh, cruel, cruel men! *[NURSE follows her.]*

Vil. Send for all helps: all, all that I am worth,
 Shall cheaply buy her peace of mind again.

[To a SERVANT.]

The storm grows loud— *[Knocking at the Door.]*
 I am prepar'd for it. Now let them in.

Enter COUNT BALDWIN, CARLOS, BELFORD, MAURICE, EGMONT, *with* SERVANTS.

C. Bald. O, do I live to this unhappy day!
 Where is my wretched son?

Car. Where is my brother?

[They see him, and gather about the Body.]

Vil. I hope, in heav'n.

Car. Canst thou pity him!

Wish him in heav'n, when thou hast done a deed,
 That must for ever cut thee from the hopes
 Of ever coming there?

Vil. I do not blame you—
 You have a brother's right to be concern'd
 For his untimely death.

Car. Untimely death, indeed!

Vil. But yet you must not say, I was the cause.

Car. Not you the cause! Why who should murder
 him?

We do not ask you to accuse yourself;
 But I must say, that you have murder'd him;
 And will say nothing else, till justice draws
 Upon our side, at the loud call of blood,

To execute so foul a murderer.

Bel. Poor Biron! is this thy welcome home!

Maur. Rise, sir; there is a comfort in revenge,
Which is left you. [To C. BALDWIN.

Car. Take the body hence. [BIRON carried off.

C. Bald. What could provoke you?

Vil. Nothing could provoke me

To a base murder, which, I find, you think

Me guilty of. I know my innocence;

My servants too can witness that I drew

My sword in his defence, to rescue him.

Bel. Let the servants be call'd.

Egm. Let's hear what they can say.

Car. What they can say! Why, what should ser-
vants say?

They are his accomplices, his instruments,
And will not charge themselves.

No, no, he came

Unseasonably, (that was all his crime)

Unluckily, to interrupt your spott:

You were new marry'd—marry'd to his wife;

And therefore you, and she, and all of you,

(For all of you I must believe concern'd)

Combin'd to murder him out of the way.

Bel. If it be so——

Car. It can be only so.

Egm. Indeed it has a face——

Car. As black as hell.

C. Bald. The law will do me justice: send for the
magistrate.

Car. I'll go myself for him— [Exit.

Vil. These strong presumptions I must own indeed,
Are violent against me; but I have

A witness, and on this side heav'n too.

——Open that door.

[Door opens, and PEDRO is brought forward by

VILLEROY'S SERVANTS.

Here's one can tell you all.

Ped. All, all; save me but from the rack, I'll confess all.

Vil. You and your accomplices design'd
To murder Biron?—Speak.

Ped. We did.

Vil. Did you engage upon your private wrongs,
Or were employ'd?

Ped. He never did us wrong.

Vil. You were set on then?

Ped. We were set on.

Vil. What do you know of me?

Ped. Nothing, nothing:

You sav'd his life, and have discover'd me.

Vil. He has acquitted me.

If you would be resolv'd of any thing,

He stands upon his answer.

Bel. Who set you on to act this horrid deed?

C. Bald. I'll know the villain; give me quick his
name,

Or I will tear it from thy bleeding heart.

Ped. I will confess.

C. Bald. Do then.

Ped. It was my master, Carlos, your own son.

C. Bald. Oh, monstrous! monstrous! most unnatural!

Bel. Did he employ you to murder his own brother?

Ped. He did; and he was with us when 'twas done.

C. Bald. If this be true, this horrid, horrid tale,
It is but just upon me; Biron's wrongs
Must be reveng'd; and I the cause of all!

Maur. What will you do with him?

C. Bald. Take him apart——

I know too much. [Exit PEDRO, guarded.]

Vil. I had forgot—Your wretched, dying son,
Gave me this letter for you. [Gives it to C. BALDWIN.]
I dare deliver it—It speaks of me,
I pray to have it read.

C. Bald. You know the hand?

Bel. I know 'tis Biron's hand.

C. Bald. Pray read it. [*BELFORD reads the Letter.*

Sir,

I find I am come only to lay my death at your door. I am now going out of the world, but cannot forgive you, nor my brother Carlos, for not hindering my poor wife Isabella from marrying with Villeroy; when you both knew from so many letters that I was alive.

BIRON.

Vil. How! Did you know it then?

C. Bald. Amazement all!

Enter CARLOS, with OFFICERS.

Oh, Carlos! are you come? Your brother here,
Here, in a wretched letter, lays his death
To you and me—Have you done any thing
To hasten his sad end?

Car. Bless me, sir, I do any thing! who, I?

C. Bald. He talks of letters that were sent to us.
I never heard of any—Did you know
He was alive?

Car. Alive! Heaven knows, not I.

C. Bald. Had you no news of him, from a report,
Or letter, never?

Car. Never, never, I.

Bel. That's strange, indeed: I know he often writ
To lay before you the condition [*To C. BALDWIN.*
Of his hard slavery: and more I know,
That he had several answers to his letters.
He said, they came from you, you are his brother?

Car. Never from me.

Bel. That will appear.

The letters, I believe, are still about him;
For some of them I saw but yesterday.

C. Bald. What did those answers say?

Bel. I cannot speak to the particulars;
But I remember well, the sum of them
Was much the same, and all agreed,
That there was nothing to be hop'd from you:

That 'twas your barbarous resolution
To let him perish there.—

C. Bald. Oh, Carlos! Carlos! hadst thou been a
brother—

Car. This is a plot upon me. I never knew
He was in slavery, or was alive,
Or heard of him, before this fatal hour.

Bel. There, sir, I must confront you.
He sent you a letter, to my knowledge, last night;
And you sent him word you would come to him—
I fear you came too soon.

C. Bald. 'Tis all too plain.—
Bring out that wretch before him.

[PEDRO produced.]

Car. Ha! Pedro there!—Then I am caught, in-
deed.

Bel. You start at sight of him;
He has confess'd the bloody deed.

Car. Well then, he has confess'd,
And I must answer it.

Bel. Is there no more?

Car. Why!—what would you have more? I know
the worst,
And I expect it.

C. Bald. Why hast thou done all this?

Car. Why, that which damns most men has ruin'd
me;

The making of my fortune. Biron stood
Between me and your favour; while he liv'd,
I had not that; hardly was thought a son,
And not at all akin to your estate.
I could not bear a younger brother's lot,
To live depending upon courtesy—
Had you provided for me like a father,
I had been still a brother.

C. Bald. 'Tis too true;
I never lov'd thee as I should have done:
It was my sin, and I am punish'd for't.

Oh! never may distinction rise again
 In families: let parents be the same
 To all their children; common in their care,
 And in their love of them.—I am unhappy,
 For loving one too well.

Vil. You knew your brother liv'd; why did you
 take

Such pains to marry me to Isabella?

Car. I had my reasons for't.—

Vil. More than I thought you had.

Car. But one was this—

I knew my brother lov'd his wife so well,
 That if he ever should come home again,
 He could not long outlive the loss of her.

Bel. If you rely'd on that, why did you kill him?

Car. To make all sure. Now you are answer'd all.

Where must I go? I am tir'd of your questions.

C. Bald. I leave the judge to tell thee what thou art;
 A father cannot find a name for thee.

Take him away—

[CARLOS led off.

Grant me, sweet Heav'n! the patience to go through
 The torment of my cure—Here, here begins
 The operation.—Alas! she's mad.

*Enter ISABELLA, distracted; and her Child running
 from her: Women following her.*

Vil. My Isabella, poor unhappy wretch!

What can I say to her?

Isa. Nothing, nothing; 'tis a babbling world—
 I'll hear no more on't. When does the court sit?
 I have a cause to try.

Will you not hear it? Then I must appeal
 To the bright throne—Call down the heav'nly powers
 To witness how you use me.

C. Bald. Pray, give her way.

Isa. What have you done with him? He was here
 but now;
 I saw him here. Oh, Biron, Biron! where,

Where have they hid thee from me? He is gone—
But here's a little flaming cherubim—

Child. Oh, save me, save me!

[*Running to C. BALDWIN.*

I fear she'll kill me.

C. Bald. She will not hurt thee.

Isa. Will nothing do? I did not hope to find
Justice on earth; 'tis not in heav'n neither.

Biron has watch'd his opportunity—

Softly; he steals it from the sleeping gods,

And sends it thus— [Stabs herself.

Now, now I laugh at you, I defy you all,

You tyrant murderers.

Vil. Call, call for help—Oh, Heav'n! this was
too much.

C. Bald. Oh, thou most injur'd innocence! Yet
live,

Live but to witness for me to the world,

How much I do repent me of the wrongs,

The unnatural wrongs, which I have heap'd on thee,

And have pull'd down this judgment on us all.

Vil. Oh, speak, speak but a word of comfort to
me!

C. Bald. If the most tender father's care and love
Of thee, and thy poor child, can make amends—

Oh, yet look up and live.

Isa. Where is that little wretch? [They raise her.

I die in peace, to leave him to your care.

I have a wretched mother's legacy,

A dying kiss—pray, let me give it him,

My blessing; that, that's all I have to leave thee.

Oh, may thy father's virtues live in thee,

And all his wrongs be buried in my grave! [Dies.

Vil. She's gone, and all my joys of life with her.



THE END.