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DRAMAS,

BY

JOANNA BAILLIE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THE greater number of the Dramas contained in the following volumes have been written many years ago; none of them very recently. It was my intention not to have them published in my lifetime; but that, after my death, they should have been offered to some of the smaller Theatres of our Metropolis, and thereby have a chance, at least, of being produced to the public with the advantages of action and scenic decorations, which naturally belong to dramatic compositions. But the present circumstances connected with our English Theatres are not encouraging for such an attempt; any promise of their soon becoming so is very doubtful; and I am induced to relinquish what was at one time my earnest wish. This being the case, to keep them longer unpublished would serve no good purpose, and might afterwards give trouble to friends whom I would willingly spare. They are, therefore, now offered to the public, with a

diffident hope that they may be found deserving of some portion of its favour and indulgence.

The first volume comprises a continuation of the series of Plays on the stronger Passions of the Mind, and completes all that I intended to write on the subject: for envy and revenge are so frequently exposed in our Dramas, — the latter, particularly, has been so powerfully delineated, — that I have thought myself at liberty to exclude them from my plan as originally contemplated. The two following volumes of Miscellaneous Plays will complete the whole of my Dramatic Works.

In thus relinquishing my original intention, there is one thing particularly soothing to my feelings, — that those friendly readers who encouraged my early dramatic writings (alas, how reduced in numbers!) will see the completion of the whole. This will, at least, gratify their curiosity; and it would be ungrateful in me not to believe that they will, also, take some interest in the latter part of a work, the beginning of which their partial favour so kindly fostered.

With the exception of two Dramas, "The Martyr," and "The Bride," the matter of the

following volumes is entirely new to the public; but, as only one edition of the former, and two small editions of the latter, have been circulated, there are few persons who can be possessed of either. Besides, as they are on subjects particularly fitted to interest and improve a young mind, they may be given away to youthful readers, disjoined from the general stock; and, in that case, will scarcely be considered as useless duplicates.

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ROMIERO:

A TRAGEDY.

IN FIVE ACTS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN.

DON ROMIERO, *a noble Spaniard.*
DON GUZMAN, *his Friend.*
DON MAURICE, *a Youth in love with Beatrice.*
DON SEBASTIAN, *Father of Zorada.*
JEROME, } *Domestics of Romiero.*
PIETRO, }

Mariners, Passengers, Domestics, *&c.*

WOMEN.

ZORADA, *the Wife of Romiero.*
BEATRICE, *her Friend.*
Nurse.

Scene in or near the Castle of Romiero, *by the Sea Shore of the Mediterranean.*

Time, during the Reign of PETER the Cruel, King of Castile, *towards the Middle of the Fourteenth Century.*

ROMIERO.

ACT I.

SCENE I. — *The Sea Shore after a Storm, with the Masts of a wrecked Vessel seen above the Water at a Distance, and Casks and various Chests, Boards, &c. floating on the Waves. Enter shipwrecked Mariners and Passengers, followed by* SEBASTIAN, *who keeps apart from the others.*

FIRST PASSENGER.

WELL, sirs! to tread on firm dry earth again
Makes the heart glad and thankful.

FIRST MARINER.

And with good cause;
For a dry grave at home is, after all,
The secret wish and prayer of every seaman,
Ay, even the boldest of us.
None hath so long or roughly lived at sea
As to be careless where his bones are laid, —
In sacred ground, or in the gulphy deep.
And thou, too, think'st so, if I read thee right.
(*To Second Passenger.*)

SECOND PASSENGER.

Ay, so in truth thou dost; I said my prayers
Devoutly as the tempest louder wax'd,
Nor am ashamed to own it.

SECOND MARINER.

Nor needs to be so; seaman as I am,
Let me, as oft as fortune beckons me,
On summer seas or rough December's waves,
Career it boldly with my jolly mates;
But let me die at last in mine own cot,
With all my kinsfolk round me. My poor wife!
She listens to the winds when others sleep,
And thinks.—Well, well! we are all safe on shore.

THIRD MARINER.

But, saving this, what have we else to cheer us?
Men on dry land are hungry and lack food;
We cannot live on safety only. See,
Here comes a countryman. Ho! friend, I say!
(*Calling off the stage.*)

(*Voice answering without.*)

What dost thou say? I cannot hear thy words.

THIRD MARINER.

Come hither, if thou hast a Christian heart,
Or any charity; come near, I pray thee.

Enter PIETRO.

PIETRO.

What is your will with me?

THIRD MARINER.

I pray thee, friend,
What shore is this? Be there or food, or shelter,
Or Christian pity in these parts? Thou see'st
What miserable shipwreck'd men we are.

PIETRO.

Yes, ye are cast upon a shore where shelter
And Christian pity never are withheld
From those who want them. See'st thou through
the trees
That castle? There a noble lady dwells,
Who will have pity on you.

THIRD MARINER.

Thank Providence for this! Your noble ladies,
When once they take to goodness, are most boun-
tiful:
The best of all; the men to them are nothing.

FIRST PASSENGER.

She hath no lord then?

PIETRO.

He is absent now,
Kept at the King's high court, as it is said,
But my opinion is ——

THIRD MARINER.

Whate'er it be,
That is not our concern. What is his name?

PIETRO.

They call him Don Romiero.

SEBASTIAN (*advancing hastily*).

What said'st thou? Is he absent?

PIETRO.

He is, but his good lady will relieve you,
Ye need not fear for that.

SEBASTIAN.

We will not fear. Ye love that lady, then,
Who is, ye say, so good?

PIETRO.

How should we else? A very brute would love
her.

SEBASTIAN.

Yes, thou say'st well; she was ev'n from her
birth—
I mean, all ladies sprung from noble blood
Are, from their birth, to generous actions train'd;
At least, it should be so.

PIETRO.

And is so, friend; for I have oft observed
Good birth and breeding, as in my own lady,
With gracious kindness joined.

SEBASTIAN.

What is her name?

PIETRO.

Donna Zorada. Thou hast heard, belike,
How her poor father ——

SEBASTIAN (*turning away*).

No; I hear no stories;
I am a man withdrawn from worldly coil,
Who hears or cares for nothing.

PIETRO (*to third Mariner*).

This is no mariner? and he speaks strangely.

THIRD MARINER.

The strangest thing is that he spoke at all.
We took him up at sea from a small boat,
Which, by the moonlight, we descried afar,
Like a black cockle on the shimm'ring waves;
But whether earth or hell had sent him to us,
We doubted much.

FIRST MARINER.

Nay; when the hurricane wax'd to its pitch
We scarcely doubted, and were once resolved
To cast him overboard. Yet, ne'ertheless,
He hath escaped; and, God be praised, we did not.

PIETRO.

Hush! he returns again. Go on, poor souls,
In lucky hour ye come; for in that wood
Not many paces hence, amongst the trees,
Donna Zorada takes her morning walk;
You 'll find her there. Come, I will lead you to her;
And, as we go, there are some words of counsel
Which I shall give to you. They may be useful;

For age, and some small share of shrewd observ-
ance,
Have made me, though I say it, fit to counsel.

FIRST MARINER.

Do so, good man, and Heaven reward thy kind-
ness!

[*Exeunt all but* SEBASTIAN.

SEBASTIAN (*alone*).

So near her! Led, as by the hand of Heaven,
Even to her very door! And I shall shortly
See her again, and hold her to my heart!
My child! my child! Oh! when those gentle eyes
Look on my woe-worn face and alter'd form,
And these coarse weeds, how will thy piteous
heart
Swell ev'n to bursting? In that wood hard by,—
So near me! Blessed Heaven hath brought me
here. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

A Wood, with various Walks and Alleys cut through it. Enter ZORADA *and* BEATRICE, *speaking as they enter.*

BEATRICE.

In truth, I slept it out. At times, indeed,
A sound came to my ears, as it had been
The distant roar of wheels, and then I dreamt

Of coursing chariots and approaching crowds,
And courtly tournaments, and tried in vain
To cast my richest mantle o'er my form .
To meet the coming show.

ZORADA.

Thy mantle for the show!

BEATRICE.

Yes, but perversely,
Still, as one tassell'd end across my shoulders
I had composed, the others to the ground
Fell dangling all awry. Then I look'd down,
And, O sight of confusion! Canst thou guess
What saw I then?

ZORADA.

Some fearful thing, no doubt.

BEATRICE.

My own bare feet unslipper'd and unhosed,
That on the checker'd floor began to move
In dancing measure. Yea, the very blood
Rush'd to my cheeks; I felt it in my dream.

ZORADA.

How could a dream so vain find harbourage
In thy fantastic brain, my little friend,
On such a dreadful night?

BEATRICE.

It was the tempest's sound that brought the dream.

ZORADA.

So grand a cause producing thoughts so vain!

BEATRICE.

Who takes account of that? Thou wert awake,
Else thou, belike, hadst ta'en the mighty blast
For the quick waving of some gallant's hat
To cool thy glowing cheek, or the soft winnowing
Of outstretch'd pinions—Cupid's wings, perhaps;
Or those of downy swans, as I have seen them,
Scared from the sedgy margin of the lake,
Bending their hurried flight across thy path.

ZORADA.

I was, indeed, awake, and heard with awe
The war of elements, whose mingled roar
Brought to mine ear the howl of raging fiends,
The lash of mountain billows, the wild shrieks
Of sinking wretches; and at intervals
Cross'd strangely with the near distinctive sounds
Of clatt'ring casements, creaking beams and doors
Burst from their fastenings, swinging in the blast.
It was a fearful night; and many a soul,
On sea and land, have found a dismal end.

BEATRICE.

Ay, we shall hear sad tales of this ere long,
When seated round our evening fire. Alas!
It will be piteous; but, the ill then past,
It will be soft and pleasing piteousness.

ZORADA.

Sad tales, I fear! O how my sympathy

Follows the seaman's hardy, perilous life;
And the poor passengers, torn from their homes
To toss upon the rude and fathomless deep,
Who shall no more on the dry land set foot,
Nor find a peaceful rest ev'n for their bones.
It is a dismal thought.

BEATRICE.

And yet how fair and bright the morning shines,
As if it laugh'd at all the late turmoil.
There 's not a cloud in the whole azure sky.

ZORADA.

None, save those little wanderers, pure as snow,
That, like bewilder'd things, are hasting on
Like sea-birds to their rock. — What men are
these?

Enter Mariners, &c.

FIRST MARINER.

We are, an' please ye, good and noble lady,
Poor shipwreck'd seamen, cast upon your shore;
Our all is lost; and we are spent and faint
For want of food.

ZORADA.

Ye shall not want it long.
Go to the Castle, where all needful succour
Will be provided for you.—From what port?
But stop not now to answer idle questions.
Are ye all mariners?

FIRST MARINER (*pointing to Passengers*).

Those men are merchants;

And he who lingers yonder 'midst the bushes,
Is one we found at sea, some leagues from shore.
We know not what he is.

ZORADA.

Why keeps he thus aloof? Call to him, friend.

FIRST MARINER (*calling off the Stage*).

Ho! there; come this way, sir; the lady calls ye.

ZORADA.

He has a noble air, though coarsely clad.
How is it that he moves so tardily?

THIRD MARINER.

He 's wayward, lady; neither moves nor speaks
Like other men.

ZORADA.

Nay, do not speak so harshly
Of one so circumstanced; your fellow-sufferer.

(*Enter* SEBASTIAN, *bending his head, and keeping his eyes fixed on the ground.*)

Good stranger, be assured you're welcome here,
And be not so desponding.

(*He bows in silence, and she seems agitated.*)

(*To the Mariners, &c.*) Pass on, my friends;
this lady will conduct you.
Wilt thou, my Beatrice, do this kind office?
And I will follow shortly. Tell my people
To serve these shipwrecked strangers bountifully.

MARINERS, *&c.* (*speaking all together*).

God bless your liberal heart, my noble lady!

[*Exeunt all but* ZOR. *and* SEB.

ZORADA (*eagerly*).

Who art thou?

SEBASTIAN.

Hush, till they be farther off.

ZORADA.

Oh! is it thou?

SEBASTIAN.

Stand from me; no embrace;
They may look back and see us.

ZORADA.

How slow they move! Will they ne'er gain
the thicket?
My yearning heart will burst; how slow they
move! (*Stands looking after them impatiently
and trembling all over for a few minutes.*)
Now they are out of sight (*rushing into his arms*).
My father! my dear father!

SEBASTIAN.

My dear child!

ZORADA.

Oh! art thou here in dread? come here to
see me
In peril of discovery? too, too kind!
Dear father! kind, and good, and dear to me,
How and where'er thou art. I fear, I fear
Thou art not as I would: tears in thine eyes,
And anguish on thy face! How hast thou fared?

SEBASTIAN.

Thou shalt hear all when I have words to tell
thee.

ZORADA.

Not now; take breath awhile, and be composed.
Lean on the grass and I will fetch thee nourish-
ment.

SEBASTIAN (*preventing her from going*).

Not now, dear child.
I am composed again, and from my side
Thou shalt not move, till I have told thee all.
(*After a pause.*) Thou know'st the bitter wrongs
and foul affront
Which my ungrateful monarch put upon me,
As meet reward for many years of service.
Ay, though I say it, valiant, faithful service
In field and council.

ZORADA.

I know it all too well; a burning shame
That he should so requite thee! Some base
wretch
Hath tempted him with——

SEBASTIAN.

Say his noble nature,—
I think it once was noble,—was abused
By the base machinations of my foes.
Say what thou wilt; I was a man, a soldier,
And sought revenge, that baleful remedy
For bitterness of heart.

ZORADA.

Nay, pause, I pray you! do not tell it now:
Thou art too much distress'd.

SEBASTIAN.

No, hear it now; 'tis short, and when once told,
One misery is past. Leagued with three chiefs,
Resentful as myself, we did in secret
Devise the means, and soon had reach'd our mark.

ZORADA.

Your mark! O what was that?

SEBASTIAN.

I see the fearful meaning of thine eye;
But be not so disturb'd. — Our mark indeed
Was vengeance, but not murder. — On his throne
We meant to place a nobler prince, whose hand
Had even justice to his subjects dealt.
We meant to place on Pedro's worthless brow
That which became it better than a crown.

ZORADA.

I understand; — a monk's unseemly cowl.
I'm glad you did not mean to shed his blood.

SEBASTIAN.

My gentle child, we meant but as I say.
And while revenging my especial wrongs,
We should have freed Castile from a hard master,
Who now sheds noble blood upon the scaffold
As lavishly as hinds the common water
Of village pool cast o'er their arid fields.
And yet to kindle in our native land
The flames of civil discord, even for this,

Has often rack'd my mind with many doubts,
Recoiling thoughts, and feelings of remorse.

ZORADA.

Ha! that indeed had been a fearful conse-
quence,
Had your concerted enterprise succeeded.
But speak not now of this. How did you fail?

SEBASTIAN.

Amongst our number, one accursed traitor
Like Judas lurk'd, and to the royal ear
Divulged the whole.—But we were warn'd of this,
And fled, each as he might. I gain'd the coast,
And lay disguised till I could find a boat,
In which I reach'd last night that founder'd bark,
Whose slender mast just peeps above the surge
Like some black wizard's wand, token of ill.

ZORADA.

No, not of ill, dear father, but of good.
'Tis Heaven hath sent thee here.
My Lord did write to me some distant hints
Of your sad story. When he shall return,
He will protect you. Cherish'd here with us,
You shall in secret live, till fair occasion
Shall offer to convey you where you would, —
Some land of safety.

SEBASTIAN.

Thy Lord's return! no no! beware of that!
He may not be my friend. — Nay, it is said
That he and others, from their kindred ties

Suspected as abettors of our treason,
To clear themselves, have sworn unto the King,
Dead or alive, wherever they may find us,
Our bodies to deliver to his power.

ZORADA.

'Tis false! thou wrong'st Romiero.
Do not believe it. Some false Judas also
Hath, in this point, deceived you. No, he did
not —
He swore no oath so cruel and so base.
Do not believe it. — Hark! the castle bell!

(*Bell sounds.*)

SEBASTIAN.

Some traveller of note must be arrived.

ZORADA.

And I must quit my dear and honour'd parent
With heartless ceremony to receive
A most unwelcome guest. —
Enter that tangled path; it leads to shelter,
An aged woman's cot, where thou may'st rest
And have refreshment. She will minister
To thy necessity. O woe is me!
That any hand but mine should have that office!

SEBASTIAN.

When shall we meet again?

ZORADA.

At fall of eve, beneath the castle wall,

Near to the northern postern. Heaven watch
o'er thee!
There's some one coming! part as we were
strangers,
Without one sign of love. That is the path.
[*Exit* SEBASTIAN, *and after a pause* DON
MAURICE *enters by the opposite side.*

MAURICE.

Good tidings! Don Romiero is arrived.

ZORADA.

My lord return'd? and art thou sure 'tis he?

MAURICE.

Yes, I am sure; why should I doubt it,
Madam?
His train is in the court; and joyful vassals,
Hearing the notice bell, crowd in to greet him.
I have not seen him yet, but am in haste
Come to apprise you of it.
(*Observing* ZORADA *motion with her hand, and
point as to something at a distance.*)
What man is that to whom you motion so?

ZORADA.

A shipwreck'd stranger, who inquired his way,
But was about to take the erring path.

MAURICE.

He has a stately air, though mean his garb;
I'll go myself and guide him through the wood.

ZORADA.

No, no! I pray thee, let us to the Castle.

MAURICE.

I'll follow thee: but, 'faith, I fain would go
And hold some parley with that stranger. Surely
He is no common man.

ZORADA.

I do beseech thee!

MAURICE.

I'll soon return. (*Going.*)

ZORADA.

O stay, Don Maurice, stay.

MAURICE.

Why? How is this?

ZORADA.

I cannot stir without thee.

MAURICE.

What is the matter, lady? You are pale.

ZORADA.

I've wrench'd my foot: I'm lame; I'm faint
with pain.
I pray thee let me lean upon thine arm.

MAURICE.

Ay, to the world's end. Nay, lean thy weight,
And let me bear thee up: thou dost but grasp me
As if to hold me fast. The pain is violent.

ZGRADA.

No, it is better now; 't is almost gone,
But I walk lamely still. Let us proceed.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I. — *An open Entrance Hall in the Castle.* JEROME, *Vassals, and Domestics are discovered in waiting.* *Enter* PIETRO.

PIETRO (*to* JEROME).

So, our good master is return'd in safety:
May I not see him?

JEROME.

No, not now, good Pietro.

PIETRO.

Not now! how so? It is my privilege,
Which he has granted to this hoary head,
To see him, unreproved, whene'er I list.
I needs must greet him.

JEROME.

Thou hadst better not;

Donna Zorada is not in the Castle
To welcome his return: till he hath seen her,
I think thy courtesy would have small chance
Of courteous reception.

PIETRO.

Well, be it so: what changes wedlock makes,
That Don Romiero should be so possessed!
He should have wedded earlier, as I think,
Or not so young a bride. For, as they say,
Let all things be in right and due proportion.
Let not the hart play gambols with the fawn.
Plant not a sapling olive by the side
Of the broad oak. Link not the bony stag-
hound——

JEROME.

Truce with thy wisdom, now! see, he is coming.

Enter ROMIERO, *in a hurried impatient manner, followed by* GUZMAN.

ROMIERO.

Not yet return'd! Go, Jerome, to the wood,
That is her fav'rite walk.

JEROME.

Please you, my Lord, I have sent Blas already
To search the wood, and now he is return'd.

Enter BLAS.

ROMIERO.

Hast found her, Blas?

BLAS.

Yes, she will soon be here;
She's coming from the wood.

ROMIERO.

With steps, I warrant,
Light as the bounding roe.

BLAS.

Nay, good my Lord,
Donna Zorada, somewhat lame, I guess,
Comes with slow steps, supported on the arm
Of young Don Maurice.

ROMIERO.

I'll bear her in my arms: she is in pain.
The very pressure of the velvet turf
Will do her injury. [*Exit hastily.*

GUZMAN (*to* PIETRO).

Thou wear'st a surly smile upon thy face,
Good Pietro, mine old friend; what may it mean?
Thy Lord, methinks, is a right tender husband.

PIETRO.

Ay, marry is he! I remember well
His lady mother urged him oft to wed.
"Become a woman's toy!" quoth he: "am I
Of such soft matter form'd, that you, forsooth,
Would make a husband of me?" Then he 'd speak
Of women, even the fairest and the best,
With such sharp taunts, that she, good lady, sigh'd,
And in despair forbore all further plea.

GUZMAN.

But dost thou think he spake unfeignedly?

PIETRO.

Why should he feign with her who gave him birth?
She was a woman of good parts, well taught,
Sober, and wise.

GUZMAN.

And yet it might be so.

PIETRO.

I cannot tell; for now, as I remember,
His love for Donna Laura none suspected
Till he was found at midnight in the vault
Lamenting o'er her grave.
'Twas said that many a night a sheeted spectre
Haunted the spot: that spectre was Romiero.

GUZMAN.

It might be so; and yet he is not close,
Concealing what he feels, but with his friends
Free and confiding.

PIETRO.

Yes, St. Lawrence bless him!
His thoughts must have their vent; but yet I say,
And know it well, none did suspect his love
Till he was found lamenting o'er her grave.
Ah! many a cheerful face hides careful heart!
This is a saying well approved by all.
For sound experience teaches many things,

Which, as my mother, Heaven rest her soul,
Was wont to say ——

GUZMAN.

Excuse me now, good Pietro;
I'll stay and hear it all another time;
I am in haste. [*Exit.*

PIETRO (*looking after him with displeasure*).

He too in haste! That light and heedless youth,
Full of their youthful sports, should be impatient
When sober serious men begin to speak,
Is nothing marv'llous; it was always so.
But now the evil still goes on increasing,
And men of middle age and understanding
Are ev'n as light and foolish as the young.
An evil sign, I trow, of evil times.
Should it go on increasing, by my certes!
Ere I have spoken half a sentence, off
Each foolish varlet I address will run,
And leave me most discourteously to find,
As it may chance, another auditor
For the remaining half. — O foolish times!
Foolish and evil too! [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

Zorada's Apartment. Enter Romiero *and* Zorada.

ROMIERO.

Feel'st thou no pain, my love? Thou art fatigued.
Ah! why didst thou refuse thine own support?
These arms that to the earth's far verge would bear,
Blessing their toil, so sweet, so dear a burthen.

ZORADA.

Indeed, my Lord, I needed no support;
The pain had pass'd away: I walk with ease.

ROMIERO.

The foolish envious pain which cast thee, Sweet,
Upon another's care. Thus, thus, and thus
(*Kissing her cheeks, and then both her hands, one after the other.*)
I pay thee my devotion. Nay, look on me,
Smile on me thy sweet smiles, and raise thine eyes,
Sweet mate, sweet play-fellow, pretty Zorada!

ZORADA.

Nay, good my Lord, these words are full of fondness,
And yet they please me not. What shall I say?
Speak to me as a wife, companion, friend,

Not as a petted darling. Art thou well?
How has it fared with thee since last we parted?
My father too — what dost thou know of him?

ROMIERO.

Thou need'st not fear for him; he has escaped;
He is in safety in a foreign land,
Where he, I hope, will end his days in peace.

ZORADA.

And shall I ne'er behold his face again?
(*He shakes his head.*)
O but I will! I'll go to comfort him,
And so wilt thou. Why dost thou turn from me?
May it not be?

ROMIERO.

Oh ask me not! I've sworn ——

ZORADA.

What hast thou sworn?

ROMIERO.

I cannot tell thee now.

ZORADA.

Then it is true! — (*Turning from him with violent gestures of distress and displeasure to the end of the chamber, then returning and looking in his face upbraidingly.*)
How could'st thou? Oh! how could'st thou
Swear to deliver to the tyrant's vengeance,
Dead or alive, wherever thou shalt find him,
My father, thine old friend, the brave Sebastian?

Is it not so? If thou hast sworn an oath
Less terrible than this, tell it me quickly.

ROMIERO.

Dear love, he is in safety far from hence.
This oath, as to his life, is nugatory;
And, but for it, thou ne'er hadst seen thy husband.
Thou knowest the cruel nature of Don Pedro.
Ah! why that face of sorrow and displeasure?
Alas! I see I am not welcome here.

ZORADA.

No; say not so.

ROMIERO.

How can I then explain
Thy sad averted looks? Where art thou going?

ZORADA.

I'm faint; I am not well; I'm sick at heart.
I long to be alone.

ROMIERO.

Life of my life! Indeed, thou art not well;
Then wherefore leave this chamber?
(*Pointing to a couch.*)
Here lay thee down, and I will watch by thee.

ZORADA.

I'll rest me in my closet for a while;
I'm wayward grown, and love to be alone.

ROMIERO.

No; say not so; I know thou art not wayward;

It is not in thy nature; but distress,
From filial duty, strain'd, perhaps, too far,
Have made thee so. Remain, my love, with me;
Thou wilt forgive me when thou hast consider'd.

ZORADA.

I cannot now consider, with a heart
Gored to the quick. I pray you, then, my lord,
Permit me to retire.

ROMIERO.

I 'll lead thee to thy closet: lean on me.
(She waves him off with her hand.)
Wilt thou not deign to do it?
[*Exit* ZORADA, *still motioning him not to follow her; (stopping, with clasped hands, in a thoughtful posture, after having paced several times rapidly across the room.)*
An absent father and a present husband
I' th' scales are put, and, to all outward seeming,
The last doth kick the beam. Is it for this —
For this that I have given my freedom up,
Drawn every strong affection of my heart
To one dear point? — and this the poor return!
(After a second pause.)
My life in such a perilous circumstance,
And now restored to her and to my home,
This is of small account. O woman, woman!
One corner of a gallant's passing fancy
Pleaseth thee well; the whole devoted heart
Of man matured is to thee as a yoke, [escape;
A cumb'rous weight from which thou would'st

And friendship, filial duty, every tie
Defrauds thy husband of his dear-earned rights.
(*After pacing again through the room as before.*)
I am a fool! I knew the heart of woman —
Knew what she had to give, and, Oh! too well,
What might, at price of many an inward pang,
To her be given; yet, ne'ertheless, forsooth!
I murmur at my lot. — (*These last words spoken while* DON GUZMAN *is entering behind him.*)

GUZMAN.

What art thou mutt'ring? Murmurs at thy lot!
Were these the words I heard thee utter now
In such a smother'd voice? With fair Zorada
Within that lot comprised, would'st thou exchange it
For any other man's?

ROMIERO.

No; not for his who fills th' imperial throne.

GUZMAN.

What ails thee, then, possessing such a treasure?

ROMIERO.

Ay, if I did possess it.

GUZMAN.

Dost thou not?

ROMIERO.

The heart I do not. Call ye it possessing,
When any tie of friendship or of nature
Crosses the vows which she has given to love?

GUZMAN.

I do not understand fantastic notions
And fine-spun niceties of sentiment.
I 'll comprehend thee better presently.

ROMIERO.

'T is plain and simple matter. My return,
Though from a per'lous state, gives to Zorada
Slight pleasure: her affections and concern
Are all engross'd by what is *duty* call'd
To her unhappy father. I am nothing.

GUZMAN.

And is this all, indeed, that troubles thee?

ROMIERO.

Should there be more? Why dost thou smile so strangely?

GUZMAN.

At thy most simple folly, noble friend.
Surely the men in these degenerate days,
When every high-plumed youth and idle stripling
Hath leave to play his gambols in the sight
Of maids and married dames without reproof;
And pour bewitching nonsense in their ears
At feast or tourney, is most fortunate,
Who can but charge a young and lovely wife
With too much duteous love for her old father.
(*Laughing heartily.*)
I needs must laugh: thou art fantastical.

ROMIERO.

No; thou art light of heart and canst not judge:

Having no care thyself, thou art incredulous
Of any cause which others have for care.
To speak to thee of what I feel is folly,
Though, from long habitude, I needs must do it.
Thou hast no sympathy, and yet my heart
Clings to thee as a fiiend.

GUZMAN.

Nay; fie upon thee!
Thou knowest full well that to the world's end
I'd run to serve thee, though my pliant lip
Cannot approve of all thy fleeting notions.
But we 'll debate no more on things so irksome.
I came to say that Maurice hath invited me
To see some curious cave which yesterday
He first discover'd, as along the shore
In quest of sea-birds' eggs he idly wander'd.

ROMIERO.

Has he been here so long?

GUZMAN.

Doubtless he has. It is a curious sight
This fairy cave, as he described it to me:
I shall be absent for an hour or so;
Perhaps, a little longer. [*Exit.*

ROMIERO (*alone*).

He is fortunate,
Who can but charge a young and lively wife
With too much duteous love for her old father!
The smile that follow'd too, — that had its meaning.

Lame and not lame, and leaning on his arm!
The stroke darts through me like an adder's sting,
Though but so slightly given.

Re-enter GUZMAN *with* MAURICE.

GUZMAN.

Maurice is come with me to tempt thee out,
If we may be so bold. The fairy cave
Is a short ride from hence, the day is cool,
And we will wait thy pleasure.

MAURICE.

I pray you be entreated, good my Lord.

ROMIERO.

I thank ye both; I mean to stay at home.

MAURICE.

What! here alone, the ladies being retired?
On such a day as this, when the blue waves
Heaving and sinking in the sunny gleam,
Show all the changes of their crisped sides
Like the seam'd foldings of a silken robe;
When every sea-bird is upon the wing
Skimming and diving for his finny prey;
When distant vessels, tacking to the breeze,
Seem dames whose snowy kirtles are stretch'd out
To the slow measure of some courtly dance;—
On such a day as this to stay at home
In gloomy chambers pent——

ROMIERO.

Surprises thee.

MAURICE.

In truth it does. Methinks on such a day,
Did we not see above the glassy brine
The mast of that wreck'd vessel still appear
To tell the dismal tale of last night's storm,
One would with buoyant heart say to the ocean,
Let us career it o'er thy surgy fields
To every coast o' th' earth.

ROMIERO.

I doubt not, Sir, 't is a fair sight to those
Who come so far afield to look upon it.
Is thine old tutor dead, or Dame Magera,
That thou art rambling gallantly at large
In this our distant province? — Dost thou blush?
That is a folly, if thou hast no cause.

MAURICE.

I fear, my Lord, I have offended you.
I am as free to ramble now at large
As any he who reckons twice my years;
Nor should my visit to this distant province
Be deem'd an idle ramble; Don Fernandez,
My aged kinsman, claims some duty of me;
I am an inmate of his lonely tower.

GUZMAN.

Pooh! boy, thou 'st said enough, and somewhat more:
Who cares about thy visit to thy kinsman?

ROMIERO.

Who does not care? It is an age of duty;
Nought now is cherish'd in the tender breast
But ties of blood; and his good company,
With all his lore and saws and thrice-told tales,
Will well reward the virtue of this youth.
Go to your cave, and see it in its beauty:
The billows else may wash its shelly sides,
And make it bare and little worth to-morrow.
(*Aside to* GUZMAN.) Take him away: why do
ye linger here?

GUZMAN (*aside to him*).

Why speak'st thou so unkindly to the youth?

ROMIERO (*aside*).

Spoke I unkindly? Then 't was unawares.
I meant it not.

GUZMAN (*aside*).

Be civil to him then, and make amends;
He stares and wonders at such taunting words.

ROMIERO (*aloud*).

A pleasant ride, my friends. (*They turn to go,
and he calls after them.*) And hark, Don
Maurice!
If thou preferr'st a wayward captious host
(For such I do confess myself to be),
With two fair ladies (both methinks are fair),
To thine old kinsman's company, return,
And be one night at least our honour'd guest.

MAURICE.

I do, with thanks, accept your courtesy.

[*Exeunt* MAURICE *and* GUZMAN.

ROMIERO (*looking after* MAURICE).

The very eye and visage, light and thoughtless;
A woman's varying blushes with the tint
Of sun-burnt hunter mix'd; the very form,
Slight as a stripling, statured as a man,
Which have — detested spell! so oft beguiled
The female fancy, prizing worthless show.
(*After a pause.*) Can it be so? O no! it cannot be;
I but distract myself. I 'll crush within me
All thoughts which this way tend, as pois'nous asps
That sting the soul and turn its bliss to bane.
(*After another pause*). To think of it no more, indeed, were good,
If it were possible. And yet to know
The truth, if fair or foul, were better still;
They are both placed beneath my observation;
'T is well I did invite him for the night. (*Rings a bell violently.*)

Enter JEROME.

(*A pause,* ROMIERO *seeming unwilling to speak.*)

JEROME.

What do you want, my Lord?

ROMIERO.

Thyself, good Jerome.
Who followed thee? I heard a creaking step.

JEROME.

It was mine own, my Lord.

ROMIERO.

'T is well; come nearer, man. How many oaks
Have by my brawny foresters been fell'd,
Since I left home?

JEROME.

I do not know, my Lord.

Shall I inquire?

ROMIERO.

Of what would'st thou inquire?

JEROME.

The oaks which you have just been speaking of.
Do you not wish to know ——

ROMIERO.

True; but I have another thing to say.
How many times hath this young Don been here
To visit Donna Beatrice?

JEROME.

To visit her?

ROMIERO.

Yes, fool! to visit her.
Why dost thou look so strangely at the question?
Answer it in few words and faithfully.

JEROME.

He hath, for some days past, come to the gate
At noon-tide hour or so, but whom to visit
It suits not me to say.

ROMIERO.

Then! 't is not Beatrice he comes to visit?

JEROME.

It does not so appear; it may, — it may not.

ROMIERO.

Why dost thou hesitate and stammer thus?
Art thou afraid to speak? What is the matter?

JEROME.

Nothing, my Lord, but you did fix your eyes
With such a keen intenseness on my face,
I fear'd I might offend.

ROMIERO.

How fear'd, unless the thing thou hast to say
Should be of bad import?

JEROME.

As I breathe life,
Nothing of good or bad import have I
To tell your honour.

ROMIERO.

Well, well! be it so.
Thy strange bewilder'd face made me suspect
thee.
Why dost thou wait?

JEROME.

Your further pleasure, Sir.

86175

ROMIERO.

There's nothing else. — Yes, yes! go bid my huntsman
Prepare him for to-morrow's early chace.

JEROME.

Why, good, my Lord! he died the very day
Before you left the castle.

ROMIERO.

Ay, true, I had forgot it. — Get thee gone.

[*Exit* JEROME.

(*Alone.*) I like not his scared face and wary words:
Something is always wrong when such as he
Stammer, and stare, and weigh their phrases so.

[*Exit.*

SCENE III.

Night. A Grove near the Walls of the Castle, which is seen in the Background, the Moon appearing behind it.

Enter MAURICE.

MAURICE (*after listening*).

No footstep near, no stirring of the boughs,
Which cast their darken'd forms, distinct and motionless,
Athwart the paly lustre of the moon!
No gentle messenger to meet my hopes! —

Ah, Hope! who makest the lover still thy fool!
Do I not know that she would give her presence
To no man living at an hour like this,
In such a spot as this, yet twice already
Some birch's shiny stem or blossom'd shrub
Have been to me her very form and semblance.
She may despise my billet — tear it — burn it,
Yet my heart beats as though — Ha! here comes
Jerome.

Enter JEROME.

What news?

JEROME.

Good news.

MAURICE.

I'd smother thee with kisses,
But that thou art such an unseemly hound.
How look'd she? Was she angry? Was she pleased?
Will she vouchsafe to hear me plead my suit?

JEROME.

She will.

MAURICE.

And where?

JEROME.

In the long gallery,
Now unfrequented. I will be on watch
That no intruder break upon your meeting.

MAURICE.

Prince of Castile, go doff thy hat and plume;
I am a prouder, happier man than thou!

JEROME.

Hush, hush! begone,—I hear a noise without.

MAURICE.

Where?

JEROME.

To the right. We'll take the other path;
Though I must needs return by this again.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter ZORADA *and* Nurse *by the opposite side.*

ZORADA.

Stand thou aside, good Nurse; I'll on some paces,
And softly call; if he be near at hand,
He'll know my voice. (*Coming forward to a thicket near the front of the Stage.*)
Ho! art thou there? come forth;—come forth and fear not.
Perhaps he has mistaken thy direction,
I think he is in cover farther on.
I hear a rustling, yonder, to the left. (*Returns again to the bottom of the Stage, and enter* SEBASTIAN. *They embrace each other, while* Nurse *stands apart.*)

SEBASTIAN.

My child! my dear Zorada!

ZORADA.

Dear, dear father!

SEBASTIAN.

And thou must meet me as a man proscribed:
Child of a parent reft of name and honours,
Bann'd by the church, and by the laws condemn'd
Ev'n to the traitor's death of degradation:
One whom to name were pain and insult to thee;
One now despised of all, forgot, accurst.

ZORADA.

O not accurst! for I will bless thee, father,
Though every other tongue should blast thy fame.
O not forgotten! I'll remember thee;
Ay; nightly, daily, hourly, in my thoughts
Shalt thou have place; more cherish'd — more endear'd
For that all hearts besides have shut thee out.
O not despised! for I will honour thee,
And in my pious thoughts, as now in act,
Kneel at thine honour'd feet in faithful duty.

SEBASTIAN.

Rise, dearest, kindest, best, mine own Zorada!
Yes, child; thou shalt be all the world to me;
But it must be a faint, ideal world.
I may in dreams, in thought, in musing fancy
Behold thy face, thy form,—may hear thy voice—
But many a league of ocean and of land

Must lie between us. Ev'n my dying day
Will not be lighten'd with one look of thine.

ZORADA (*after weeping on his neck*).

We do not know what Heaven appoints for us.

SEBASTIAN.

Has Don Romiero spoken aught to thee
Respecting my sad fate?

ZORADA.

He has: 'tis true — the horrid tale is true.
The King has bound him by the horrid oath
Which thou did'st mention to me. — Base compliance!

SEBASTIAN.

Nay, blame him not; he took it in the faith
That I was safe, beyond the reach of power.
But this being so, I needs must rest in hiding
Secure and close, till thou canst find a vessel
To take me from the coast.

ZORADA.

There is within the precincts of this wood
An old abandon'd chapel, where the dead
Rest undisturbed. No living tenant there,
But owlet hooting on the ruin'd tower,
Or twitt'ring swallow in his eve-screen'd nest,
Will share the dismal shelter: for a time
Thou may'st be there secure. My good old Nurse
Has all things duly stored for food and rest,

And will conduct thee to it. Come, dear Nurse!
Greet thine old master in his time of sorrow,
And take of him good care.

NURSE.

Yea, that I will; for unto me and mine
He hath been ever kind and bountiful.
O woe the day! that I should have occasion
To do him such a service!

SEBASTIAN.

Ay, Nurse; there be sad changes in men's fortunes.
The day when first I saw thee to thy breast
Lay this dear child, a little toothless infant,
Whilst o'er ye both bent with fond beaming eyes
The best and fairest lady of the land,
For so she was, — that was indeed a day —
A day of brightness. Ah! how different
From this most dismal hour!

NURSE.

She was a noble lady, fair and gentle!
This wicked world did not deserve to hold her,
And so her time was short. And for her babe —
My babe; — I call'd her mine, and still will call her, —
A very cherub, peeping from the clouds,
As our fair pictures show them, is less beautiful
Than she half-covered with her cradle-clothes,

When waking from her morning's sleep, appear'd.
Ah me! the pleasant days that I remember!

ZORADA (*alarmed*).

I hear a noise.

SEBASTIAN.

Thou art, my dearest child, alarm'd for nothing.

ZORADA.

Yes; I fear every thing. But, right or wrong,
Go instantly, nor linger longer here.
Nay, go: we do not part: I'll see thee soon.

SEBASTIAN.

Heaven bless thee, then! Come, Nurse, I'm
now thy child,
Cherish me kindly.

NURSE.

Ay, bless your honour! I will do my best.
I'd give the life-blood in this poor old heart
For you and yours.

[*Exeunt* SEBASTIAN *and* Nurse; ZORADA *goes by the opposite side, meeting* JEROME, *who enters at the same time, and hurries along, covering her face as she passes him.*

JEROME.

Who's that who starts aside with guilty haste?
(*Following her.*) Ho! damsel, mistress, whoso-
e'er you be,
Let me have words of thee. I swear, good faith!
I'll take thee safely to thy rendezvous,

If thou wilt trust me. (*Following her off the stage, and then returning.*)
What have I done? What have I seen? No face,
For that was closely cover'd, but the figure,
The robe, the air, — if it be not Zorada,
I am a fool — a purblind, mazy fool,
And do not know my right hand from my left.
What brings her here? Were't any other woman,
It were an easy thing to guess her purpose.
Well, who lives long may see strange things, they say;
And if I needs must give my thoughts the rein,
I 'll curb my tongue. [*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I. — *An outer Room in the Apartments of* ZORADA, *with a wide Door opening in the Bottom of the Stage, which shows a magnificent Bedchamber, where* ROMIERO *is discovered walking to and fro in a distracted manner; he then rushes hastily from it to the Front of the Stage, and bends his ear to listen.*

ROMIERO.

No footstep yet: all 's still: 't is past endurance.
So late! the first night, too, of my return!

Is it the tardiness of cold aversion?
'T is more than that; some damned conference
Elsewhere detains her. Ay, that airy fool
Wore at the supper-board a conscious look,
Glancing in concert with the half-check'd smile
That moved his quiv'ring cheek, too well betraying
His inward triumph: 't was a cursed smile;
I would have cast my javelin at his throat,
But shame withheld me. — She the while did sit
With pensive fearful eye, that always fell,
Beneath my keen inquiring look, reproved.
Is virtue thus demure, restrain'd, mysterious?
She, too, who was as cheerful as the light,
Courting the notice of my looks! no, no!
Some blasting change is here. What can be done?
For something must be done. (*A pause and listening.*) Ho there without!
Who walks at this late hour? — A heavy step;
Have they their emissaries on the watch
To give them notice of my movements? Ho!
Ho there without!

Enter Servant.

What dost thou up? Why art thou not abed?

SERVANT.

My Lord, it is not yet our hour of rest.

ROMIERO.

Thou liest! 'T is late; 't is past the midnight watch.

SERVANT.

I do believe scarce half an hour has past
Since I did light your Honour from the hall.

ROMIERO.

Peace! thou art fool or knave, I know not which.
I 've pass'd since then two hours as truly told
As sun on dial moves.—Why shrink'st thou back?

SERVANT.

I hear my lady coming.

ROMIERO.

Coming at last! Haste! leave me; go thy ways.
[*Exit* SERVANT.
(*Putting out a lamp which stands on a side table.*)
Out light! The partial gleam from yonder door
Will, as she enters, fall upon her strongly;
I 'll stand aside, and mark her face unseen.

Enter ZORADA, *who stops short to wipe tears from her eyes, &c., as if preparing herself to appear composed; whilst* ROMIERO, *in the shade, after eyeing her suspiciously, bursts suddenly upon her.*

Have done with all this smoothing of thy features,
And look as sad and rueful as thou wilt.

Thy tardy, slow unwillingness, and all
The strange demeanour of this day, too well
Speak that which ev'n the smiles of Hebe's cheek,
Hadst thou more female art such smiles to copy,
Could not gainsay. — Where hast thou been so long?
Wilt thou not answer me?

ZORADA.

You frighten me, Romiero, as I reckon
'T is little past our usual hour of rest.

ROMIERO.

Thou dost evade the question. Not the time; —
Where hast thou been?

ZORADA.

Have patience — O have patience!
Where I have been I have done thee no wrong:
Let that suffice thee.

ROMIERO.

Ha! thou 'rt quick, methinks,
To apprehend suspicion. Done no wrong!
What call'st thou wrong? Yea, by that sacred band
Which linketh soul to soul in wedded love,
Pure, fervent, aud confiding, — every thought,
Fancy, and consciousness, that from thy husband,
Unfitting for his ear, must be withheld,
Is wrong to him, and is disgrace to thee.

ZORADA.

Then woe is me! Since wives must be so perfect,
Why didst thou wed Zorada de Modinez?

ROMIERO.

Dost thou upbraid me for it? Then too well
I see the change. — Yes, I will call it change,
For I must still believe thou lovedst me once.

ZORADA.

Yes, yes! I loved thee once, I love thee now,
And will for ever love thee, dear Romiero,
If thou wilt suffer me.

ROMIERO.

Suffer thee, dear Zorada! It is paradise
To think thou lovest me, hell to doubt of it.

ZORADA.

Then doubt it not. If I am cold and sad,
I have a cause, — I must repeat my words, —
Which does to thee no wrong. Some few days hence
Thou shalt know all, and thou wilt pity me.
Did I e'er tell thee that which afterwards
Thou foundest to be untrue?

ROMIERO.

Thou never didst.

ZORADA.

Then why suspect me now?

ROMIERO.

Give me thy dear, dear hand, my own sweet wife!
Yes, I will trust thee, and do thou the while
Think charitably of my stern rebuke.
Love can be stern as well as tender, yet
Be all the while most true and fervent love.
But go to rest, dear child, and I will follow thee;
For it indeed is late. (*Stands musing as she retires, then turning suddenly.*)
Zorada!

ZORADA (*returning*)

What, my Lord?

ROMIERO.

Forget not, Love,
That soothing ointment of such efficacy.

ZORADA.

For what, I pray?

ROMIERO.

Didst thou not wrench thy foot?

ZORADA.

O, not at all.

ROMIERO.

Didst thou not say thou hadst?

ZORADA.

O that was but a feint to cheat Don Maurice.

ROMIERO.

To cheat him! wherefore cheat him? for what end?

Was it a time for childish freaks like that?
And the deep colour crimsoning thy cheek —
What does it say? — Go to! thou needst not
speak.

ZORADA.

Indeed, indeed you err; my heedless words——

ROMIERO.

Were very, very heedless. — Go to bed;
Go, go! my hour of rest is distant still.
Linger not here, I say; retire to rest.

[*Exit* ZORADA *into the chamber.*

(*After musing some time.*) I do not think her
wicked, but there lurks
Within her fancy vain and dangerous things.
Those striplings, — those light, beardless play-
fellows!
The devil himself hath not an imp more subtle
Than one of these.—They laugh, and mock, and
mimic,
And cast upon the lovely face of virtue
The gloomy veil of cloister'd melancholy,
Whilst vice is all so gay and deftly trick'd,
That who can choose but range them on her
side?
To break down every sacred tie, what is it?
'Tis but a merry trick!——
Ay, she was wary, too, in her expressions:
"Did I e'er tell thee that which afterwards
Thou foundest to be untrue." — Equivocation,

A half-corrupted woman's poor device.
(*Muses and mutters to himself a few moments longer, and then paces up and down with slow irresolute steps.*)
—— A half-corrupted woman!
If it be come to this, who shall restrain
The hateful progress, which as rapidly ——
Restrain it! No! to hell's profoundest pit
Let it conduct her, if she hath so far
Debased her once pure mind, and injured me.
I dare not think on 't, yet I am compell'd;
And at the very thought a raging fire
Burns in my head, my heart, through every vein
Of this distracted frame. I 'll to the ramparts,
And meet the chilness of the midnight wind;
I cannot rest beneath this hateful roof. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

An old Gothic Gallery, with Doors leading to different Apartments.

Enter JEROME, *carrying a light, and followed by* DON MAURICE.

MAURICE.
I am the first at our appointed place,
Which is beseeming in affairs of love.
I hope, meantime, she is upon the way.
List, dost thou hear a step?

JEROME.

My ears are not so quick.

MAURICE.

Am I again deceived? and hear'st thou nothing?

JEROME.

I hear the swallows stirring in their nests,
Disturbed with sudden light. Such creatures build
In ev'ry crevice of those mouldering arches.

MAURICE.

Did'st thou not tell me these adjoining chambers
Are all untenanted, and no one near us.

JEROME (*pointing*).

Yes, all are empty but that further room,
In which Don Guzman chooses to abide,
That from its lofty windows he may see
A more extensive prospect.

MAURICE.

Would he were at the utmost verge of all
That may be thence survey'd! — I like it not:
He is a dangerous neighbour.

JEROME.

But he is tired and gone, ere this, to rest:
You need not fear to be disturb'd by him.

MAURICE.

I hear a footstep now: she comes, she comes!
O she is good and punctual to my wish!
Do thou retire, good Jerome.

Enter BEATRICE *attended, and* JEROME *with her Female Attendant keep on the background, while* MAURICE, *running eagerly to her, leads her nearer the front.*

My charming Beatrice! may I indeed
Believe that thou art here? that thou vouchsafest
To come with thoughts of favour for thy slave?

BEATRICE.

Perhaps I do but dream I am so bold.
It is so strange, — my mind is so bewilder'd!

MAURICE.

And why bewilder'd, Love? There's nought to fear.

BEATRICE.

I've heard sounds of alarm, and seen faint forms,
That seem'd to follow me, and yet were nothing.
I thought the very stones of the old walls
Did call my name and know me as I pass'd.

MAURICE.

Fear nothing, Love: this place is unfrequented:
Swallows or bats may whisper of our meeting,
But naught besides. — Oh! how I have desired
To tell thee all my heart; on bended knee
To plead my cause! — My fate is in thy hands;
And since thou hast such pity of my pain
As thus to listen to me, may I hope
Thou wilt be better still?

BEATRICE.

Go not so fast: perhaps I am but come
To chide thee for thy most presumptuous mes-
sage.

MAURICE.

And if thou dost, I'll bear it all so meekly,
That thou wilt say within thy cunning self,
"This man, in truth, is made to be a husband."

BEATRICE.

It were no cunning but a foolish self
Could hold such inward parley. Every gallant
Would laugh most certainly within himself,
On hearing such a sober, grave conclusion
Joined to the noted name of gay Don Maurice.

MAURICE.

Nay, do not twit me now with all the freaks,
And levities, and gambols charged upon me
By every lean-faced dame that wears a hood.
I will be grave, and dismal, and punctilious
As heir at miser's funeral, if thou wilt,
And all the while as blithe o' heart as he.
I have as many fashions and demeanours,
As mantles in a lady's wardrobe; choose, —
I 'll be whate'er thou wilt, if in return
Thou wilt obey me but for some few hours.

BEATRICE.

I hear a noise.

MAURICE.

Only the wind that moves yon creaking door.

Step farther this way. (*Leading her to the opposite side of the Stage, near the door of* GUZMAN'S *chamber.*)
The time is precious, my most charming mistress!
Let me speak plainly in few words. Thou know'st
How much I fear Romiero's apt suspicion.
Delay were dangerous: therefore by the dawn,
In the dark grove of pines, meet me, prepared
To quit with me the castle, and for life
To share my lot. Deny me not: time presses:
O let me urge thee! — As for life I plead.

BEATRICE (*after a pause*).

What can I say? — I feel I should not say it.
And yet I feel thou dost not plead in vain.

MAURICE.

Thou 'lt meet me then, — do not retract thy words.
There is no time for slow deliberation.
Thou 'lt meet me by the dawn?

BEATRICE.

Yes; I will meet thee in the grove of pines.

Enter at the bottom of the Stage a SERVANT, *who whispers to* JEROME, *and then retires, upon which* JEROME *advances hastily to* MAURICE.

MAURICE.

What is the matter?

JEROME.

Romiero is not yet in bed. A spy
Who stood on watch without has given me notice.
He wanders through the house like one possess'd,
And may at last invade your privacy.

MAURICE.

He is not yet so near us. We shall hear him
Ere he approach.

JEROME.

His motions oft are sudden.

BEATRICE.

Retire, retire! I'll meet thee by the dawn;
So, till that time, adieu. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

DON GUZMAN'S *Chamber, who is discovered sleeping in his Chair.*

Enter ROMIERO.

ROMIERO.

Not yet abed! Ay, but he is asleep.
Happy unwedded! Thou canst soundly sleep;
Nor woman's fickleness, nor woman's guilt,
Can bring disgrace or agony to thee.
I'll not disturb him. (*After remaining for a while on the front of the Stage musing and muttering to himself, he speaks, but in a low voice.*)

The heart, the heart! What prize we but the heart! (*Mutters again, then breaks out in loud and vehement utterance.*)
No; though his lips had never touch'd her hand,
If that be lost, I 'm wretched!

GUZMAN (*waking*).

What sound is that? Who 's there? Ha! thou, my friend!

ROMIERO.

What has so startled thee?

GUZMAN.

The voice that woke me.
Thou must have heard it; 't was a human voice.

ROMIERO.

It was mine own, Don Guzman.

GUZMAN.

What has befallen? Why wert thou so alarm'd?
Or was it some sharp pang of bodily pain?

ROMIERO.

No, no! it was not that; and I am here
Only to share thy chamber for the night.

GUZMAN.

And why? I am amazed.

ROMIERO.

I 've paced o'er ramparts, halls, and galleries,
Till I have need of rest.

GUZMAN.

And thou would'st find it here? What strange caprice

Debars thee from the fair Zorada's chamber;
That place which gives the rest of paradise?

ROMIERO.

Ah! so it did to me. It was a pleasure
Where every lovely — every sweetest thing
In seeming shelter, bloom'd i' th' early sun,
Till the first sultry breath of southern winds
Blasted its freshness, leaving naught behind
But tainted fragrance — sered and faded flowers.
It was the magic palace of a dream,
Changed in an instant to some dismal den:
It was a bower of healthful innocence,
Changed to a lazar's vile and loathly ward:
It was —— Oh, oh! I know not what I say,
Thinking of what I was and what I am.

GUZMAN.

Nay; give thy ruffled thoughts a little pause;
Be well assured things are not as thou fear'st.
She did appear so good.

ROMIERO.

Alas! she did.
If I but droop'd or look'd a little pale,
The stroke of her soft hand, her kindly words,
Her sweet breath on my cheek, — O! it did turn
The hour of pain to bliss! — And all this happiness
Was but delusion — but a hov'ring vapour
That covers for a while the fenny pool.

GUZMAN.

No, say not so! Is it not far more likely
That the delusion rests with thee, my friend?

ROMIERO (*after musing, and without heeding what* GUZMAN *has said*).

Ay, if I did but droop, her look of sympathy
Went to my soul. Or if I parted from her,
Though only for a week — a day ——

GUZMAN.

Cease, cease!
Be well assured it is not as thou fear'st.
Try to compose thyself: what are thy proofs
That she has been unfaithful?

ROMIERO.

No; what a worldly judge would deem unfaithful
I trust she has not been; but what avails it?
He whom her fancy follows, he who pleases
Her secret thoughts and wishes, is her Lord,
Let who will, by the power of legal right,
Her body hold in thraldom. — Not unfaithful!
If I have lost her heart, I've suffer'd all.
No further outrage can enhance my wretchedness. (*Turning quickly and taking hold of him.*)
But thou believest that, ev'n in this, my fears
Are mere extravagance. (*Pausing and looking earnestly in his face.*)
Dost thou not think so? Dost thou not, Don Guzman?

GUZMAN.

I hope they are.

ROMIERO.

That hope implies a doubt;
Ay, and a doubt which, when I saw thee last,
Did not exist. Speak, speak! If *thou* mistrust her,
It is on no slight grounds.

GUZMAN.

Be more composed, and I will tell thee all.

ROMIERO.

There's something then to tell; some damned thing.

GUZMAN.

Nay, think not so; for, when I've told thee all,
'Twill make no certain proof against Zorada.
And since thou think'st her love for thee is changed,
Caring but for her love, thou may'st the better
Endure to learn the worst, if such should follow.

ROMIERO (*in a faint voice*).

I understand thee.

GUZMAN.

Two hours since, perhaps, —
I've been asleep, and cannot say how long ——
But pause we now. Thy quiv'ring lips are white,
Thine eyes are fix'd: lean upon me, my friend.

ROMIERO.

A sickly faintness passes o'er my heart.

GUZMAN (*supporting him to the chair*).

Lean here a while; thou canst not hear me yet.

ROMIERO.

I 'm better now.

GUZMAN.

But we will pause a while.

ROMIERO.

Proceed, proceed! I 'll listen, though thy words
Were each the spiked tooth of a martyr's wheel.
Proceed: — Some two hours since ——

GUZMAN.

Some two hours since, as, not disposed to sleep,
I was perusing that old book of stories,
I heard, and, as I judged, close to the door,
Two persons speaking in the gallery.
The voice of Maurice I could recognise,
The other was a woman's.

ROMIERO (*starting from the chair*).

And Zorada's.

GUZMAN.

Use not such frantic gestures of despair;
I say not it was her's: perhaps it was not;
Perhaps 't was Donna Beatrice.

ROMIERO.

No, no!
It was Zorada. Absent from her chamber

I found her at that time. When she return'd,
At a late hour, we had some wrangling words,
Glozed o'er, but poorly glozed, with female fraud,
Which soon betray'd itself; and then I left her.

GUZMAN.

'Tis very strange; and what I heard them say ——

ROMIERO.

Ay, ay! proceed with that; and make no pause
Till thou hast told the whole, though it should make me
A very fiend of agony and shame.

GUZMAN.

Thou graspest my throat so hard, I cannot speak.

ROMIERO.

Well, well, then! Out with all their damned words,
Till they have proved the blackest tint of guilt,
And then will come the fatal end of all;
The sabre clutch'd in strength; the stroke of vengeance;
The horrible joy, that lasteth for a moment!
Let all this be; let horror be unstinted!
Let every misery light upon the head
Of that most wanton —— No, the word would choke me;
I will not utter it.

GUZMAN.

Thou art beside thy wits; thou canst not hear me.
The words they spoke, prove against her nor no one
An act of guilt, but only the intent.

ROMIERO.

Intent! O monstrous! foul deliberation!
If life blood warm his heart another day,
I am bereft, debased, and brutified,
Unmeet to wear the outward form of manhood.

GUZMAN.

Wilt thou not hear my story?

ROMIERO.

I have heard it,
Knowing the cursed purport; ne'ertheless,
Tell it all, as minutely as thou wilt,
I 'll listen to the end.

GUZMAN.

I drew close to the door, and heard these words
Distinctly spoken in Don Maurice's voice: —
"Thou knowest I fear Romiero's apt suspicion;
"Delay were dang'rous; therefore, by the dawn,
"Meet me beneath the grove of pines, prepared
"To quit the castle. We will fly together:" —
Or words to this effect, which indistinctly
Fell into softer whispers, till, alarm'd,
As I suppose, they left the gallery.
'T was my intent to give thee early notice;

Therefore I shunn'd that tempting couch, and sought
Here, in my chair, to snatch a little sleep,
And be in readiness ere break of day.

ROMIERO.

Thou hast done well. (*After a pause.*)
Come to this pitch of secret profligacy,
Who was so modest and so timid once!
Was I a tyrant, that she is so ready
To doff the virtuous and respected wife —
For the base mistress of that minion too?
Some spell, some devilish witchery, hath subdued her,
Ere it could come to this.

GUZMAN.

Ay, so I think, if that in verity
It be Zorada.

ROMIERO.

O 't is she! 't is she!
Think'st thou I am a fool to be deceived
By such affected doubts, in pity utter'd?
Speak truly, plainly, treat me as a man.
Call them—yea call that woman, an' thou wilt,—

GUZMAN.

Fy, fy! Zorada is not yet a ——

ROMIERO (*putting his hand on the lips of* GUZMAN).

Hold!

Speak not the word; I 'm weaker than I thought.
Is it not near the dawn?

GUZMAN.

I think 'tis distant still.

ROMIERO.

Surely it is not.
We'll to the eastern turret, and look forth:
Should they escape! —— My brain burns at the thought. [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I. — *A Grove of Pines, and the Sky of Morning, before Sunrise, seen through them.*

Enter ROMIERO *and* GUZMAN *from a thicket at the bottom of the Stage.*

ROMIERO.

The dull light through yon bank of misty clouds
Hath changed its tanny hue for silver grey;
'T is near, 'tis actually, 't is past the time.

GUZMAN.

Have patience; for the sun, I guess, is still
Behind the eastern hills.

ROMIERO.

Should they escape! — Some cursed emissary,

Upon the watch, perhaps, hath given alarm.
Should they escape us by some other path!—
It must not be: I will look out.

GUZMAN (*drawing him back to the thicket as he is about to advance*).

Keep still.
I see them now; but let us be conceal'd
Till they are nearer.

ROMIERO.

They move tardily,
With their damn'd dalliance. — So very fond
That they forget the peril of their state,
Lost in the present bliss. ——
Ay; smile with lips which shall, within an hour,
Be closed in death; and glance your looks of
love
From eyes which shall, ere long, in coldness glare
Like glassy icicles.

GUZMAN.

Stay; rush not on them now.

ROMIERO.

See that! see that! her hand, and then her lips!
Shall I look on, and give another moment
To such abhorred transport. — Where's my
weapon? (*Snatching his sword from* GUZMAN, *who attempts to remove it.*)

GUZMAN.

Be not a madman in thine extacy,
And foil thine own intent. — See, they advance.

Enter MAURICE, *leading* BEATRICE *muffled in her mantle.*

MAURICE.

Come, sweetest mistress mine, move we more quickly;
Our horses wait us some few paces off;
And by the baiting hour, when labouring hinds,
Under some tree, sit round the loosen'd scrip,
Holding on homely fare a merry feast,
We will, like them, in all security,
Enjoy a welcome rest.

ROMIERO (*rushing forth*).

Which shall to doomsday last, thou damned villain! — (*Draws fiercely upon him, while* BEATRICE *runs away. They fight, but she presently returns and rushes between them, favoured by* GUZMAN.)

ROMIERO.

Forbear, thou shameless woman. — Beatrice!

BEATRICE.

It is, my Lord; and O have pity on me!
It is myself who am the most to blame.
Pardon my dear, dear Maurice. — Yes, you will.
Your look of strange amazement, changed to joy,
Emboldens me. — Our hearts have long been join'd;
O do not sever us!

ROMIERO.

No, simple girl:
Sever ye! by the holy rood I will not!
I am right glad that ye are so united.
Stick to it then; be thrifty of your love,
To make it last; be doves in constancy.
Good sooth, young fools! I will not sever ye.

BEATRICE (*kissing his hand*).

Thanks, noble, kind Romiero!

MAURICE.

Thanks for this frank and unexpected pardon!
I fear'd, my Lord, that you might deem it right
To thwart my suit with Beatrice, who lived,
Protected, as her friends might haply think,
Beneath your roof.

ROMIERO.

And thou thought'st justly too.
In cooler blood so ought I to have felt.
Beshrew me! whither fled my wits the while?
I have most freely given what is not mine.
(*To* GUZMAN.) Do thou, my friend, untie this ravell'd knot.
(*Turning again to* MAURICE.) I'll plead thy cause, at least, and prove, perhaps,
A powerful advocate.—Speak to them, Guzman;
And promise in my name, without reserve,
All that my honour warrants. I, meantime,
Must make my peace where I have need of pardon. [*Exit in eager haste.*

MAURICE.

How placable and kind beyond belief!
Would I had fairly own'd to him my love,
Since he is thus inclined! But he appear'd
Hostile, and stern, and fretful at my stay,
Unreasonably prolong'd. I had not courage
To risk my happiness, which his caprice,
Stern sense of honour — call it as you please —
Might in a moment blast.

GUZMAN.

I blame thee not; had'st thou at first declared it,
Thou would'st have found him hostile.

MAURICE.

Then, pray, Don Guzman, what strange freak
hath changed him?

GUZMAN.

That he is changed, is your good luck; improve it,
Without inquiring why you are so favour'd.

MAURICE.

And so we will, sweet Beatrice; we will
Delay our happiness, to make it surer.

BEATRICE.

Yes, Maurice; run no further risk; we 'll both
Return again and bide within the castle.

GUZMAN.

No; be advised: (*to* BEATRICE) do thou return
alone;
Some foolish freak may yet disturb his mind.

I know he 'll favour Maurice most when absent.
(*To* MAURICE.) Dost thou not comprehend me?

MAURICE.

Not very clearly: jealousy of one
Whose love is fix'd on an acknowledged mistress,
So fair, so lovely, were absurd — impossible.

GUZMAN.

Nay, only say absurd; for there be husbands,
Ay, lovers too, who, should you cross their way,
New-mated with the Queen of Love herself,
And their own dame or mistress were in form
Black as an Ethiope, would ne'ertheless
Suspect you of designs against their peace.
Then wonder not, Zorada being fair,
If fanciful conceits disturb his brain.

MAURICE.

But I 'll be circumspect.

GUZMAN.

Go, foolish boy!
Thy very shadow on the wall will show
Some indication of sinister wishes,
School thou the substance as thou wilt. Go, go!
And be assured I 'll prove thy friend when absent.

MAURICE (*to* BEATRICE).

And must we part?

BEATRICE.

We shall not part for long.

MAURICE.

No, not for long, sweet maid: beneath thy win-
dow
I'll hold my midnight watch; and when thy case-
ment
Moves slowly on its hinges, I'll look up,
And see thy beauty, by the moon's pale light,
Sending sweet smiles to bless me.—
When thou walk'st forth, I'll in some thicket
lurk,
To see thee pass — perhaps to touch thy robe.
Wilt thou not give me, dear, before we part,
Some token of thy love?

BEATRICE.

Yes, gentle Maurice, thou shalt have a token,
Which every hour thou 'lt look upon, and think
How dear, how true ——

GUZMAN.

I'll leave you for a while
To settle all this nonsense as you will;
That done, we 'll meet again in yonder alley,
And I 'll conduct the lady to the castle.

[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE II.

The Apartment of ZORADA.—*She enters with* Nurse, *who carries a basket in her hand.*

ZORADA (*speaking as she enters*).

And see, good Nurse, that where the cold wind enter'd
Thou stop the crevice well. Oh! that his head,
His dear and honour'd head, should so be laid,
While I am couch'd on down! Thou say'st his face
Look'd not so sadly as before.

NURSE.

Indeed I thought so, Madam: he spoke cheerily,
And listen'd to my stories of past days,
As if he liked to hear them.

ZORADA.

Alas! the very sound of human words,
Address'd to him in peace, is now a solace
Enjoy'd but rarely.— I must talk and smile,
And keep my station at the social board,
While my sad heart is thinking of his silent
And lonely state. — There is my picture then,
Since he desires to have it. (*Giving her a picture, which he puts into the basket.*)

NURSE.

Yes, Madam, he did earnestly desire it.
He bade me say to you, no lover ever
Gazed on the features of a plighted mistress
With such intense and yearning love as he
Will gaze upon this image.

ZORADA.

Yes; he will look, and think that in return
It looks with love on him; but woe is me!
He cannot know how dearly in my heart
His image is impress'd. I call to mind
His kind caresses in my infant years;
His noble form in warlike harness braced,
When he returning caught me to his heart,
And heard my simple welcome with delight,
Filling his eyes with tears. I well remember —
Dost thou not also, Nurse? the voice of fondness
With which, ev'n when I cross'd his graver mood,
He call'd me little Zada. O 't was sweet!
I thought so then; but now it haunts mine ear
Like portion of some broken melody,
Which mocking bird is so enamour'd of,
He will not learn the whole. — And say, good
Nurse,
That I will surely see him ere he go,
If it be possible. [*Exit* Nurse.
(*After a thoughtful pause.*) "My little Zada!
tush, my little fool!
I will not have thee for my playfellow,
If thou art so perverse."

No more than this; this was my worst rebuke.
He set no heartless stepdame o'er my head,
Though many ladies strove to win his love.
He was both sire and mother to his child,
Gentle as her I lost.
Then for his sake I 'll willingly endure
The present misery. O my Romiero!
Wilt thou not trust my conduct for a day? —
Absent all night! To what a state of passion
His brooding fancy must have work'd his mind!
Alas, alas! 't is his infirmity.

Enter ROMIERO.

ROMIERO.

My dear Zorada! dear, dear wife! thy pardon:
I crave it on my knees. O pardon one
Who has offended from excess of love.
I might have thought all eyes that look'd upon
thee,
With more than admiration look'd; but, Oh!
To think that thy pure mind could e'er be moved
To aught which blessed saints might not approve,
Was monstrous, vile — yea a most vile sugges-
tion —
Though all the while 't was an offence of love.
Thou art amazed, I see, and well thou may'st.
I have but now discover'd what my fears ——

ZORADA.

Fears! What hast thou discover'd?

ROMIERO.

Be not alarm'd; naught that can injure thee.
For if thou hast been privy to their love,
Though I might chide thee as a cunning wife,
Who from her husband hath a secret kept,
The bane of confidence; yet being myself
So deep in trespass, I must needs be meek,
And say thou art not very, very naughty.

ZORADA.

Thy words are wild; I do not comprehend them.

ROMIERO.

Dost thou not know thy fair but thoughtless friend
Has to young Maurice's suit such favour given,
That she this morning, short while since, was caught
Escaping in his company?
I watch'd and stopp'd them in the grove of pines.
How glad a sight it was to me, when, wild,
With terror wild, she rush'd between our weapons,
To find it was but Beatrice.

ZORADA.

But Beatrice! whom did'st thou fear to find?

ROMIERO.

Oh! spare me! Crimson shame upon my cheek,
Betrays too plainly that for which already
I've craved forgiveness.

ZORADA (*drawing herself up proudly*).
Yes, I comprehend thee.

ROMIERO.
Oh! but that look, that air, that flush of anger
Which ne'er before so stain'd thy lovely face,
Speak not of pardon. (*She turns away, and he follows her.*) I have much offended.
But he who like offence hath ne'er committed:
Who ne'er hath look'd on man's admiring eye
Fix'd on the treasure of his heart, till fear,
Suspicion, hatred hath bereft his soul
Of every generous feeling; he who never
Hath, in that state of torture, watch'd her face
Till ev'n the traits of saintly innocence
Have worn the shade of conscious guilt; who never
Hath, in his agony, for her dear sake
Cursed all the sex;—may, as the world conceives,
Be a most wise, affectionate, good husband;
But, by all ecstacy of soul, by all
That lifts it to an angel's pitch, or sinks it
Ev'n to perdition, he has loved but slightly —
Loved with a love, compared to what I feel,
As cottage hearth where smould'ring embers lie,
To the surcharged unquenchable volcano.

ZORADA.
What creed is this which thy perturbed mind
Repeats so boldly? Good my Lord, discard it,

As a false faith. I have believed true love
Of such a noble, high, confiding nature,
That neither scandal's breath, nor seeming show
Of fitful change, could shake its gen'rous trust.
'T were agony for me to think *thee* false;
But till thou front me with a rival — yea,
Till thine own words have own'd that thou art faithless —
I will believe thee true.

ROMIERO.

Believe, believe it! and on these dear hands,
A thousand times caress'd, let me be vow'd
Ne'er to offend again thy noble nature
With ev'n the slightest movement of suspicion.
Dost thou relent, Zorada? Dost thou love me?

ZORADA.

Indeed I do; have I not often said it?
And yet, it seems, thou did'st mistrust my words.

ROMIERO.

Fy on that gibe! let me have perfect pardon.

ZORADA (*embracing him*).

Thou art forgiven. Now; art thou satisfied?

ROMIERO.

I were a Tartar else, or sullen Turk.
Sweet partner, lovely mate, my gentle wife!
O the soft touch of this dear hand thrills through me,
So dear! as dear as when thou first wert mine.

(*Stroking her hand, and then pressing it to his forehead and cheek.*) If word, or look, or circumstance, again
E'er tempt me to conceive unworthy thoughts,
I am a vulgar wretch, debased and mean,
Unworthy even to look thee in the face,
Or hold myself akin to virtue. No;
I will no more offend.

Re-enter Nurse, *who is busy arranging her basket, and then looking up, starts on seeing* ROMIERO.

Nay, start not, worthy Nurse; pray thee advance.

NURSE.

I came — I thought my Lady was alone.

ROMIERO.

And so she is; for we are so united
In every thought and wish, that thou should'st reckon,
When with each other, we are still alone.
Is it not so? — Thou comest for some good purpose,
I'll swear. To whom bear'st thou that tempting fruit?

NURSE.

To no one, Sir; I come to show its beauty:
It is my Lady's basket.

ROMIERO.

Thou'st cull'd the best: my lips are parch'd and dry.
May I —— (*Putting his hand to the basket.*)

NURSE.

Nay, good my Lord, I'll choose you one.

ROMIERO (*rejecting what she offers*).

Not that: the further peach my fancy courts.
(*Putting his hand into the basket.*)
But there be dainty viands and cakes besides!

ZORADA.

A charitable dole for age and want. (*Looking to the* Nurse *significantly.*)
That is the reason why I bade her show it,
Ere she should take it to the poor distress'd.

ROMIERO.

Ha! let me then restore my robbery;
And here, to make amends. (*Putting money into the basket.*)
What have we here?
(*Taking out a picture.*)
Is this a present for your villager?

NURSE.

Yes, please you. — No, she but desired to see it.

ROMIERO (*with bitter irony*).

A most refined and sentimental gossip!
Or does she mean to use it as a charm
To cure old aching bones?

NURSE.

You've guess'd it well, my Lord. Quoth she to me,
Could I but see your Lady's blessed face!
Quoth I to her, Thou canst not, by good reason:
My Lord is now return'd. Quoth she again,
Could I but see her picture, lack a day!

ROMIERO.

Have done: I see thy drift. Be not so eager
To tell me how it is. I'm satisfied.

ZORADA.

Come to my closet, Nurse; there is besides
What I must charge thee with.

[*Exeunt* ZORADA *and* Nurse, *the last speaking loudly as she retires.*

Ay, ay, quoth she, poor soul! I have a longing
To see that picture. Foolish man, quoth I,
'Tis but a painted —— (*Her voice still heard as she retires.*)

ROMIERO.

Foolish man, quoth I! — The cunning jade
Hath made a slip: it was a woman first.
(*A pause, and he stands musing and muttering to himself before he speaks aloud, then in a low smothered voice*) Ay, and such thoughts
Which in the breast had perish'd unreveal'd,
Are by these cunning beldames brought to utterance.

Words follow thoughts, acts follow words, and all
The steps of infamy, from which the mind
By nature shrinks, are thus familiar made.
A blighting bane, corroding to its core
Beauty and innocence. (*Mimicking the voice of a nurse.*)—"My dearest child!
Thou need'st not fear to tell thy thoughts to me;
I know thy tender heart, I know thy fears."
Would the whole race were blasted from the earth! (*In his own voice, and stamping on the ground.*)

Enter JEROME

What brings thee here?

JEROME.

Old Pietro is below,
And craves to speak with you.

ROMIERO.

The irksome fool!
He trows that I am always in the humour
To hear his prosing proverbs.

JEROME.

He does, my Lord; and oft presuming on it,
Has grown familiar.

ROMIERO.

Art thou his judge?

Tell him I cannot see him now. To-morrow
I'll find him in his cottage.

JEROME.

But what he has to tell you, please you, Sir,
He bade me further add, is of importance,
And may not be delay'd.

ROMIERO.

I'll see him, then, since it must needs be so.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

An Antechamber.

Enter PIETRO *and a Domestic.*

PIETRO (*speaking as he enters*).

A blessing on thy simple head! impatient!
I have, good sooth! been wont to speak with him
As though he were my fellow. Much shrewd
counsel
He hath received from me right pleasantly.
He looks not grave or proud when poor men
speak;
At least I'm sure he was not so inclined
Before he married.

Enter JEROME *behind him, and listens archly.*

Ay, he knows mankind,
With all their knavish arts; ay, and he knows
I know them also. Bless the day! full often

He listen'd to me with a merry face:
Much shrewd discoursing we have had together.

JEROME (*advancing*).

True, but such shrewd discoursing, as thou call'st
Should only upon rainy days take place, [it,
When idle folk, from field and sport debarr'd,
Are glad to while away the weary time
With aught to save the kicking of their heels.

PIETRO.

Will he not see me, then?

JEROME.

I said not so.
He'll see thee presently; but do not teaze him
With a long-winded tale, choked up with saws;
He is not in the humour for it now.
It would, to say the least on't, be a present
More prized by him who gives than who receives it.

PIETRO.

Go to! I have no need of thee to school me:
I know as well as thou dost when to speak,
And when to hold my tongue.

Enter ROMIERO *and* GUZMAN, *and the Domestics withdraw.*

ROMIERO.

Good morrow, Pietro! thou would'st speak with me.

PIETRO.

Yes, please your honour, I'm a simple man;—

That is to say, I am not school'd or learn'd
As many be, who set great store by it;
But yet, I think, I can, as well as others,
Scent mischief in its covert. Ah, good lack!
This is a wicked world.

ROMIERO.

I know it well.
Thou'st told me so a thousand times, good Pietro.
What is the matter now? Rehearse it briefly,
And plainly too, my friend: enough of comment
Will follow after. Speak, — what is the matter?

PIETRO.

Ay, something is the matter, take my word for't.
For there be ill enough in this sad world, —
In court and cot, in city and in village.

ROMIERO (*interrupting him impatiently*).

There is amongst your villagers, I hear,
A person much afflicted.

PIETRO.

We were all well, both young and old of us,
When I left home scarce half an hour since. No;
My story is of other matters; villagers
Are not therein concerned, unless it be
As hired emissaries: for, I trow,
No wealthy devil e'er lack'd some poorer imp.
No rich man ever wants ——

ROMIERO.

A truce with proverbs!
What is it thou would'st tell me?

PIETRO.

Marry, that mischief, in or near your castle,
Is hatching secretly.

ROMIERO.

Why dost thou think so?

PIETRO.

A ghost was seen by some benighted fools,
As they report it, near the ancient chapel,
Where light pour'd through the trees, and strangely vanish'd
They know not how. I much suspect your ghosts.
'Tis said they're ominous of death; but weddings,
Or worse than weddings, oft'ner follow after.
You have a rich and beauteous ward: Don Maurice
Is young, ambitious, and cunning: — No!
It is no ghastly spectre haunts your woods.

ROMIERO.

Was it a female form those fools beheld?

PIETRO.

Yes, by Saint Jago! and it wore, they say,
Donna Zorada's air, who is, you know,
Not much unlike, in size and gait, to Beatrice.

GUZMAN.

We know all this already, worthy Pietro;
Naught ill will follow it; be thou content.

ROMIERO.

If Beatrice hath in the shades of night

Gone forth to meet her lover, she hath err'd
Beyond what we believed. (*Calling loud.*) Ho!
Jerome there!

Re-enter JEROME.

Thou wert the secret agent of Don Maurice;
In this thou'st sinn'd against thy master! Say,
And I'll forgive thee all, if thou speak truly,
Did Donna Beatrice e'er, by night, steal forth
To meet him in the forest?

JEROME.

No, good my Lord; that I will answer truly;
She never did.

ROMIERO.

Good Pietro tells a story
Of frighten'd villagers, who have, at night,
Seen wand'ring in the wood a female form.
Thou seem'st confused; thou, too, hast heard of this?

JEROME.

Not heard of it, my Lord.

ROMIERO.

Then thou hast seen it.

JEROME.

I must confess I saw a form, last night,
Glide hastily before me, through the wood:
The face I could not see.

ROMIERO.

It was a woman?

JEROME.

It was, my Lord.

ROMIERO.

Its stature tall or short?

JEROME.

Neither, my Lord.

PIETRO.

Did I not say it seem'd ——

GUZMAN (*pulling* PIETRO *back.*)

Hush, thou art wise, and should not waste thy words.

ROMIERO (*to* JEROME).

Did it resemble any female figure
Familiar to thine eye? Why dost thou hesitate?
Speak truth; speak freely; think not to deceive me:
Seem'd it a form familiar to thine eye?

JEROME.

I was confused—I knew not. No, my Lord,
It was no well-known form.

ROMIERO.

Thy words are false!
(*Walks perturbedly to and fro, then returning to them.*) Why stand ye here to gaze upon me? Go!

GUZMAN (*to* PIETRO).

Retire, and do not speak to him again.
Save thee, good Pietro; and thou, too, Jerome.

[*Exeunt* PIETRO *and* JEROME.

(*Going up to* ROMIERO.) Thou art bereft of reason. In the dark
A gliding form is seen, nor tall, nor short,
Nor having any mark by which to prove
It is or is not any woman breathing;
And thou in thy diseased conceit hast shaped——

ROMIERO.

Thou speak'st in ignorance: I have good cause—
Cause which thou know'st not of. I'll tell thee more
When I have breath to speak.——
My dame, my wife, she whom I made my wife,
Hath secret myst'ries—hath a beldame Nurse—
Hath one conceal'd to whom she sends—O shame!—
Outrageous, frontless shame! the very picture
Which I have gazed upon a thousand times,
Tears in my eyes, and blessings on my lips.
How little thought I once—vain, vain remembrance!
It is a thing most strange if she be honest.

GUZMAN.

How strange?—that thou thyself shouldst be deceived
As many men have been, which is a marvel
Of daily note, amongst the sons of Adam.

ROMIERO.

Deceived! be there witch-powder in mine eyes,
To make that seen which is not; in mine ears,

To make them hear false sounds? I've seen;
I've heard:
I am deluded by no gossip's tale.—
O would I were! I loved—I worshipp'd her;
She was the thing that stirr'd within my soul,
Which had no other life. Despise me not;
For tears will force their way.—She was to me——
When I have power to speak, I'll tell thee all.

GUZMAN.

Yes; pause a while, my friend. Thou art too vehement.

ROMIERO (*lowering his voice*).

Have they overheard me? Has it come to this,
That such as they should know my misery.
I will match wiles with wiles, and borrow of her
That damn'd hypocrisy. Come thou with me,
And give me counsel: thou thyself wilt own
It is no weak conceit disturbs me thus.
But stop, and stand aside. (*Stops on seeing* Nurse *pass by a low window on the outside.*)

GUZMAN.

What wouldst thou now?

ROMIERO.

Here comes the beldame Nurse of whom I spoke;
Returning from her mission, as I guess.
Stand thou aside whilst I engage with her,
And, with her own deceits, deceive the witch.
Do thou observe her visage as I speak.

GUZMAN.

Nay; trust not to deceit; for at this moment
Thou hast not o'er thyself as much control
As would deceive the simplest soul on earth.
She will outwit thee; leave the task to me,
And do thou stand aside. — I hear her steps.

Enter Nurse, *while* ROMIERO *goes behind the arras.*

Ha! my good Nurse; thou art a stirring person,
And one of service in this family,
If I mistake it not. How could fair damsels,
And dainty dames, and other tender souls
Endure the thraldom of stern lords and masters,
Brothers, and jealous guardians, and the like,
Were it not for such useful friends as thou?

NURSE.

I know not what you mean by service, Sir;
I serve my mistress honestly and fairly.

GUZMAN.

And secretly, when it must needs be so.
Do I not know it well, and well approve
Thy wary vigilance? Take this broad piece;
(*giving gold*)
A token of respect for all thy virtues.
Thou art, I know, the agent of Zorada
In all her secret charities: how fares it
With that poor invalid?

NURSE.

What invalid?

GUZMAN.

To whom thou took'st that basket of fair fruit.
Let me attend thee when thou goest again;
I have some skill in med'cine.

NURSE.

I thank you, Sir; I have some skill myself,
And that suffices. She will soon be well.

GUZMAN.

It is a woman, then.—Look in my face:
Look at me stedfastly.—I know it is not.
It is a man; ay, and a man for whom
Thy Lady hath some secret, dear regard.
And so, perhaps, hast thou: where is the harm?

NURSE.

And if there be, where is the harm of loving
Those near akin to us?

GUZMAN.

Yes, fairly said! Who can find harm in that?

NURSE.

Whom should we love—I mean, whom should I
love,
But mine own flesh and blood?

GUZMAN.

Thy flesh and blood! lies flesh and blood of
thine
So near us, and conceal'd?—A son, perhaps?

NURSE.

I have a son; but where he is conceal'd,
Or far or near, I know not.

GUZMAN.

Nay, nay, good Nurse; think of next month's confession,
When lying must be paid for. Father Thomas
For a small penance will not let thee off. (*Here* ROMIERO *appears from behind the arras, with gestures of impatience, but draws back again.*)

GUZMAN.

Know'st thou not where he is, this son of thine?
A handsome youth, no doubt.

NURSE.

As ever stepp'd upon the blessed earth.
When but an infant, he with fair Zorada
Play'd like a brother. Such a pretty pair!
And the sweet children loved each other dearly.
Would he were here! but where he is I know not.

ROMIERO (*bursting out upon her*).

Vile wretch! thou liest; but thou shalt tell the truth.
I'll press the breath from out thy cursed body,
Unless thou tell me where thy son is hid.

NURSE.

My son, my Lord!

ROMIERO.

Ay, witch; I say thy son;
The ugliest hound the sun e'er looked upon.
Tell me, and instantly, if thou wouldst breathe
Another moment. Tell me instantly. (*Shaking her violently, while* GUZMAN *interposes,*

and ROMIERO, *struggling with him, falls to the ground, and* Nurse *escapes off the Stage.*)

GUZMAN (*endeavouring to raise him*).

I pray thee, pardon me, my noble friend!
When passion led thee to disgrace thyself;
This was an act of friendship. — Rise, Romiero.

ROMIERO.

No; here upon the ground, my bed of agony,
I will remain. Sunk to this deep disgrace,
The centre of the earth were fitter for me
Than its fair surface and the light of heaven.
Oh! this exceeds the worst imagination
That e'er found entrance to this madden'd brain!
That he — this hateful, vulgar, shapeless crea-
ture ——
Fy, fy!

GUZMAN.

If thou canst harbour such a thought,
Thou art in verity beside thyself.
It is not possible that such a one
Could please Zorada, were she even unfaithful.

ROMIERO (*rising fiercely*).

Not please her! every thing will please a woman
Who is bereft of virtue, gross, debased.
Yea, black deformity will be to her
A new and zestful object.

Enter ZORADA *behind him.*

GUZMAN (*making her a sign to retire*).

O Lady! come not here.

ZORADA.

I heard Romiero loud; what is the matter?

ROMIERO.

O nothing, Madam; pray advance. O nothing!
Nothing that you should be surprised to hear.
That ladies can be fair and delicate,
And to the world's eye as saints devout,
Yet all the while be coarse, debased, and stain'd
With passions that disgrace the vulgar kind.

ZORADA.

Alas! what mean you?

ROMIERO.

Thou 'st play'd me false; thou art a worthless woman;
So base, so sunk, that those whose appellation
Brings blushes to the cheeks of honest women
Compared to thee are pure.—Off! do not speak!
It is a sick'ning sight to look upon thee,
Fair as thou art. Feign not to be surprised:
Begone, I say, I cannot for a moment
Say what I may not do. (*Taking his dagger from his side, and giving it to* GUZMAN, *who snatches it hastily from him.*)
Now thou art safe; but go, thou shameless creature!

GUZMAN.

Madam, I pray you go, for he is furious,
And would not listen to a saint from heaven.

[*Exit* ZORADA *wringing her hands.*]

Come, leave this spot, Romiero; some few hours,
I am persuaded, will reveal this mystery.
Meantime, let me constrain thee as a friend;
Thou art not fit to speak or act with reason.

ROMIERO.

Think'st thou to bind and lead me like a maniac?

GUZMAN.

Like what thou art: but here comes Beatrice.
Wouldst thou to her expose thy sorry state?

Enter BEATRICE.

ROMIERO.

To her or any one, what boot they now,
Fair seemings and fair words?

BEATRICE.

Are you not well, my Lord?

ROMIERO.

No, damsel; *well* was banish'd from the world
When woman came to it.

BEATRICE.

Fy! say not so.
For if deprived of women, what were men?
Like leafless elms stripp'd of the clasping vine;
Like unrigg'd barks, of sail and pennant bare;
Like unstring'd viols, which yield no melody.
Banish us all, and lay my life upon it,
You will right quickly send for us again.

ROMIERO.

Ay, as for parrots, jays, and kirtled apes,
To make vain sport withal. It makes me sick
To think of what you seem and what you are.

BEATRICE.

But say not *all*, because there are a few.

GUZMAN.

Fair lady, hold no further parley now.
(*To* ROMIERO.) And come with me, my friend.
[*Exeunt* ROMIERO *and* GUZMAN.

BEATRICE (*looking after him*).

What strange tormenting fancy haunts him now?
She leads a life worse than an Islam slave,
Who weds with such as him. Save me from that!

Enter MAURICE *by the window, having previously peeped in to see if she were alone.*

MAURICE.

Dear Beatrice! to find thee thus alone ——

BEATRICE.

Good Heaven preserve us! what has brought thee back?

MAURICE.

To see and hear thee, Love, and yet again
To touch thy fair soft hand.

BEATRICE.

An errand, truly,
To make thee track thy steps so many miles!

MAURICE.

An errand worth the toil ev'n ten times told.
To see thy figure moving in thy veil,
Is worth a course of five good miles at least;
To see thy glowing face of welcome is,
At lowest reck'ning, worth ten score of leagues
By sea or land; and this soft thrilling pressure,—
O! 'tis worth all the leagues that gird the globe.
(*Taking her hand.*)

BEATRICE.

What idle words! how canst thou be so foolish?
I needs must chide thee for it, thoughtless boy!

MAURICE.

Chide me, indeed, who am two years thy elder,
And too good months to boot!—Such high pretension!
Have sixteen summers and a woman's robe
Made thee so very wise and consequential?

BEATRICE (*giving him two mock blows on his shoulder*).
Take that, and that, for such discourteous words.

MAURICE (*catching both her hands and kissing them separately*).
Ay, marry will I, and right gladly too,
When this and this are added to the gift.

BEATRICE.

Forbear such idle rapture, 't is a folly:

So tell me truly what has brought thee back
To this disturb'd and miserable house.

MAURICE.

What, miserable still? Not yet convinced
That thou, and not Zorada, is the queen
Of my impassion'd heart?

BEATRICE.

Of this, indeed,
He is convinced; but what doth it avail?
Some other fancy, yet I know not what,
Again possesses him. Therefore depart;
Quickly depart, nor linger longer here,
When thou hast told me wherefore thou art
come.

MAURICE.

When some way off, it came into my head
That Don Romiero — the occasion past,
Which has excited him to favour us —
May be remiss, or may repent his promise.
I therefore quickly turu'd my horse's head,
Nor drew I bridle till within the forest
I found me once again, close to the postern.

BEATRICE.

What would'st thou do? for in his present state
Thou may'st not speak to him.

MAURICE.

But I would speak to Guzman; he has power
To keep Romiero stedfast in his promise.

I should have thought of this before I went,
And urged him earnestly that no remissness
With thy relations may retard our bliss.

BEATRICE.

Are we not happy now? Is marriage bliss?
I fear to think of it.

MAURICE.

Why should'st thou fear?
Shall I be jealous? O my gentle Beatrice!
I never will believe thee false to me,
Until such proof as that heaven's sun is bright
Shall flash upon me, and the agony
Will be my death-blow and prevent upbraiding.

BEATRICE.

And art thou, then, so tender in thy nature?
In truth it makes me weep to think thou art.

MAURICE.

Let me wipe off those tears, my gentle Love.
Think hopefully and cheerfully, I pray thee.
I feel within my breast a strong assurance
Thou never wilt prove false, nor I suspicious.
Where may I find Don Guzman? [*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I. *The Scene dark; the Forest.*

Enter JEROME *and another* Domestic, *by opposite sides of the Stage.*

JEROME.

Hast thou seen any thing?

DOMESTIC.

No; but I spy a distant moving light
Far to the left.

JEROME.

Then run and see who bears it.

[*Exit* Domestic.

Here come my Lord and Guzman, slow and silent.
Surely they have not seen it; and, perhaps,
My comrade is deceived.

Enter ROMIERO *and* GUZMAN.

ROMIERO.

Ha! Jerome! is it thee?

JEROME.

It is, my Lord.

ROMIERO.

Hast thou seen aught? hast thou heard any sound?

JEROME.

Nothing, my Lord.

ROMIERO.

Yet still be on the watch:
Revisit every path; let naught escape thee.

JEROME.

No, nothing shall. I'll use both eyes and ears
Intently; nothing shall unnoted be.
An owlet shall not turn him in his nest
But I shall be aware of it, nor hare
Scud 'cross the path without my observation.

ROMIERO.

Well, say no more: I trust thee. To thy duty!
[*Exit* JEROME.

GUZMAN.

I am persuaded we shall range this wood
The livelong night, nor meet with any thing
But such small denizens as Jerome mention'd,
Or these benighted trees that skirt our path,
So black and motionless.

ROMIERO.

Oh! if the light of day return again,
Naught being found to justify my fears,
I'll hail it as the wretch whose op'ning dungeon
Receives the light, as through its portal passes
Some glad friend, bearing his reprieve. Oh,
Guzman!
The felon, chain'd to meet his shameful doom,
Hath not more agony of thought, nor starteth

With greater horror from the brink of death,
Than I do from that moment of despair
Which shall make manifest the thing I dread.

GUZMAN.

I trust that moment never will arrive.

ROMIERO.

Dost thou, my friend? dost thou, in very truth?
I bless thee for that noble confidence:
Would I could feel it too! Repeat thy words.

GUZMAN.

I do believe that moment will not come.

ROMIERO.

No, no! it was not thus: thy words are changed;
Thy tone of voice is changed; thoughts of recoil
Pass o'er thy mind, and turn their force to weakness.
Thou dost not trust,—no, nor believe it neither.

GUZMAN.

Indeed, I think—I hope thou art deceived.

ROMIERO.

Shame on such timid tamp'ring with my passion,
Provoking it the more! If she is guilty,
I am prepared with dreadful preparation.
If she is innocent,——tears choke my voice:
To say, "if she is innocent!"——
Her look, her smile, her easy lightsome gait,—

She was th' embodied form of innocence;
The simple sweetness of a cottage child,
Join'd to a lady's grace.

GUZMAN.

Her's seem'd, indeed, the loveliness of virtue.

ROMIERO.

Even so; but that is changed. She cannot now
So look, so smile, so step; for if she could,
I should defy all proof of circumstance
To move me to suspicion.

GUZMAN.

Nay, good Romiero, know thy nature better.
A circumstance as trivial as the glance
Or meaning smile of some young varlet page
Would tempt thee to suspect a saint of heaven.
But cease debate; your scout returns in haste.

Enter Domestic.

DOMESTIC.

My Lord, they 're in the wood: I've seen them.

ROMIERO.

Whom?

DOMESTIC.

The Nurse, my Lord, went first, and close behind her
Donna Zorada stole like one afraid.

ROMIERO (*seizing him by the throat*).

Hell choke thy blasted breath, thou croaking fiend!
Thou darest not say 't was she.

DOMESTIC.

I did not say so, certainly.

ROMIERO.

Thou didst.

DOMESTIC.

I spoke unwittingly; I will unsay it.

ROMIERO (*casting him away from him with violence*).

And be a damned liar for thy pains.
All that my darkest fancy had conceived!
Uncover'd shame, degrading infamy!—
Come quick, unstinted, terrible revenge!
If the base wantons live another hour,
I am as base as they.

GUZMAN.

Be not a maniac: think before thou act,—
Before thou do what cannot be undone.

ROMIERO.

Think ere I act! Cool, sober, gentle friend!
Had'st thou not better say, "Good Sir, be patient.
Thy wife is faithless, and her minion bless'd;
But pray, good Sir, be patient."—Oh, my heart!
The seat of life will burst ere it be done:

Hold, hold till then! (*To* Domestic.) Where were they? near the castle?

DOMESTIC.

No; in the beechen grove beyond the chapel,
To which we did suspect their steps were bent,
Taking, no doubt, that further winding path
The better to avoid detection.—See,
There's light now faintly peering from its window.
They must be there already. (*To* GUZMAN.) Look, Don Guzman!

GUZMAN.

I do; it vanishes and re-appears,
And vanishes again, and all is dark.

ROMIERO.

Yes; all shall soon be dark:
That flame of guilt, those glow-worms of the night,
That bright deceitful sheen of foul corruption,
Shall be extinct, trod out, earth bray'd with earth.
Which of these paths leads to th' accursed spot?
(*Rushing into a path, and then turning back and taking another.*) I am bewilder'd! this will lead me right. [*Exit.*

GUZMAN.

We must pursue his steps, and try, if possible,
To keep his unrein'd ire from desp'rate acts.
[*Exeunt.*

Enter, by the opposite side, BEATRICE *and her* WOMAN.

BEATRICE.

He should be here, or somewhere near this spot.
I am afraid in these dark forest paths.
Each crooked leafless stump or dwarfish bush
Seem beast or man prepared to pounce upon us;
And then to make a vain and short amends,
Each slender, graceful sapling is my Maurice.
I dare not venture further.

WOMAN.

Perhaps we're wrong, and have mista'en the
place;
Let us turn back, and try some other alley.

BEATRICE.

Turn not; I hear his foot. (*Listening*).

WOMAN.

My ear then must be dull, for I hear nothing.

BEATRICE.

Yes, they are dull; thou hast not in thy heart
That which doth quicken mine.—It is his footstep;
I know it well!

WOMAN.

Indeed, I should have guess'd——

BEATRICE.

Nay, hush, Theresa;

I love to bend mine ear and listen to it. (*Listens again as before, and presently enter* MAURICE.)
Is't thou, my friend?

MAURICE.

Yes, dearest; further on
I waited for thee, and became impatient.

BEATRICE.

How glad I am to hear thy voice again!

MAURICE.

What hast thou done? How hast thou sped with Guzman?
Since thou would'st take that office on thyself,
I trust thy parley with him was successful.

BEATRICE.

As heart could wish, although it was but short.
He'll be our friend, and keep Romiero so;
And will, besides, to my stern uncle speak,
Who, as thou know'st —— But here comes one in haste.

Enter JEROME.

JEROME.

Remain no longer here; for Don Romiero,
And Guzman with him, wanders through the wood:
You may encounter him in any path.

MAURICE.

What shall we do?

JEROME.

Be still, and follow me,

And I will lead you to a safer spot,
Free from intrusion, near the ruin'd chapel.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

The Inner Porch of a ruined Chapel.

Enter Nurse *and a* Sea Captain, *meeting.*

NURSE.

Are all things ready then?

CAPTAIN.

The breeze is faint,
But it is fair; my seamen are on board;
We shall weigh anchor by the early dawn,
And bear us out to sea. Go, tell my passenger
To join us presently upon the beach.

NURSE.

I will, good Captain: 'tis no thoughtless youth,
Who trows the very winds should wait his bidding;
He will be punctual. He hath seen good days,
Although I may not tell thee who he is.

CAPTAIN.

Nor do I ask thee.

NURSE.

He hath seen good days,
And evil too, and hath been buffeted
By wayward fate.

CAPTAIN.

Good mother, so have I.
But what of that? The foul, the fair will blow,
And we must weather it even as we may.
Speak not in such a lamentable tone;
I will be kind to him.

NURSE.

I hope thou wilt.
Heaven will reward thee, and Saint Jago too.

CAPTAIN.

Tut, woman! wherefore make so much ado
About some kindness to a fellow sinner?
I shall expect him ere the morning break;
And give him notice, for the time is near. [*Exit.*

NURSE (*alone*).

I will not yet break on their sad farewell,
But in the outer porch remain on watch.
Ah, woe the day! that they must thus, by stealth,
Take their last leave. I fear 't will be their last.
[*Exit.*

SCENE III.

An old Gothic Chapel: SEBASTIAN *and* ZORADA *are discovered in earnest conversation.*

SEBASTIAN.

And wilt thou bear these lessons in thy mind?

ZORADA.

I shall forget to say my daily prayers

When I forget to think of thee, dear father!
And, when I think of thee, thy words of kind-
ness,
And words of counsel too, shall be remember'd.

SEBASTIAN.

Sweet child! stand back and let me look upon
thee.
Ay; so she look'd. O! it is sweet in thee
To look so like thy mother, when mine eyes
Must take their last impression, as a treasure
Here (*his hand on his heart*) to be cell'd for
ever. Many looks
Thy varying face was wont to wear, yet never,
But in some sad or pensive mood, assumed
The likeness of that countenance;—to me
Thy loveliest look; though, to all other eyes,
Thy mother's beauty never equall'd thine.

ZORADA.

I still remember her: the sweetest face
That e'er I look'd upon. I oft recall it,
And strive to trace the features more distinctly.

SEBASTIAN.

Be good as she was; and when I am gone,
Never again let myst'ry and concealment,
Tempting the weakness of thy husband's na-
ture,
Which but for this were noble, break the peace
And harmony of marriage. — For this oath —

This fatal oath — he was constrain'd to take it.
Then so consider it, nor let it rankle
Within thy gentle breast: that were perverse.
When I am gone, all will again be well,
And I will write to thee and comfort thee.
Our minds shall still hold intercourse, dear Zada,
And that should satisfy.

ZORADA.

Alas! alas!
When I shall read thy letters, my poor heart
Will but the more yearn after thee, dear father!
And pine to see thee. Suffer me to hope
That we shall meet again. — Call it not vain,
But suffer me to think ——

Enter Nurse *in alarm.*

What is the matter?

NURSE.

You are discover'd: Don Romiero comes;
I heard his voice approaching through the trees.
I heard the hollow tread of many feet.

ZORADA (*to* SEBASTIAN).

O fly! farewell!

SEBASTIAN.

Farewell, my dearest child!
Heaven bless and guard thee ever! O farewell!
[*Embraces her, and exit.*

ZORADA.

If he should be discover'd!

NURSE.

Fear it not.
He knows the nearest path, and on the beach
The Captain will receive him. Ere 'tis light,
He will be safely in the vessel lodged.
O all good saints of heav'n! he 's here already.

Enter ROMIERO.

ROMIERO.

Most wretched and degraded woman! Now
Thy shameful secret is discover'd. Now,
Vice unveil'd and detestable must have
Its dreadful recompence. Where is thy minion?

ZORADA.

O cease! you frighten me with such fierce looks.
I have done thee no wrong.

ROMIERO.

Provoke me not with oft-repeated words,
Which I do know are false as his who fell
Apostate and accursed. Where is thy minion?
(*In a still louder voice, and stamping on the ground.*)
Tell me without delay: speak briefly, truly,
If thou hast hope to live another hour.

ZORADA.

O pity, pity! be not so enraged!
Thou shalt be told the truth a few hours hence;
Then, to that time, detest me as thou wilt,
But spare my life.

Re-enter SEBASTIAN, *while* ROMIERO *has, in his rage, strode to the front of the stage.* ZORADA, *uttering a shriek, runs to her father, and throws her veil over his face, endeavouring to push him back.*

SEBASTIAN.

What! fly and leave thee in a madman's power?
I heard his stormy voice, and could not leave thee.

(ROMIERO *turns round, and, running furiously at them, stabs* ZORADA *in aiming at* SEBASTIAN, GUZMAN, *who enters in alarm, followed by* MAURICE *and* BEATRICE, *endeavouring, in vain, to prevent him.*)

GUZMAN.

Hold! hold! thou wilt not strike a cover'd foe!

ZORADA (*still clinging round her father*).

Strike me again; I will not quit my hold.
I'll cling to him; within my dying grasp
I'll hold him safe: thou wilt not kill him there.

(*Sinking to the ground, while the veil drops from the face of* SEBASTIAN.)

ROMIERO.

Her father!

ZORADA.

Yes; my father, dear Romiero!
Thou wilt not slay us both. Let one suffice.
Thou lovedst me once; I know thou lovest me now:
Shall blood so dear to thee be shed in vain?
Let it redeem my father! — I am faint,
Else I would kneel to thee.

(*Endeavouring to kneel, but prevented and supported by* Nurse *and* BEATRICE.)

NURSE.

Do not, dear murder'd child!

BEATRICE.

My dear, dear friend, forbear. He heeds thee not.

GUZMAN.

Romiero, dost thou hear her sad request?

ROMIERO.

I hear your voices murm'ring in mine ear
Confused and dismal. Words I comprehend not.
What have I done? Some dreadful thing, I fear.
It is delusion this! she is not slain:
Some horrible delusion.

ZORADA (*aside to* SEBASTIAN).

Fly, fly, dear father, while he is so wild.
He will not know and will not follow thee.

SEBASTIAN.

No, dearest child! let death come when it will,
I'll now receive it thankfully. Romiero,
Thou wretched murd'rer of thy spotless wife —
Romiero de Cardona!

ROMIERO.

Who is it calls me with that bitter voice? (*Gazing on him; and then with a violent gesture of despair*)
I know thee; — yes, I know what I have done.

GUZMAN.

Forbear such wild and frantic sorrow now,
And speak to her while she is sensible,
And can receive thy words. She looks on thee,
And looks imploringly.

ROMIERO.

Zorada, my Zorada! spotless saint!
I loved thee far beyond all earthly things,
But demons have been dealing with my soul,
And I have been thy tyrant and thy butcher,
A wretch bereft of reason.

BEATRICE.

She makes a sign as if she fain would speak,
But her parch'd tongue refuses. (*To* MAURICE.)
Fetch some water
To moisten those dear lips and cool that brow.
[*Exit* MAURICE.
She strives again to speak.

ROMIERO (*stooping over her*).

What wouldst thou say? What means that gentle motion?

ZORADA.

Come close to me; thou'rt pardon'd, Love, thou'rt pardon'd.

ROMIERO.

No, say that I am blasted, ruin'd, cursed,
Hateful to God and man.

Re-enter MAURICE *with water, which she tastes.*

ZORADA.

Thou art not cursed; O no! then be more calm.
(*Endeavouring to raise herself up.*) Look here;
he is my father: think of that.
Thou'rt pardon'd, Love; thou'rt pardon'd.
[*Dies.*

ROMIERO.

She call'd me *Love*. Did she not call me so?

GUZMAN.

Yes, most endearingly.

ROMIERO.

And she is gone, and I have murder'd her!
(*Throws himself on the body, and moaning piteously; then starts up in despair, and looks furiously at* SEBASTIAN.)
Thou restless, selfish, proud, rebellious spirit!
Thy pride has work'd our ruin, been our bane;

The bane of love so bless'd! Draw, wretched man,
I've sworn an oath, which I will sacred hold,
That when Sebastian and myself should meet,
He should to royal justice be deliver'd,
Or, failing that, one of the twain should die.
(*Drawing his sword fiercely upon him*).

GUZMAN (*holding him back*).

Hold, madman, hold! thy rage is cruel, monstrous,
Outraging holy nature.

ROMIERO (*breaking from him*).

Off! think'st thou to restrain or bind despair
With petty strength like thine? — Proud rebel, draw.
I am thy daughter's murderer, and thou
Destroyer of us both.

SEBASTIAN.

Yes, Don Romiero, we are match'd in ruin,
And we will fight for that which cures despair.
He who shall gain it is the conqueror. (*They fight, each exposing himself rather than attacking his adversary.*)

ROMIERO.

No; to't in earnest, if thou would'st not have me
Deliver thee a felon to the law.

Defend thine honour, though thou scorn thy life. (*They fight again, and* ROMIERO *falls.*)
I thank thee, brave Sebastian: O forgive
Harsh words that were but meant to urge contention.
Thou'rt brave and noble; so my heart still deem'd thee,
Though, by hard fate, compell'd to be thy foe. —
Come hither, Guzman: thou hast sworn no oath.
Give me thy hand; preserve Sebastian's life,
And lay me in the grave with my Zorada.

(*The Curtain drops.*)

THE

ALIENATED MANOR:

A COMEDY.

IN FIVE ACTS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN.

CHARVILLE.
CRAFTON.
SIR ROBERT FREEMANTLE, *Nephew to Crafton.*
SMITCHENSTAULT, *a German Philosopher.*
SIR LEVEL CLUMP, *an Improver.*
DICKENSON *and* ISAAC, *Domestics of Charville.*
SANCHO, *a Black.*

WOMEN.

MRS. CHARVILLE.
MARY, *Sister to Charville.*
MRS. SMOOTHLY.
DOLLY.

Scene, Charville's *House in the Country, and the Woods, &c. belonging to it, or near it.*

THE

ALIENATED MANOR.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Wood, with a View of* CHARVILLE'*s House in the background, seen through the Trees.*

Enter CRAFTON, *who immediately stops short, as if looking earnestly at something off the Stage.*

CRAFTON.

WHO can it be? Ho! paper and pencil in hand; and the broad-brimmed hat, too, with its green lining;—I heard he was with them. Fit crow for such a rookery!

Enter SIR LEVEL CLUMP.

Your servant, Sir Level Clump; I wish you good morning.

SIR LEVEL.

Good morning, Mr. Crafton; I am delighted to see you. Do you often, in your morning rambles, trespass thus far on your neighbour's premises?

CRAFTON.

I trespass not at present, I hope, being directly on my way to pay my compliments to Mr. Charville on this happy occasion.

SIR LEVEL.

Right, Mr. Crafton; you are above any little resentment for the extravagant demand with which he so ungraciously met your late reasonable offer regarding this manor. I know all about it; and the very unfair advantage which the late Mr. Charville took of your uncle's distresses to get possession of it, — I know all about it. Mr. Charville is my friend and employer, but I am too candid not to feel and to perceive: indeed he was wrong — much in the wrong, in that matter.

CRAFTON.

And in other matters too, perhaps. But one must keep up some intercourse with the world as it is; the grass would grow on my threshold, were I to confine my visits to the immaculate. You are come down, I presume, to improve the pleasure grounds. He means upon his marriage to have every thing in the modern taste.

SIR LEVEL.

And shall have it, if I can do any thing; but he is so conceited of his own notions, so suspicious, he will trust nobody but by halves.

CRAFTON.

What; not trust Sir Level Clump implicitly in matters of taste! Conceited indeed! — But what are your own ideas, Sir? Have you surveyed these woods, with all their winding paths, and ferny dells, and dark covert nooks, and tangled thickets? I am, perhaps, too partial to the ancient possessions of my forefathers, but this place seems to me full of sylvan beauty.

SIR LEVEL (*tardily*).

Yes, — O yes.

CRAFTON.

Don't you think so?

SIR LEVEL.

Assuredly: it is at least practicable ground. If you saw my plan, you would be astonished at what may be made of it. A few hundred pounds spent in clearing away the underwood, and cutting out that heavy mass of forest trees into separate groups, would give it a very elegant, tasteful, parkish appearance.

CRAFTON.

Cut out the mass of forest trees into separate groups! I should be astonished indeed.

SIR LEVEL.

Ay, ay! I knew you would. Lightness, variety, and plan — these are the grand principles; there is nothing like these. For you

know very well, my dear Sir, if there be no plan, there is no meaning in what you do; *ergo*, no taste; and if there be no taste, it is all one as if there were no plan.

CRAFTON.

Not exactly, Sir Level.

SIR LEVEL.

Nay, you don't exactly comprehend me. You'll catch it by and by, when I show you my sketch. Why, these woods, as they now are, compared to what they will be when the plan is completed, are as a rude, untamed clown to a gentleman.

CRAFTON.

Say, rather, a savage chief to a posture-master. But you have been in the North lately, Sir Level. What progress is taste making in Lochaber?

SIR LEVEL.

O lud, lud! totally impracticable! What could I do for them there?

CRAFTON.

I'm sure I can't pretend to say; but you did attempt something, I suppose.

SIR LEVEL (*shrugging up his shoulders*).

Ay; the Laird of Glenvorluch, who is lately returned from Calcutta, with a large fortune at command, did indeed take me over his estate and put a *carte blanche* into my hands; but in vain.

There was a burn (as they call it) running past the house, with water enough in it to have beautified the domains of a prince; but with such an impetuous, angry, perverse sprite of a stream, spade or shovel never contended. It would neither serpentine, sweep, nor expand in any direction, but as it pleased its own self.

CRAFTON.

And having no plan, Sir Level, it would, of course, have no taste.

SIR LEVEL.

Ah! sad discouraging work there for improvers!

CRAFTON.

Was there nothing to be done?

SIR LEVEL.

I could, no doubt, have collected its stores in the dell beneath, and made as fine a sheet of artificial water as heart could desire; but what purpose could this have answered with a lake fronting the house, in which you might have floated half the small craft of the British navy?

CRAFTON.

A perverse circumstance, indeed.

SIR LEVEL.

In short, all that I could do was to remove some rough woody knolls that intervened, and, instead of a partial view of the lake, open it

entirely to the mansion, as a grand, unbroken whole. A hundred sturdy Highlanders, with wheelbarrows and mattocks, made it, in a short time, a very handsome, smooth, gradual slope, that would not have disgraced the finest park in Middlesex. This piece of service I did for him.

CRAFTON.

And had you done as much for me, Sir Level, I should have acquitted you from all further trouble.

SIR LEVEL.

Ay; you are a reasonable man, Mr. Crafton. Why, what could I have done better for such an obstinate place?

CRAFTON.

Nothing that I know of, unless ——

SIR LEVEL.

Unless what? Pray let me have your idea. Successful as I have generally been, I hope I still bear my faculties too meekly not to be willing to profit by a friendly hint from a person of discernment. — Unless what, my dear Sir?

CRAFTON.

Unless you had let it alone altogether.

SIR LEVEL.

O no, no, no! that was impossible. The Laird had a lady,—a young bride, too;—she was new, the house was new, the furniture was new,

and the grounds also were to be made suitable: I was obliged to operate upon it.

CRAFTON.

A hard necessity.

SIR LEVEL.

However, since no better could be, they have my plan hanging in the library, to show what the place ought to be, if it will not; and this must even vindicate their reputation for taste to all the strangers and travellers who may visit the house of Glenvorluch.

CRAFTON.

Very good, Sir Level; the lady must be satisfied with that. — But pray let us talk of another new-married lady. How do you like Mrs. Charville? Is she handsome?

SIR LEVEL.

She is very fond of my plan.

CRAFTON.

O, no doubt; and this would have been a decided answer, had I inquired after her mental perfections. But being a plain country squire, and pretending to little refinement, I simply inquire if she is handsome.

SIR LEVEL.

I believe people do think her so, though the rules of art are against her.

CRAFTON.

Never mind the rules! — I beg pardon. She is handome then; and gay, I suppose.

SIR LEVEL.

Yes, yes: she is too gay; perhaps the world will say thoughtless; but I must still think there is a fund of good sense at bottom. She really perceived the beauties of it with great quickness, and took to it wonderfully.

CRAFTON.

Took to what?

SIR LEVEL.

To my plan.

CRAFTON.

O very true! how could I lose sight of that? And how will a gay thoughtless wife suit a man of Charville's disposition? He is very suspicious, you say.

SIR LEVEL.

They jar a little, as other married folks sometimes do; but if they put my plan into execution, it will occupy them more pleasantly—for a time at least.

CRAFTON.

If separating the trees will unite them, there is sense in the plan, and its taste is, of course, unquestionable. — And how do you like Char-

ville's sister, who is so much admired — the gentle Mary?

SIR LEVEL.

She is gentle enough; but she has no quickness, no perceptions, no brains at all.

CRAFTON.

Poor girl; I fear she has not wit enough to comprehend the plan. — But here comes my nephew; he is going with me to the mansion.

Enter SIR ROBERT FREEMANTLE.

Come, Freemantle; I have waited for you here some time, and am indebted to this worthy gentleman for not finding it tedious. Let me present Sir Robert Freemantle to you, Sir Level.

FREEMANTLE.

Sir Level Clump, I presume. We shall have a paradise about us presently, were we but worthy to enjoy it.

SIR LEVEL.

You do me honour, Sir Robert. You have a pretty place in the West, I am told, though the park is somewhat in disorder: but, no doubt you mean to improve it.

FREEMANTLE.

I must improve my corn-fields in the first place, to get money for other improvements.

SIR LEVEL.

The readier and more common method, now-a-days, is to cut down the wood on one part of the ground, to pay for beautifying the other.

FREEMANTLE.

A good device, Sir Level; but my worthy mother likes the old woods as they are; and you might as well bring her own grey head to the block, as lift an axe against any veteran oak on the estate.

SIR LEVEL.

Ah! those old people, with their prejudices, are the bane to all taste and improvement. — Good morning; I see Mr. Smitchenstault in search of me.

CRAFTON.

Is that the German philosopher we have heard of?

SIR LEVEL.

Yes; so he calls himself. I only pretend to make these grounds visibly beautiful; he will demonstrate, forsooth, that they become at the same time philosophically so. Poor man! though mighty clever in his way, he is altogether occupied with his own notions; and to indulge him a little, I have promised to meet him in the further part of the wood. Have you a mind for a lecture?

CRAFTON.

Not at present, my good Sir; excuse us.

SIR LEVEL.

Good morning to you. [*Exit.*

FREEMANTLE (*running after him*).

I have a mind for the lecture, though. (*Checking himself and returning.*) No, no; we will go to our visit: she may possibly be there; she is probably there; she is certainly there: the brightness of the sunshine, the playful fanning of the wind, the quick beating of my heart tells me so. Uncle, are you going? You are in a deep reverie, methinks.

CRAFTON (*aside, without attending to him*).

His suspicions, her thoughtlessness,—the idea fastens itself upon me strangely.

FREEMANTLE.

Ha! speaking to yourself, Sir! What is it that fastens upon you?

CRAFTON.

A thought for your good too.

SIR ROBERT.

Pray let me have it then, for very few such thoughts have any immediate communication with my own brain.

CRAFTON.

Charville has got a pretty wife, whom he loves to a folly.

FREEMANTLE.

And a pretty sister, too, whom he loves but moderately; yet some other good person might be found, who would be willing to make up that deficiency.

CRAFTON.

I understand thee well enough. But she has no fortune unless she marry with her brother's consent; and his robbing (I must call it so) thy poor simple cousin at the gaming-table shows plainly how much he loves money.

FREEMANTLE.

Nay, nay! Since I have seen the sister, I would forget that unhappy transaction entirely.

CRAFTON.

I only mention it now to show his disposition; and surely thou art poor enough to justify his refusal of thy suit to his sister.

FREEMANTLE.

I have never made any suit to her.

CRAFTON.

I know thou hast not; but if thou shouldst, how wouldst thou relish a flat denial from his formal importance? Therefore, if thou hast any thing of this kind in thy head, I would counsel

thee to begin with paying thy particular attentions to his wife, who will afterwards plead thy cause with her husband. — Come, come; it is a very good thought; let us speak of it as we go.

FREEMANTLE.

But not so loud; we may be overheard.

CRAFTON.

Very true; give me thine arm. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

CHARVILLE'S *House; a Saloon opening into the Garden.*

Enter MR. *and* MRS. CHARVILLE, *speaking as they enter.*

MRS. CHARVILLE.

No, no! I can't wear them so of a morning, my dear Charles: positively you sha'n't make such a witch of me. (*Pushing him gently away as he endeavours to stick flowers amongst her hair.*)

CHARVILLE.

And art thou not a witch, little Harry? with spells enough about thee for any man's perdition, if thou wert not at the same time a good — a very good little witch, mine own little Harry! Do wear them so; they look pretty.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

They look awkward, and affected, and silly; I can't endure them. Why will you be so teasing?

CHARVILLE.

And are my expressions of attachment become teasing? A cold indifferent husband, then, would please you better. You reject the simple offering of a devoted heart: as my fondness increases, yours, alas! declines.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Come, come; don't look so grave! I'll stick those foolish roses into my hair, if you will, though I am sure they are only fit for a holiday nosegay.

CHARVILLE.

I gathered them, Love.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

And I am sorry, Love, you had not the wit to gather better. They are such as a village schoolmistress would strew in her drawer to sweeten her kerchiefs and aprons. They are too full blown for the flower-pot on her window. But never mind; I'll wear them.

CHARVILLE.

I knew you would, for all your saucy words, mine own little Harry: and I'll tell thee what I'll do in return for all thy sweet condescension.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

And what may that be, I wonder?

CHARVILLE.

You objected to my going to Middlemoor this morning.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

No, I did not.

CHARVILLE.

Nay, but you did. I read it in your eyes, gentle Harry. But now I set that journey aside: I will not leave thee a week; not half a week; no, not a day.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

O what a tide of goodness flows upon me now! I shall be drowned therewith. — Not a day! Do you think I wish to have you always by my side? No, my dear Charles: go from home when you please; and when you return you will bring your sister and me all the news, and let us know how the world is moving. All the married folks, I know, are sometimes separated.

CHARVILLE.

And are they as happy as you would wish to be?

MRS. CHARVILLE.

They are happy enough, I suppose.

CHARVILLE.

I suppose; *suppose*. The cold, formal, miserable word! I hate the very sound of it. — I may go from home, then, as often as I please. My

absence, I *suppose*, would be no interruption to your happiness?

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Your occasional absence, perhaps, might increase it. The most wretched pair of all my acquaintance is the only one always together.

CHARVILLE.

Who are they, pray?

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Lady Bloom and her jealous husband. The odious man! She can't stir, but he moves too, like her shadow. She can't whisper to a friend, nor examine a picture or gem with an old cognoscenti, but he must thrust his nose between them. — But how is it now? You are as grave as a judge, and twisting off the heads of those very flowers, too, that have occasioned all this commotion. How is it with you now?

CHARVILLE.

You take part against the husband very eagerly, I perceive.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Not very eagerly; but I hate a man who is so selfish that he must engross his wife's attention entirely. What do you think of the matter?

CHARVILLE.

It is indifferent to you what I think of it; I am no longer your care — your only care.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Did I ever tell you that you were? God forbid I should be so uncharitable, so narrow, so confined! I have cared for some people in the world besides you, and I have told you so.

CHARVILLE.

Yes, Madam; I should have remembered how long Henry Devonford disputed with me the prize of your heart: you favoured us both.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

True, Charles; but where would have been the merit of preferring you, had I cared for nobody else? If I did show some favour to him, it was you whom I married.

CHARVILLE.

Very true, very true! It was me whom you married, married, — married.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Nay, foolish man! If you will stride about the room so, let us give something of a figure to it. We are too grave for a rigadoon, so we had better make it a minuet. (*Holding out her gown, and always facing him, as he turns away, with so much coaxing good humour, that he is at last overcome, and clasps her in his arms.*)

CHARVILLE.

My dear, dear Harriet! you treat me like a fool, but I must bear with it. I know thou lovest me better than thou professest to do.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

O not a whit!

CHARVILLE.

Nay, but thou dost. I know it. (*Putting his hand fondly on hers.*)

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Indeed you know a great deal that nobody else does. You study deeply for it; you are fond of occult learning.

Enter a Servant announcing Company.

CHARVILLE.

And we must be pestered with such interruptions.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Don't fret; I like to see new faces.

Enter CRAFTON *and Sir* R. FREEMANTLE.

CRAFTON.

I am happy, Mr. Charville, to offer you my hearty congratulations, and to have the honour of paying my respects to this lady.

CHARVILLE.

I thank you, Sir. I am happy to have the honour of seeing you and Sir Robert Freemantle in my house;—and Mrs. Charville too — we are both glad to have that honour.

MRS. CHARVILLE (*after making a formal courtesy to* CRAFTON, *and then turning to* FREEMANTLE.

And must I do my ceremonies to you too? (*Makes a very affected stiff courtesy, and then holding out her hand to him with great vivacity.*) My old friend and playfellow, I am delighted to see you. So unexpected! Do you belong to these parts?

FREEMANTLE.

No; but my good fortune makes me a temporary resident at present.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

It is good fortune to us all. Is it not Charles? He is brother to my friend Charlotte. (CHARVILLE *bows gravely.*) And how does dear Charlotte? is she near us too?

FREEMANTLE.

No; she is in Shropshire.

CRAFTON.

I could not prevail upon my niece to come to me at this time.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

O but she will come, when she knows that I am here: do write to her: it is so long since we met. Do tell me about her, Sir Robert; I have many things to ask. (*Drawing him aside.*)

CRAFTON (*to* CHARVILLE).

What a charming frank disposition!—a most charming woman! You are a happy man, Charville, and a bold one too, after the dealings you have had with this wicked world, to become responsible for such a treasure. But you will tell me she is all perfection, and I will believe it.

CHARVILLE.

Nay, good Sir, if you are disposed to think well of my choice, I had better trust to that for doing her justice.

CRAFTON.

Ay, ay; I understand this grave restraint: you have applied the point of ridicule to many a poor Benedict; and when it comes to your own turn, you shrink from it. You are but a new recruit in this service of matrimony, and still belong to the awkward division.

CHARVILLE (*smiling faintly*).

Perhaps so. It is a pleasant morning: did you come by—— (*Here* MRS. CHARVILLE *and* FREEMANTLE *pass from the bottom of the Stage into the garden.*)——by the common?

CRAFTON.

Why, that lies miles off on the other side, you know.

CHARVILLE.

True; I mean the garden.

CRAFTON.

When you are kind enough to give me a key to it, I may come that way.

CHARVILLE.

No, no! I mean the woods.

CRAFTON.

You have named my way — my favourite way, at last. But I fear it will not long be so; for Sir Level Clump pronounces it to be practicable ground, and that is a death-warrant to nature and simplicity.

CHARVILLE.

Nature and simplicity are very antiquated personages; and Mr. Crafton is particularly kind in taking any interest in the latter, who has assuredly no kindred claim to his protection.

CRAFTON.

And is it for the same reason that you would drive her from yours?—But let us both befriend her on more liberal principles: I shall be proud at all times to follow your good example.

CHARVILLE.

You expect to keep up with me on some of the easy-pacing virtues.

CRAFTON.

I don't know; even so mounted, you may run me harder than I like. But I may strive to do it, were it only out of spite.

CHARVILLE.

I 'll trust you for that.

CRAFTON.

Do so, by all means: trust me or any body for any thing, if you can, and you will cultivate a disposition of mind that is good for man in every condition, particularly in the married state. Under another name, you know, it is one of the cardinal virtues.

Enter SMITCHENSTAULT.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

O you talk of de vertues cardinalls, de great, de grand, de sublime vertues; dat be de ting, de one only ting.

CRAFTON.

Mr. Smitchenstault, I presume. (*Bowing.*)

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Yes, yes; hear you me: my name is Smitchenstault. Hear you me. De sublime vertue is de grand, de only vertue. I prove you dis. —Now we shall say, here is de good-tempered man; he not quarel, he not fret, he disturb no body. Very well; let him live de next door to me: but what all dat mean? — O, dat he is de good-tempered man. Den dere is de industrious man, hear you me, de industrious man; he don't love idle, he work, he toil, he do every ting dat be to do; — very well, all dat very well:

let him build my house, let him make my shoe, let him ——

CHARVILLE (*who has been all this while watching with his eyes* MRS. CHARVILLE *and* SIR R. FREEMANTLE, *as they walked to and fro in the garden, seeing him now take a letter from his pocket, calls out, off his guard*).

A letter! (*Moves towards the garden.*)

SMITCHENSTAULT (*pulling him back*).

Letter! I say no letter: I say make my shoe. O, let him make — let him do all dat; dis be well too. And dere be de sober man: he not love wine; wine make him ill; and he have always de great commendations, — O, he be de sober man! But, I say, now hear you me ——

CRAFTON.

We do, Mr. Smitchenstault; and no disparagement to your argument, it is a virtue of necessity.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

No, he don't hear. — (*To* CHARVILLE.) What you always look dere for? (*Turning round himself.*) O, de lady is in de garden!

CHARVILLE.

Shall we join her, Mr. Smitchenstault? She is fond of your reasoning.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

No, no! She love de flowers and frivolities.

I say, hear you me. I say, let him make my shoe.

CRAFTON.

But you had got beyond that, my good Sir.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

O, very well den, you understand. — But of what value is all that piggling, niggling, — you call little thing piggling, niggling?

CRAFTON.

Sometimes we do, perhaps.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Very well: what is it, I say, but de piggling, niggling driblets of virtue? But de grand, de sublime, is in what you call — not de heart — (*Striking his breast.*) — not de heart.

CRAFTON.

Stomach?

SMITCHENSTAULT.

No, no! — Soul — (*Striking his breast with greater energy.*) — ay, de soul, dere be de sublime vertue. My sentiment, my entusiasm, my love for my friend do flame here; what tough in my rage I do cut his troat?

CRAFTON.

That were but a trifle. But suffer me to transpose the matter, and make the sublimity of sentiment to belong to your friend, and the throat to yourself.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Pardon, pardon! you do turn upon me de very vulgar reply. Observe well de turn of my argument. Actions be noting: it is de high soaring of de soul. — (*To* CHARVILLE.) But you don't attend; you don't look at me.

CRAFTON.

Pardon him, Sir; his eyes follow a still more agreeable object. — Shall we join the party in the garden, Charville?

CHARVILLE.

O no! 'pon my soul, I was looking at that window frame; the ideot of a carpenter has bungled it abominably.

CRAFTON.

I see no fault in it. But you are difficult; Mr. Smitchenstault's piggling virtues are not in favour this morning. Good day.

CHARVILLE.

Ha, ha, ha! 'Pon my life, I am in the best humour imaginable. You will not go without taking leave of Mrs. Charville.

CRAFTON.

I am a person of no ceremony.

CHARVILLE.

But your nephew.

CRAFTON.

He will walk home when he likes it: I take

no charge of him. — Good day, Mr. Smitchenstault.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

O! but you have not hear where de sense of my argument lies.

CRAFTON.

I have not indeed.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

But you must, tough. I go wid you. (*Taking him by the arm, and speaking busily as they go off.*) De soul is de sublime energy; it is de subtile matter, de, &c. &c. &c.

[*Exeunt* CRAFTON *and* SMITCHENSTAULT.

CHARVILLE (*now looking without restraint to* MRS. CHARVILLE *and* FREEMANTLE *in the garden*).

Very good friends, truly, with their letters and their confidences. That coquettish animation too: they must have some merry joke to laugh thus. No, hang it! 'tis their own damned pleasure in being together. (*Runs to them in the garden, and the scene closes.*)

ACT II.

SCENE I.—MRS. CHARVILLE's *Dressing Room.* *She is discovered with* MARY, *sitting by a table at work, &c.*

MRS. CHARVILLE.

And you have seen him at Lady Melford's?

MARY.

Yes.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

And at Harrowgate?

MARY.

Yes.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

And have danced with him?

MARY.

Yes.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

And have found him very agreeable?

MARY.

Yes.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Well, fair befall thee for answering Yes to this

last question! for I did believe thee hypocrite enough to have answered No.

MARY.

Your opinion of me is flattering.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

How could it be otherwise, seeing you receive him as you did when I called you into the garden? You came forward like a blushing schoolgirl, sent into her governess's parlour to speak to her Town cousin of the fifteenth degree. I 'm sure I think Sir Robert Freemantle a Godsend to us, in our present condition.

MARY.

In your present condition! Is not this your honeymoon with my brother? At least, I should think it is not yet entirely at an end.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

O dear no! But would it had less honey and more shine; we want lemon juice for our sweetness.

MARY.

And you are in the way to have it. Indeed, my dear Harriet, if you are not aware, you will soon have too much of it.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Then, if you are afraid of this, do you apply the remedy.

MARY.

Willingly, if it be in my power; but what can I do?

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Give me something to amuse and interest me. I know Freemantle will be in love with you, if you take any pains with him. — Nay, don't look so proud, Lady, — I don't mean disingenuous pains; and then I shall have something to think of—something to talk of.

MARY.

Have you ever been without this last resource?

MRS. CHARVILLE.

O no, Heaven bless me! I can talk of the last foreign mail, or the changing of an old turnpike road, or any thing, rather than hold my tongue.

MARY.

But you are not reduced to this necessity surely, with Sir Level's taste and Mr. Smitchenstault's philosophy at command.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

But I mean something that is worth talking about. Something that one whispers in the ear; something that one watches an opportunity to communicate; something that one speaks of busily in the twilight, in some private alley, with the bats wheeling over one's head; something —— O dear, O dear! I can enjoy this now only by sympathy.

CHARVILLE *enters by a door behind the Ladies, but stops short on hearing their conversation.*

MARY.

What a long sober face you put on! What are you thinking of now?

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Matrimony is a duller thing than I took it to be.

MARY.

Indeed!

MRS. CHARVILLE.

I was too foolish: I might have had my amusement for another good winter at least, and have married him after all, if I liked it.

MARY.

So you married to amuse yourself?

MRS. CHARVILLE.

My dear girl, what could I do? I was with my stiff grave cousins in the country: I was disappointed of a trip to the Continent; the Bath season was still distant, and there was neither county ball, horse-race, nor strolling players in all the country round: so when Charville presented himself again, and renewed his addresses, I was ready to have flown with him to the moon. And now, my dear little sister, if there be any grace in thee, let us have some amusement.

MARY.

Willingly, if I knew how.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Get into some attachment, and difficulties, and correspondences; for, next to receiving a love-letter one's self, there is nothing so delightful as peeping into the love-letters of one's neighbours.

MARY.

Ha, ha, ha! You might be easily satisfied; for I have only to give Mr. Smitchenstault a little encouragement, and we shall have love-letters enough to peep into.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Somebody is coming. (CHARVILLE *retires softly without being perceived, and* SMITCHENSTAULT, *by the opposite door, enters, with heavy creaking steps.*)

MARY.

See! the old proverb verified; speak of him, and he appears. Mr. Smitchenstault, you come in good time to give us the benefit of your exquisite sensibility. My sister there is painting a rose, and two buds which seem newly separated from it; and she must not put dew-drops upon each, you know, because that would be formal: now, whether should the rose appear to be weeping for the buds, or the buds for the rose?—the parental or the filial affections prevail?

SMITCHENSTAUDT.

O de nice question! de sweet affection! de dear sympathy! de pretty affection! What you wish me to say? I am no moder; I am no bud; but I have de tender heart.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

So my sister knows Mr. Smitchenstault.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

She know? O de incredible delight! (*To Mary.*) Do you know mine heart? de heart of one who feel all de sublime delicacies, all de pretty commotion, all de genteel ecstasies of de soul of one lover. (*Ogling her absurdly.*) Have mine eyes told you all?

MARY.

Not entirely, my good Sir; for that would have been using your tongue exceedingly ill.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

O no! no tongue, no tongue! all heart, true heart, devotioned heart. (*Laying his hand on his breast.*) It be all here trilly, trilly, like de strings of an instrument, de poor instrument dat you will play upon.

MARY.

Not I, Mr. Smitchenstault; I want skill.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Let me teach you den. O de sweet tuition:

MRS. CHARVILLE.

O the charming preceptor!

SMITCHENSTAULT (*bowing conceitedly*).

O, dear Madam! I am de poor unwordy.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Say not unwordy, my dear Sir; don't, I pray you, do yourself that wrong.

SMITCHENSTAULT (*bowing again*).

You are very good. But if dere be in me any ting good, any ting noble, any ting amiable, it be all from de passion of mine heart, — dat dear passion dat do make me, one poor philosopher, become like de lofty hero.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

O the surprising transformation! if one's eyes were but gifted enough to perceive it.

SMITCHENSTAULT (*turning again to* MARY).

And you do know dat I have de tender heart?

MARY.

I have not quite so much penetration; but I really know that you are very polite and obliging; and perhaps you will have the goodness to hold this skein of silk whilst I wind it.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

De very great honour. (*Holding out his hands, upon which she puts the skein.*)

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Yes; that rose-coloured silk looks, indeed, like the bands of love; but those don't look quite so like the hands of love: you have been making too free with your snuff-box this morning.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

O it is always so; when I am in de great agitations, I take de great snuffs.

MARY.

So, by this, one may guess at the strength of your passion.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

And I am sure, for these few days past, there is no man in the kingdom who has been within half a pound of tobacco so fervent a lover as Mr. Smitchenstault.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

You do me de great honour.

Re-enter CHARVILLE.

CHARVILLE.

Ha, Smitchenstault! What do I see? Hercules with Omphale! A philosopher forgetting his dignity, and condescending to amuse himself with girls!

SMITCHENSTAULT.

O, dere is de potion dat put all dignity to sleep.

CHARVILLE.

I believe so; and, by my faith! yours is sometimes drugged pretty handsomely. But beware of this potion, which you have, I presume, received from one of these ladies; it may be dangerous.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

O no! it be only for de sweet mutual enjoyment.

CHARVILLE.

Well, let it be so; that's prudent; as much of it as either of them will share with you, may be taken with safety. But if this potion should have the same effect upon your genius as on your dignity, what will the admiring and expecting public say to it?

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Let it have patience; I will give de public, by and by, all dat it will desire.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

And a little more into the bargain, no doubt, to do the thing handsomely.

CHARVILLE.

Yes, I'll be bound for it; your doctrine of energies will not be dealt out by such a scanty measure. And pray, amongst all your powers, have you discovered any that can bind the fickle fancy of a woman?

SMITCHENSTAULT.

O no! no bind! — I do bind nothing, — loose all: dat is my plan; de free plan of nature: so I do teach my pupils.

CHARVILLE.

A most agreeable lesson, truly: and you will find some ladies very willing to become your pupils; if, indeed, they are not already more qualified to teach than to learn.

MARY.

Dear brother, how severe you are! But a truce to philosophy! It is in matters of taste that we have been craving Mr. Smitchenstault's instruction, though he has not yet told us whether the dew-drops — emblems of sensibility — should be hung upon this rose, or the buds which have been torn from her. (*Pointing to the flowers* MRS. CHARVILLE *has been painting.*)

CHARVILLE (*eagerly to* MRS. CHARVILLE).

Is it the flower I gave you this morning?

MRS. CHARVILLE.

O dear, no! It is the one Sir Robert Freemantle wore in his button-hole: we have not one in the whole garden of the same species. Come, do you tell us where these same dew-drops should be disposed of on this drawing?

CHARVILLE.

Dip it into the well, if you please, and it will have drops enough.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Dear me! you are angry.

CHARVILLE.

No, faith! It should take a thing of more importance to make a man angry.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Indeed, I think it should.

Enter SIR LEVEL CLUMP, *skipping joyfully.*

SIR LEVEL.

Huzza, huzza! Come out to the lawn with me; come out to the lawn with me, gentles all, and I will show you a thing.

CHARVILLE.

What is the matter?

SIR LEVEL.

Such a discovery! Such a site for a ruin! Such a happy combination! A dilapidated wash-house for the foundation; an old stag-headed oak, five Lombardy poplars, and a yew tree in such skilful harmony, the rules of composition could not offer you a better. — You must have an erection there, Mr. Charville; you positively must. There sat a couple of jackdaws upon the oak too, in such harmony with the whole; but they would fly away, hang 'em!

MRS. CHARVILLE.

That was very perverse of them; I suppose

those same daws belong more to Mr. Smitchenstault's school than to yours, Sir Level.

SIR LEVEL.

But you lose time, my dear Madam: come away, come away! a hundred pounds or two laid out on the ruin would make it a morsel for the finest Ducal park in the kingdom.

MARY (*to* SMITCHENSTAULT, *as they are going*).

But we shall interrupt your instructive conversation.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Never mind: de poor good man! I always indulge de good peoples in dere little folly.

[*Exeunt all but* CHARVILLE.

CHARVILLE (*after musing moodily on the front of the Stage*).

Such a craving for dissipation and change!—A curious busy imagination.—"Next to receiving a love-letter of one's own, nothing delights one like peeping into the love-letters of one's neighbours;"—the true spirit of intrigue! Ay, but receiving love-letters of one's own; that is the best. A married woman and love-letters! How should she think of love-letters? A bad, a suspicious, a dangerous disposition. I think I know myself; I am not prone to suspicion; but for those strange words, I should not have cared a maravedi for her painting that cursed flower. (*Dashing his hand over the papers, and scattering them about.*)

Re-enter SIR LEVEL CLUMP.

SIR LEVEL.

My dear Sir, why do you stay behind — you who are most concerned in this piece of good fortune? You must come out and behold it. A few hundreds — a mere trifle laid out upon it. If I could give it the form of an ancient mausoleum, it would delight you.

CHARVILLE.

Not a jot, unless you were to bury yourself under it. [*Exit the other way.*

SIR LEVEL.

What is the matter? What is the matter? How can I have possibly offended him? I am sure nobody is less teasing or obtrusive than I am. [*Exit.*

Re-enter CHARVILLE.

CHARVILLE.

Is he gone? He will suspect something: they will all suspect. I must join them, and pretend it was only a feigned displeasure. Married, married! [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

MRS. SMOOTHLY's *Room. She enters speaking, and taking a Bandbox from a Servant, who immediately retires.*

SMOOTHLY.

All nonsense! if you had waited for it last night at the waggoner's, you would have got it. (*Alone.*) 'T is well it comes at last: my lady's present bonnet will surely fall to my share now. (*Opening the box.*) Let me see. O how smart and pretty! Did it but fall to my lot, now, to wear such things with their best new face upon them! (*Going to the glass, and putting the bonnet on her head, and then courtesying to herself affectedly.*) Indeed, I beg ten thousand pardons: I thought for to have come for to ride in the park with you earlier; but my Lord, — Sir John, (ay, that will do) would not allow me; for you know I have not always command of my own horses, and them things we married ladies must submit to. O lud, lud! will it ever come to this? Such fine clothes, such a carriage, such a husband some girls have got, who are not, I'm sure, half so handsome.

Enter SMITCHENSTAULT *softly behind her, and looks over her shoulders.*

O mercy on me! (*Shrieking out.*)

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Hush, hush! What is de matter?

SMOOTHLY.

O, it is only you, Sir!

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Why, who did you tink?

SMOOTHLY.

Lud, Sir! they say that when people are vain, the devil is always near to take his advantage of it; and when I saw in the glass such a face staring over my shoulder, — O dear! I was frightened out of my wits.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Fy, fy! dere is no devil nor nonsense. I will teach you better dan dat. But dere be de little God of Love: you have heard of him, pretty minx?

SMOOTHLY.

With his bow, and his quiver, and all that there?

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Ay; he it be who do take de advantage,— who do tempt you, who do tempt me, who do tempt every body.

SMOOTHLY.

O lud, Sir!

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Now, be you quiet; be not so fluster. You

call dat fluster? (*She nods.*) Very well; it be him who do tempt every body. Do you know any body in dis house dat he is tempting now? Tink well before you answer me.

SMOOTHLY.

You said yourself, Sir.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Yes, but beside me dere is anoder.

SMOOTHLY (*coyly*).

La, Sir! how should I know?

SMITCHENSTAULT.

What you tink now of your pretty mistress, de sweet Mary Charville?

SMOOTHLY.

O Sir! if that is your point, I know nothing of that (*sulkily*).

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Come now, be free wid me: dere is for you. Buy ribbon, or de shoe buckle, or what you please. Now you tell me; don't she sometimes speak of me? make de little confidences?

SMOOTHLY.

O lud, no! ha, ha, ha!

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Come, come, no laugh; you not mock me. I know very well; tell me de truth. Dere is more money; dat will buy de little gown, if you please.

Don't she sometime speak of me when you are alone?

SMOOTHLY.

You are so sinuating!—O dear! to be sure she sometimes does.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

I knew it; I knew dat she did. Now, pretty minx, when she speak of me again to you, and sigh, and do so (*languishing affectedly*), den do you speak of me too, you know.

SMOOTHLY.

And what shall I say, Sir?

SMITCHENSTAULT.

All dat you tink.

SMOOTHLY.

I fear, Sir, that would be of little service to you. You had better tell me precisely what I am to say.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Why—why, you may say dat I am handsome.

SMOOTHLY.

Very well, Sir: if she is in love with you, she will believe me. And what more shall I say?

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Say, dat in her place you would love me too.

SMOOTHLY.

O dear, Sir! that would be presumptuous.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Poo, poo, poo! not presumptuous. Say you dat, pretty minx, and I tell you a secret: when I marry your lady, I can love you bote.

SMOOTHLY.

Dear, Sir, would not that be wicked?

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Wicked, pretty fool! what be dat ting wicked? I tell you dere be no devil in de world.

SMOOTHLY.

Truly, Sir, he does not seem to be wanted, while you are here.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Come, come, don't be afraid: I will love you bote. (*Bell rings.*)

SMOOTHLY.

My lady's bell: I must go to her immediately. She is in a hurry for her new bonnet.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Remember, den, and take dis wid you. (*Offering to kiss her.*)

SMOOTHLY.

O no! I am in a great hurry: we'll put that off for the present. (*Bell rings again.*)

[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE III.

The Wood near the House.

Enter MARY *and* SIR ROBERT FREEMANTLE *by opposite sides.*

MARY.

Sir Robert Freemantle!

FREEMANTLE.

Yes, even so; both morning and noon, always Sir Robert Freemantle. However, I don't make this second visit entirely without pretence. My uncle sent me — a very willing messenger, I own — to inform Mrs. Charville that the botanical work she mentioned this morning is out of print, so she need not take the trouble of writing to town for it: but he has it in his library, which is entirely at her service, and will take the liberty of sending it to her.

MARY.

He is very obliging; and so are you. Shall I turn with you, and meet Mrs. Charville? She is just coming out to walk.

FREEMANTLE.

This spot is very delightful: had we not better wait for her? Do you begrudge me one moment of your company, which will so soon

pass away? How fleetly that time passes in reality, which from the imagination passes never!

MARY.

Ay, so it does.

FREEMANTLE.

Do you remember the evening when we danced together at Lady Milford's? And the morning when I met you on your sorrel mare, crossing the heath at full speed, with your locks scattered on the wind like the skirts of some drifted cloud? And that little party to the cottage too?

MARY.

Yes, I remember it all very well.

FREEMANTLE.

Very well! I remember it too well. But I distress you, Miss Charville; for you guess what I would say, and my motives for remaining silent on a subject so closely connected with every idea I have formed to myself of happiness. I will not distress you: yet permit me to see you sometimes. Let me call myself your neighbour or your friend. — Ha! Mrs. Charville already!

Enter MRS. CHARVILLE.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

I saw you at a distance. How good you are to come to us again! for I have been thinking

of many inquiries I should have made after my friend. However, I need not scourge my poor brains to remember every thing at once; for you are our neighbour, and we shall often meet.

MARY.

Mr. Crafton has sent by Sir Robert a very obliging message to you. The book you wished to see is out of print, and he will send it from his own library.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Good, dear, sensible Mr. Crafton, to keep such delightful books, and such a messenger to do his errands withal. To-morrow he will send me a novel to read—a very scarce, clever work; and the day after that, some verses by a friend (we are great critics in poetry, I assure you); and the day after that, a charade; and the day after that, a riddle, of his own writing perhaps; and the day after that —— O, we shall make a great many days of the riddle! We need not guess it all at once; that would be improvident.

FREEMANTLE.

But, my dear Mrs. Charville, will you trust nothing to my own ingenuity in finding out reasons for doing what is so agreeable to me?

Enter CHARVILLE.

MRS. CHARVILLE (*to her husband*).

You saw Sir Robert at a distance too, I sup-

pose. We are all gathering round him, I think, like pigeons round a looking-glass.

CHARVILLE (*to her*).

I heard your voice at a distance, and guessed you had some cause for such lively animation.

MARY.

Is my sister often without it?

MRS. CHARVILLE.

If I am, it is but of late. When you look grave (*to* CHARVILLE), it would be undutiful in me to be merry.

CHARVILLE (*peevishly*).

You are dutiful, and that makes you grave. (*Striding away from him, muttering to himself.*) I comprehend it; it is all plain enough. (*Checking himself, and returning to* FREEMANTLE.) This beautiful morning, Sir Robert, has tempted you to prolong your rambles in the wood: but what has become of Mr. Crafton?

FREEMANTLE.

He went home some time ago: he dislikes sitting down to dinner fatigued.

CHARVILLE.

He is right; it is not good for any body.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Then Sir Robert will stay and dine with us, and go home in the cool of the evening. He has

walked a great deal, and must be fatigued, if he return now. (*Looking wistfully to* CHARVILLE, *who is silent.*) This would be a most agreeable arrangement. (*Looks to him again, and he still remains silent.*) Don't you think it would?

CHARVILLE.

Undoubtedly, if Sir Robert will do me the honour.

FREEMANTLE.

I am very much obliged to you and Mrs. Charville; but my uncle expects me: it is near his hour. I must deny myself a very great pleasure: I must return immediately.

CHARVILLE.

Since we are so unfortunate, perhaps you are right. The clouds seem to be gathering for rain.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

It is only the shadow of the trees overhead: the sky is as clear as a mirror.

CHARVILLE.

Is it the trees? There are shadows somewhere.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

So it seems: but blow them away, pray. I can't endure shadows.

MARY.

Yet you like moonlight and twilight, I think.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

O, to a folly! When owls are hooting, and beetles humming, and bats flying about, making as many circles in the air as a summer shower does on the pool. Did you (*to* CHARVILLE) see the bat we caught last night?

CHARVILLE.

A bat?

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Yes, a horned bat; the ominous creature, you know, that fanciful people are frightened at. O yes, you must have seen it, for you are drawing in the muscles of your eyes and face at this very moment in mockery of the creature.

MARY.

Did you not see it, brother? It was very curious.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

He looks at no creatures but those which are bred in his kennels and his stable. I'll describe it to Sir Robert. (*Going to* SIR ROBERT, *and walking with him to the bottom of the Stage, talking, and demonstrating with her hands, while* CHARVILLE *and* MARY *occupy the front.*)

CHARVILLE.

So fond of natural curiosities: this is a new fancy, methinks.

MARY.

No; she is fond of painting butterflies, you know.

CHARVILLE.

So it seems, so it seems. (*Striding away, and pacing round the Stage with his eyes fixed upon* SIR ROBERT *and* MRS. CHARVILLE, *till he gets close behind them, while they move towards the front.*)

MRS. CHARVILLE (*continuing to speak as she and* FREEMANTLE *come forward*).

But that kind is larger, and speckled like a wilding's egg, or a cowry, or the back of a trout, so pretty, and so minute.

CHARVILLE (*thrusting his head between them*).

My Love, you are too minute. You forget that Mr. Crafton is waiting for Sir Robert.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Bless me! is your face there? I thought you were on the other side of us.

FREEMANTLE.

I am just going, Sir.

CHARVILLE.

O! Sir Robert, I beg that you will not go sooner than —— Mr. Crafton, I know, is apt to be impatient.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

And you have a fellow-feeling for him.

FREEMANTLE (*to* MRS. CHARVILLE).

So I may venture to tell my uncle that you receive the liberty he has taken in good part. Good day. (*Going.*)

MRS. CHARVILLE (*calling him back*).

But when do you write to your sister? There are many things which I wish to say to her.

FREEMANTLE (*returning*).

I shall have the honour to receive your commands on that subject whenever you please. (*She walks with him, again busily talking, to the bottom of the Stage.*)

CHARVILLE.

Does she mean to detain him the whole day?

MARY.

He has been here but a very short time.

CHARVILLE.

A long half hour by the clock.

MARY.

It is a clock of your own keeping, brother, and the wheels of it are in your own brain. I reckon it ten minutes.

CHARVILLE.

Are you bewitched to say so? — He goes; see he goes now. No, hang it! he does not go yet.

MARY.

Why are you so impatient?

CHARVILLE.

I am not impatient: let him stay till doomsday, if he will; but I hate people who are always going and going, and never go. (*Stepping on to them hastily.*) It will rain presently: it rains now; would you stay here to be wet?

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Rain!

CHARVILLE.

I felt a drop on my hand this moment: look there.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

It fell not from the clouds then; but verily, I think, from your own forehead, How warm you are! (*Turning to Freemantle.*) Good day, then, I will not detain you. [*Exit* FREEMANTLE. (*To* CHARVILLE.) Well, dear Charles, since you are so afraid of the clouds, let us go into the house. But I must visit my bower first.

[*Exit swiftly among the trees.*

CHARVILLE (*after stalking slowly away in another direction, stops short, and returns to* MARY, *who stands on the front, looking after* FREEMANTLE).

MARY.

Well, brother!

CHARVILLE.

My dear Mary!

MARY.

Well, brother; what would you say?

CHARVILLE.

I am going to ask a very foolish —— I mean an idle —— I should say, an unmeaning question.

MARY.

Never mind that; what is it?

CHARVILLE.

Has Freemantle really a sister?

MARY.

Is it possible that you have forgot the young lady whom you used to think poor Mordant resembled?

CHARVILLE.

Very true; it went out of my head strangely.

MARY.

Strangely indeed! Could you think he would talk of a sister, if he had none?

CHARVILLE.

O no, no, no! I have not an atom of suspicion about me; but I thought it might be a sister-in-law, or a brother's wife, or —— there is no saying how many intricate relationships people have, now-a-days.

MARY.

He could have no sister-in-law; for poor Mordant, though distant, is his nearest male relation.

CHARVILLE.

Don't mention that poor wretch. He would be ruined: it was not my doing.

MARY.

Did you dissuade him from playing? and were you obliged to receive all that he lost? My dear brother, let me speak to you on this subject when you are composed and at leisure.

CHARVILLE.

I am composed enough, but certainly not at leisure. [*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE IV.

An outer Court adjoining to the House.

Enter ISAAC *with a Letter, and immediately followed by* MRS. SMOOTHLY.

SMOOTHLY.

Where are you going with that letter, Isaac?

ISAAC.

To Squire Crafton's.

SMOOTHLY.

Is it for the Squire himself?

ISAAC.

I bien't good at reading handy writ, as how my wit never lay that way; but I guess that it is

either for the Squire himself, or some of the gentle folks of his family.

MRS. SMOOTHLY.

A clever guess truly; thy wit, I think, must lie that way. Give me the letter; I 'll take it; I 'm going there, at any rate.

ISAAC (*giving her the letter*).

There it is: I knows you like an errand to that house to see somebody.

SMOOTHLY.

Dost thou think I would go to see nobody, foolish oaf?

ISAAC.

Ha, but a favourite somebody. Ay, ay! I knows what I knows. John, the butler, is a mighty fine man, and goes to church dressed like a squire of a Sunday, and the poor silly tits of the village courtesy as he passes, and call him "Sir." I knows what I knows. [*Exit.*

SMOOTHLY.

Do they suspect me, then? I 'll hide this in my bosom, and nobody else shall know where I am going.

Enter CHARVILLE.

CHARVILLE.

What letter is that you are hiding so carefully?

SMOOTHLY.

O lud, Sir!

CHARVILLE.

What, you are nervous, are you? I say, what letter is that? Who is it for?

SMOOTHLY.

Lud, Sir, I never read the direction, it's for the post.

CHARVILLE.

Why need you go out with it, then, when the letter-box is in the hall? Give it to me, and I'll put it in.

SMOOTHLY.

O Sir, that wo'n't take it to the place it is going to.

CHARVILLE.

Did you not tell me this moment that it is for the post?

SMOOTHLY.

Did I, Sir? I was wrong, Sir; I must take it myself.

CHARVILLE.

Come, come; no more waiting-maid prevarications! Give me the letter, I charge you, and I'll take it where it should go. Give me the letter this instant.

SMOOTHLY (*giving it unwillingly*).

There, Sir.

CHARVILLE (*looking at the direction*).

By heaven and earth just what I expected. (*Sternly to her.*) And you did not know to

whom this letter is directed? (*Motioning her to go as she is about to speak.*) Away, away! Tell me no more lies: I 'll take care of this letter.

[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE V.

The Butler's Room.

Enter DICKENSON *with a Paper in his Hand, which he looks upon ruefully.*

DICKENSON.

Ay, this *was* the state of the cellar: what it will be soon, if all these palavering people, with their improvements and philosophy, stay much longer in the house, the Lord knows! That good bin of claret is melting away most piteously. Who 's there?

Enter CHARVILLE.

My master. I beg your honour's pardon.

CHARVILLE.

Hush! Let me be here for a little while.

DICKENSON.

What is the matter, Sir? you are very pale.

CHARVILLE.

Nothing, nothing. Watch on the outside of the door, and prevent any body coming in: there is not a room in my own house where I can be at peace for a few minutes to read a letter.

DICKENSON.

Are they in your study, Sir?

CHARVILLE.

Yes, yes! Sir Level is there with his cursed plans: they are in my dressing-room too; they are every where. Watch by the door, I say, for a few minutes. [*Exit* DICKENSON.

(*Taking out the letter with agitation.*)
"To Sir Robert Freemantle." Her own hand-writing: that fair character for such foul ends! What man on earth would not do as I do? (*Breaking open the seal.*) A cover only. The enclosed. (*Reads again.*) "To Miss Freemantle." Is this all? (*Examining the envelope.*) What's here? A coarse scratched drawing of a horned bat. (*Reads again.*) "You will understand what I mean by this, though it is but a scratch."—No more! By Jove there is some mischievous meaning under this! It is my likeness she would give under that of a bat, and she will add the horns to the original, if she can. (*Reads again.*) "To Miss Freemantle." If this should be a device now, lest the letter should be opened! I'll pawn my life it is. "To Miss Freemantle." We shall see; we shall see. (*Tears open the enclosed letter.*) Mercy on us! three pages and a half so closely written!

DICKENSON (*without*).

You shan't come in, I say.

CHARVILLE.

Who's there? (*Huddling up the papers.*) I must have time to read all this. (*Noise of voices without.*) What 's that?

Re-enter DICKENSON.

DICKENSON.

They are inquiring for you, Sir. Ladies and gentlemen, and all; they are going to walk.

CHARVILLE.

Let them go where they please. I 'll take my walk elsewhere.

DICKENSON.

You may go out by the back stair, Sir.

CHARVILLE.

So I will; that is well thought of: thee, good Dickenson. [*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—CHARVILLE's *private Library. He is discovered sitting by a table with the letter in his hand.*

CHARVILLE (*reading*).

"My dear Charlotte, I rejoice so much in the happy chance."—Psha! I have read it a hundred

times since yesterday. I'll look upon the hateful scrawl no more. (*Tosses it from him, paces in a disordered manner about the room, then returns to it again.*) What, does it take hold of me still? the fascination of a snake is about it; I cannot keep away from it: I must read that passage once more. (*Sits down again and reads.*) "Ah the cross fate that separates us so cruelly! We were once, as you know, within an ace of coming together, of consummating that dearest wish of my heart. Those dear woods of Oakenly! how dear they would then have been! The tender green boughs of spring with all their lovely blossoms would have smelt more fragrant; the birds would have sung more melodiously; the fair face of nature would have smiled more sweetly." These the sentiments, these expressions of one woman to another! It is as evidently a loveletter, as that my clenched fist presses this table. Some part indeed seems irrelevant; but far less ingenious commentators than our ancient text books have been handled by would find no difficulty in it at all. — Ay, plain enough: here is a good rule to try it by: substitute Robert for Charlotte, and there is sense in it; without this, it is a mass of absolute absurdity. All this pains! Why not? I have heard of most intricate ciphering made use of in such clandestine matters. This is simple and more ingenious still — and yet — pest take these tormenting

incongruities! Go, vile scrap! I must tear thee to atoms or thou wilt craze my brain. (*Tearing the letter furiously.*)

Enter DICKENSON.

(*Angrily.*) Who's there?

DICKENSON.

Mr. Crafton wishes to speak with your Honour.

CHARVILLE.

Let him speak with the devil! are not the ladies below?

DICKENSON.

Yes, Sir; but he has express business with yourself, and would follow me up stairs.

CHARVILLE (*in a whisper*).

Is he behind thee?

DICKENSON.

Yes, Sir, close at hand.

CHARVILLE (*in a low voice*).

Let him come then, since it cannot be helped. (*Gathering up the torn papers hastily while* CRAFTON *enters.*)

CRAFTON.

Good morning, Sir; pray let me assist you.

CHARVILLE.

O Sir, I beg—I shall do it myself in a moment.

CRAFTON.

(*Stooping.*) Pray allow me; the pieces are as

numerous, as if you had been plucking a goose, yet from your countenance I should rather have expected it to be a crow.

CHARVILLE.

No, nothing; an old tailor's bill that gave me trouble once, and I had a spite at it.

CRAFTON.

And you have wreaked your vengeance on it unsparingly.

CHARVILLE.

I think Dickenson said you were come to me on business. Have the goodness to be seated.

CRAFTON.

No I thank you; it can be settled in a few words.

CHARVILLE.

Well, Sir.

CRAFTON.

Our neighbour Dobson is going to sell his little farm; now it is a desirable possession for either of us, and I should like to add it to my own estate; yet I would by no means enter into competition with a purchaser of your calibre.

CHARVILLE.

I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Crafton; I'll consider of it; it is a very good aspect for apple trees.

CRAFTON.

For apples! you surely mistake me: it is

Dobson's farm I mean; it is not my own little paddock, I assure you; that I will never part with.

CHARVILLE.

I beg your pardon: I heard you imperfectly. The farm! well, I shall consider of it. I am greatly obliged to you. Are you alone this morning?

CRAFTON.

Yes, my nephew is gone.

CHARVILLE.

Ha! gone! It is a delightful day for his journey: I am glad — I mean glad of the fine weather he is getting. I wish him a pleasant journey with all my heart.

CRAFTON.

He is not gone a journey; he is only sporting with Squire Ruddley; I expect him to dinner.

CHARVILLE.

That's all — I was afraid — I thought somebody had told me he was going to leave you soon.

CRAFTON.

Myself, perhaps; for I had no idea when he came to me that he would have staid so long. But he has been so happy since he came, and you have become such a kind and agreeable neighbour to him, that I don't know when he will go. — However, it is all very well, he has no agreeable

home to go to, and I am the better for his company. I should not wonder now if he were to spend the best part of every summer with me.

CHARVILLE.

A very bad—I mean a very extraordinary arrangement. Why does he not marry?

CRAFTON.

Why, in the first place, he has little money to keep house upon, and he is so whimsical and scrupulous that he will marry no woman, forsooth, unless he be in love with her; and a young man's inclinations, you know, Charville, will not be controlled by prudence and propriety: they will wander here and there.—O dear! every where, where they should not. (*After a long pause.*) Well, you say you will consider of it. (*Another pause.*) Yes, I see you are considering of it.

CHARVILLE.

O no, not at all. The orchard-field that you wish me to purchase.

CRAFTON.

No no, my dear sir; the little farm which I do not wish you to purchase.

CHARVILLE.

I mean so, I mean so; I'll think of it at leisure.

CRAFTON.

And when you have done so, you will have the goodness to let me know the result.

CHARVILLE.

Certainly.

CRAFTON.

Good morning: I'll intrude upon your time no longer.

CHARVILLE.

Good morning. [*Exit* CRAFTON. (*Alone, after musing for a little.*) "Every where, where they should not." Did he not glance at something in these words. "Young men's inclinations will not be controlled."—"Every where, where they should not." — I'll go live in the Hebrides — at Johny Grott's house — I'll travel for improvement to Kamschatka, rather than live here with such a neighbour as this at my elbow. — What noise is that?

Enter DICKENSON.

What do you want?

DICKENSON.

Would you have the closet doors set to rights, Sir? the locksmith is here.

CHARVILLE.

Who sent for him now?

DICKENSON.

My mistress, Sir.

CHARVILLE.

For what purpose?

DICKENSON.

To have a better lock put upon the north door of her dressing room.

CHARVILLE.

On that door? has it not been nailed up for a long time?

DICKENSON.

Yes, Sir, but she has a fancy to have it opened.

CHARVILLE.

A fancy! I'll have no locksmiths: I'll have none of his jobs done here.

DICKENSON.

It would be so convenient for my lady, Sir; for it leads to the back staircase.

CHARVILLE.

It leads to the black devil!—Let him take his smutty face out of my house, I say; I'll have none of his jobs done here.

[*Exit* DICKENSON.

Preparations making for some damned plot or other. O, if I could but devise some means of coming at the bottom of it!—Wonderfully anxious that I should go from home now and then; to amuse myself; to bring her the news, forsooth.—Could I but devise any means. (*Stands a while considering, then takes a turn across the room with slow thoughtful steps, then rouses himself suddenly, and rings the bell.*)

Re-enter DICKENSON.

Yes, it is you that I want. I have something to say to you.

DICKENSON.

At your pleasure, Sir.

CHARVILLE.

It is the little cottage by the brook which you wished to have for your sister?

DICKENSON.

Yes, please your honour, but you said it could not be spared; so I would not tease you about it any more.

CHARVILLE.

She shall have it.

DICKENSON.

Bless your honour! and the widow's blessing shall be upon you also. It is so very good of you to think of that just now: it is more than I could have expected.

CHARVILLE.

Well, say no more about it; the cottage is hers.—(DICKENSON *bows gratefully, and is got as far as the door, to go away.*)—Come back, Dickenson.

DICKENSON.

Your honour?

CHARVILLE.

This is not all I have to say, my good Dick-

enson.—(*A pause,* DICKENSON *expecting what he is further to say.*) Hast thou ever been frolicsome in thy youth?

DICKENSON.

Sir!

CHARVILLE.

I don't mean in any bad way, Dickenson. Don't look so surprised, man: yet I think thou wilt be somewhat surprised when I tell thee what has come into my head.

DICKENSON.

It is not for me to judge of your honour's notions.

CHARVILLE.

Thou wilt hardly guess what I am going to say.

DICKENSON.

No, Sir, but something for your own good, I doubt not.

CHARVILLE.

Nay, don't look so grave; I am only going to try a little frolic.

DICKENSON.

That is what I should never have guessed, I confess.

CHARVILLE.

O! only a mere whim; every body has their whims: it is a whim in your mistress, now, to have that door opened.

DICKENSON.

Belike, Sir.

CHARVILLE.

But then you must hear what my whim is. I am to go from home, you know, this morning with Sir Level; but I shall soon leave him and return again, unknown to every creature in the family but thyself. Now, couldst thou provide some disguise for me that I may not be known?

DICKENSON.

Lord, Sir! every body in the house will know that anxious look of yours, and the sound of your voice.

CHARVILLE.

Do I look so very anxious, then?

DICKENSON.

Of late, Sir, you have; just, if I may be so bold, as though you thought somebody were hatching a plot against you.

CHARVILLE.

Ha! dost thou know of any plot?

DICKENSON.

Lord forbid, Sir! I'm sure that claret has been as honestly drank at your table ——

CHARVILLE.

Hang the claret! thou art as honest a butler as ever drew cork. — But as I said, Dickenson, I should like to remain for some time in the

house disguised: is the new servant, who is coming to be trained under thee, known to any one in the family?

DICKENSON.

No, Sir, not a soul has ever seen him.

CHARVILLE.

Let me put on the livery intended for him, and prevent him from coming till my turn is served.

DICKENSON.

Lord, Sir! would you so far demean yourself?

CHARVILLE.

Never trouble thy head about that. Come and show me the livery, and I'll tell thee more about it afterwards. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

The Drawing-room. A Table for Tea set out. Enter DICKENSON *carrying a Tea-board, which he places on the Table; and on the opposite Side* MRS. SMOOTHLY, *who goes prying about the Room.*

DICKENSON.

What are you looking for, Mrs. Smoothly?

SMOOTHLY.

Only my mistress's work-bag: she desired me to finish the collar she has been working at so

long. We poor waiting gentlewomen have all them tedious matters to *finish*, as it is called; that is to say, to do two thirds of the whole.

DICKENSON.

Yonder it lies: I desired my new man to clear the table for tea, and he has put every thing upon the chairs, I see, which he should not have done. But he'll know better by and by.

SMOOTHLY.

It will always be by and by with him, I fear, poor stupid oaf. I wonder you could bring such a creature into the family. Isaac tells me he has spilt a plate of soup on my mistress's gown at dinner, which is very hard upon me, Mr. Dickenson. To have the fingerless fool spoiling my perquisites!

DICKENSON.

You'll get the gown all the sooner for that: why, he's serving you, child.

SMOOTHLY.

Serving me! I should have had it in a fortnight, and not a smutch upon it. And what do you think of his sneaking behind doors, and listening too?—Speak of the devil and he appears: I see him at this very moment lurking in the passage. (*Calling off the stage.*) Come in, sirrah; it is you I am talking of, and I'll say all I have said to your face. (*Enter* CHARVILLE, *disguised in livery, and a silver waiter in his*

hand.) I say, sirrah, you are a dirty, sneaking, curious fellow. What business had you to stand listening at my lady's door when I was dressing her for dinner?

CHARVILLE.

I mistuke the door, gentlewoman, judging as how it was the parlour.

SMOOTHLY.

Take you care again, lest I mis*tuke* your nose for the handle of the door, and give it such a turn as shan't be for the beautifying of that knave's face of yours.

DICKENSON.

Fy, Mrs. Smoothly! don't rate him so for a mistake.

SMOOTHLY.

Mistake truly! he mistakes every nook and corner in the house, where he can stick himself up to listen, for the parlour.—Take care, sirrah; for if I catch that snout of yours again where it should not be, I'll take the tongs in my hand, and treat you as St. Dunstan did the devil. I'll teach you to sneak, and to pry, and to haunt one so: I'll teach ——

DICKENSON.

Nay, nay, Mrs. Smoothly, perhaps he is in love with you: you should have pity on the young man.

SMOOTHLY.

In love, indeed! Such a creature as that in love with me! I wonder, Mr. Dickenson, that a man of your sense and discretion should take upon you to bring such an oaf into genteel service. Wait till your master return; he'll not suffer such a shambling fellow in his house, I'll assure you.

CHARVILLE.

Mayhap measter may think better of me than you trow, gentlewoman.

SMOOTHLEY.

I trow this, however, that he 'll make thee pay for thy prying. He likes that business himself too well to share it with thee, I can assure thee.

DICKENSON.

For shame, for shame! to put yourself in a passion for such trifles. Don't you hear the company coming from the dining room?

SMOOTHLEY.

Are they? (*Snatches the work-bag from the chair, and exit.*)

CHARVILLE (*looking after her*).

The fair, obliging, pretty-spoken Mrs. Smoothly! Heaven preserve us! What creatures we may find women to be when we get behind the curtain! — (*To Dickenson*). They're coming, you say. I'll retire to the darker end of the room; for Smitchenstault gave me such a look of ex-

amination at dinner, that I began to dread detection.

DICKENSON.

You need not fear him now, for he has taken his coffee below, and is retired to his room for the rest of the evening.

CHARVILLE.

Did my wife give him a hint to retire?

DICKENSON.

No, Sir? Why should she?

CHARVILLE.

O nothing!—No reason at all. I only thought she might have done so. He is tiresome enough sometimes, and—O no, no reason at all.

DICKENSON.

I think he has got some stones in his pocket, and is going to write something about his jolligy.

CHARVILLE.

He said that himself, did he?—Ha! Here they come.

DICKENSON.

I think you had better retire till they ring.

[*Exeunt* CHARVILLE *and* DICKENSON, *and enter* MRS. CHARVILLE *and* MARY, *followed by* SIR ROBERT FREEMANTLE.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

But, Sir Robert, you have never said a word to me the whole day of the letter I sent to your

care, and the elegant drawing on the envelope. You have surely received it.

FREEMANTLE.

I most surely have not.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

I gave it to the servant early in the morning. Can he have been so negligent?

FREEMANTLE.

The fault lies with my own man probably: he is a careless knave: I shall find it on my table when I go home.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

You will have a great loss, else, I assure you.

FREEMANTLE.

A drawing too!

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Yes; a most beautiful sketch of the curious bat, which you thought might be of the same kind with that which you caught last summer in Cornwall.

MARY.

But the greatest loss of all would be Miss Freemantle's.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Hush, child! keep my secret.

MARY.

It wont keep.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Then, I 'll tell it myself. Long ago, Charlotte and I wrote romantic sentimental letters to one another, in imitation of the novels we were then so fond of; and now I have commenced my correspondence with her again in style, that will, I know, afford her a good hearty laugh, if she don't think my head turned altogether.

FREEMANTLE.

Is it sealed up? Could not one have a peep at it?

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Not for the world. But if you have great pleasure in reading curious letters, Mary can indulge you with one. She has a curiosity in her possession that is worth the gold of Ophir. Pray go and fetch it, my dear sister, if there be any good nature in thee, and I know thou hast a great deal.

MARY.

So entreated, how can I resist?

FREEMANTLE.

Must you have the trouble of going for it? O! no, no. I 'll see it another time.

MARY.

Indeed it is no trouble; I shall find it presently. [*Exit.*

FREEMANTLE.

And in the mean time shall we examine that

bust with the light cast down upon it? You will find that it has, so viewed, a beautiful effect. (*Takes a candle from the table, and goes behind a large screen at the bottom of the room, followed by* MRS. CHARVILLE, *when, from the door left ajar by* MARY, *enters* CHARVILLE.)

CHARVILLE.

So, so, so! The philosopher sent off, and my sister sent off, and the screen to befriend them besides. (*Hearing them speak indistinctly behind the screen.*) Speaking low, too. Cautious enough, I find. Something bad in so much caution. (*Drawing softly near the screen.*)

FREEMANTLE (*behind the scene.*)

Such beauty and expression!

CHARVILLE.

Ay, ay, ay! The devil himself hath no need of the forbidden fruit, if he will talk to a woman of her beauty.—(*They speak again indistinctly.*) What are they saying now? It sounded like husband. O virtuous lady! she recollects that she has a husband.—Some little impediment to be sure.

FREEMANTLE (*as before*).

And that look of modesty, too, forbidding all —(*the rest of the sentence spoken indistinctly*).

CHARVILLE.

Her modesty indeed! that wont stand in the way.—They speak low again: they are whis-

pering now. They are; flesh and blood can endure it no longer! (*Running to the table, and throwing some of the china on the floor, when* FREEMANTLE *and* MRS. CHARVILLE, *alarmed by the noise, come hastily from behind the screen.*)

MRS. CHARVILLE.

That awkward fellow again breaking more china.—(*To* CHARVILLE). This seems to be your only occupation in the family, Barnaby! Ha, ha, ha! how bewildered he looks! What brought you here now? You should never come but when the bell rings.

CHARVILLE.

Lud! They be always ringing in my ears. bells here and bells there, and silver cups a clattering. I does not know when I be wanted.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

I'm sure, Barnaby, I does not know neither; for I know nothing on this earth that one could want thee for, unless it were, for spite, to hand a cup of tea at a time to scald a neighbour's fingers.—(*To* FREEMANTLE *as* CHARVILLE *retires.*) Did you ever see such a looking creature?

FREEMANTLE.

I don't know; he puts me strangely in mind of somebody or other, and I can't recollect who. Where does he come from?

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Dickenson says from Yorkshire.

FREEMANTLE.

It may be so, but his dialect belongs to no county in England that I am acquainted with.—(MARY *heard speaking without*). Don't stand here, young man; keep below till you are called for.

Re-enter MARY.

MARY.

Here is the letter, — a love-letter from an old schoolmaster to his mistress: but you must read it, sister, for I can't do it justice.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

As you please, but make us some tea first; the cramp words that are in it require a ready articulation.

MARY *begins to prepare tea, when enter* DICKENSON, *and* CHARVILLE *peeping behind him.*

DICKENSON.

Ladies, I am sorry to alarm you, but there is a man below who says, he has found a person at the foot of a tree, not far from the house, who seems to be in pain, and that when he spoke to him the voice which answered him again resembled my master's.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Foolish fancy! but let us relieve the poor man whoever he may be. (*Exeunt* MARY *and* FREEMANTLE *hastily.*) It is a cold night, sister;

stay and put on a shawl.—(*To* DICKENSON.) Bring me that shawl from the next room.—(CHARVILLE *gives a sign to* DICKENSON, *and goes for the shawl himself.*) Surely, Dickenson, you don't believe that it can possibly be Mr. Charville: you would be more alarmed if you thought so. There is some trick in this: I know it by that smile on your face. (DICKENSON *retires without answering, and* CHARVILLE *re-enters with the shawl.*) That is a lace shawl, foolish fellow, bring me the other. That would keep nobody warm, and be torn on the bushes besides.

CHARVILLE (*rending the shawl in anger, and speaking in his natural voice*).

And let it be torn into a thousand pieces! A bit of paltry lace, or any thing, is of more importance to you than the fate of your miserable husband.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Ha! is it you?

CHARVILLE.

Ay, you may start as if you saw an apparition from another world.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Nay, there is nothing like the other world about you. That coat and wig, and that ludicrous visage of yours, belong neither to angel nor demon, and are altogether earthly, I assure you; much more an object of laughter than of

fear. Ha! ha! ha! What made you put on such a ludicrous disguise? If I were a vain woman, now, I should think you were jealous.

CHARVILLE.

Call it by what name you please, Madam; but the levity of your conduct, the unblushing partiality shown on every occasion to that minion of your fancy, your total want of regard for myself, but poorly concealed under the mask of easy general carelessness, has raised up that within me which every man must feel, who is not as insensible as the earth on which he treads.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

And you have, in serious earnestness, thus disguised yourself to be a spy upon my conduct. And you have, no doubt, made some notable discovery to justify your suspicion.

CHARVILLE.

Madam, madam! this is no time for trifling. It is for you to justify — I mean explain those appearances, if they have indeed deceived me. Why is Sir Robert Freemantle so often in this house, and received by you with such indecorous pleasure and familiarity?

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Had you asked me that question before with open and manly sincerity, you should have had an answer as open and sincere; but since you have preferred plots, and disguises, and conceal-

ment, even make it out your own way. It would be an affront to your skill and sagacity to satisfy your curiosity independently of them. (*Going.*)

CHARVILLE.

Do you mean to expose me to the whole house?

MRS. CHARVILLE.

No, Charles; you can never be exposed, cruel as you are, without my sharing in the shame.—Oh! oh! has it come to this. [*Exit weeping.*

CHARVILLE.

Ha! does she weep? (*Running after her, and then stopping short.*) No, no! she does not: there is too much parade with her cambric handkerchief for real tears: she does not weep; and yet I could tear my hair for spite that she does not. [*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Back Court, belonging to the House;* SANCHO *discovered waiting by the Gate.*

SANCHO.

Now, we see—we see. White man great deal of money—read book—know all tat be

good. We see — we see. I wait long — O here he come!

Enter DICKENSON.

Well, friend, what say your massa to my massa?

DICKENSON.

He has nothing to say to him at all. He is very angry with your massa.

SANCHO.

Very angry! Ay, my massa be poor, and every body be angry wit him. — Your massa not angry, your massa very fond of him when he shake a te dice, and take all te money from him. Te tevil will shake him over te great fire for tat. — You tell him, he be in prison; he be cold; he be hungry?

DICKENSON.

I told him every thing you desired me, but he has nothing to say to you. He is very angry, and wont see you.

SANCHO.

Angry! Wont see me! He shall see me. I watch him; I speak to him; I deal wit him. Angry! White man angry! Black man angry too. (*Going.*)

DICKENSON.

Stay a little: he sent this for yourself to pay your way back again to London. (*Offering him money, which he scornfully casts away.*)

SANCHO.

None for myself; me will beg my way back; me will take noting of him but his heart's blood, and tat I will take if I should give him mine own in return.—May his money choke him! May te white tevil tear him! May his moter curse him!—Angry! Sancho be angry too. [*Exit.*

DICKENSON.

Poor creature! I pity him: but he'll beg his way back well enough. He has been used to it, no doubt, in his own country. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

An old dismal-looking Chamber.

Enter MRS. SMOOTHLY *and* DOLLY *by a concealed door in the pannelling of the walls, carrying lights, which they place on a table.*

DOLLY.

What a dismal ghastly-looking place! It looks as like a chamber where some wicked thing has been done as any I ever see'd.

SMOOTHLY.

But no wicked thing has been done in this chamber, foolish creature! though a wicked man died here.

DOLLY.

Ay, no wonder he comes back again, since he was so wicked. I marvel you thought of taking the haunted chamber for playing your tricks in with that poor 'losopher: I durst as soon think of taking the church or the vestry.—What's that?

SMOOTHLY.

I heard nothing. Poor creature! you are so ignorant, Dolly, and that makes you frightened. Don't you know that ghosts and all them terrible things never appear till midnight?

DOLLY.

And if so be, why did you ax me to keep you company? Housekeeper wants me below to pick raisins.

SMOOTHLY.

O la! I a'n't frightened; but I thought I should weary somehow to wait by myself.

DOLLY.

Ah, Mrs. Smoothly, it don't become me to say so, but I be feared that you and the 'losopher mean to do some'at that a'n't right.

MRS. SMOOTHLY.

Nothing worse than cajoling him out of a little money, which he loves like his own life; and punishing him for being so conceited as to believe that my mistress, forsooth, would make an appointment with such a ragamuffin as him.

DOLLY.

Hark; he 's coming now. Good luck to you.
[*Exit.*

Enter SMITCHENSTAULT (*hastily and alarmed*).

MRS. SMOOTHLY.

My dear Mr. Smitchenstault; dear deceiver!

SMITCHENSTAULT.

No honey words.

SMOOTHLY.

What 's the matter?

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Some one pursues me: hide me somewhere.

SMOOTHLY.

Mercy on us! (*opening the door of a small closet.*) Go in there. (*Puts him in.*) I 'll get off altogether. (*Runs to the concealed door by which* DOLLY *had gone out.*) She has shut it so hard, stupid idiot, that it won't open. What shall I do? O I remember. (*Opens an old wardrobe press, and creeps into it.*)

Enter CHARVILLE, *followed by* DICKENSON.

CHARVILLE (*speaking as he enters*).

No; I could not be deceived. I 'll take my oath it was he. If I had not stumbled in the gallery at that other cursed door, I should have got up to him.

DICKENSON.

Surely, Sir, your eyes have deceived you: it

could not be Sir Robert Freemantle that you saw.

CHARVILLE.

Deceived! Do I not know his form, his size, his manner? Fiends seize him! I know them too well: they are before mine eyes all day long.

DICKENSON.

Then, perhaps, they were only before your eyes now in the same manner.

CHARVILLE.

No, no, no! Thou makest me mad. Do I not know one thing from another? Cannot one know one hateful face from another, though one be not absolutely within arms' length of the pest?

DICKENSON.

Nay, if your honour saw the face.

CHARVILLE.

Saw it or saw it not, I'll be sworn it was him. Did you not say yourself that you saw a man run hastily up stairs?

DICKENSON.

Yes, Sir; but it appeared to me to be Mr. Smitchenstault.

CHARVILLE.

Smitchenstault! Think'st thou I should not know a hog from a greyhound? Is Smitchenstault tall?

DICKENSON.

I cannot say he is.

CHARVILLE.

The figure I saw was tall? Is he slender?

DICKENSON.

I cannot say he is.

CHARVILLE.

The figure I saw was slender. Has he, in any respect, the appearance of a gentleman?

DICKENSON.

Not much of that, I confess.

CHARVILLE.

Then, teaze me no more by saying it was Smitchenstault; it was the devil as soon. Where can he have disappeared? There is no door for him to escape by.

DICKENSON.

What if it should be some apparition that has deceived you? This is the haunted chamber which has been shut up so long, and why it is open to-night, and lights burning, I cannot imagine.

CHARVILLE.

Ay, ay! There is always a ghost or a haunted chamber wherever intrigue and treachery are at work. But if it be not a spirit, I will dislodge it.

DICKENSON.

The closet door seems to move.

CHARVILLE (*running to the door*).

I cannot open it; somebody presses it to in the inside. Go fetch my pistols: I'll send a brace

of bullets through it, and prove if the thing within be flesh and blood, or not. Run for my pistols, I say.

SMITCHENSTAULT (*bursting from the closet*).

Don't fire de pistol! I am blood and flesh.

CHARVILLE.

You here! Where is Freemantle? It was him I followed along the gallery, if there be any truth in vision.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Yes, dere be great trute in vision: it is one of senses. I feel, I see, I taste, I smell, I hear; — one of de laws of nature which do force belief.

CHARVILLE.

Pest take your philosophy! Where is Freemantle? Where is the man I saw before me in the gallery?

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Gone out by dat door. (*Pointing to the panel.*)

CHARVILLE.

Is there a door here? (*Searching for it.*)

DICKENSON (*to* SMITCHENSTAULT.)

Pray, Sir, how did you see him?

SMITCHENSTAULT.

I peep tro' de chinks of de closet, and see him pass.

DICKENSON.

And what brought you here, Mr. Smitchenstault?

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Only to take de little pleasance wid Mrs. Smootly, who is very fond of me.

DICKENSON.

How could that be, when there is no door there?

CHARVILLE (*having just discovered*).

Faith! but there is though, which confirms every word he has said. (*Bursts open the concealed door, and exit, followed by* DICKENSON.)

SMOOTHLY (*bursting from her hiding place in a rage.*)

O you lying serpent! Pleasance with Mrs. Smoothly, indeed! Very fond of you! Pretty pleasance, indeed! I could burst with vexation.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Dear, dear: what for all dis?

SMOOTHLY.

And to take my name in your mouth too! Would not Dolly or the dairy-maid have suited as well for your excuse?

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Dear me, pretty moute! too pretty to speak de scold.

SMOOTHLY (*pushing him off*).

Keep your distance, I say. Pleasance with me, indeed! Such a lie; such an aggravated lie; I detest all lies! Pleasance, indeed.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Don't be so angry; dere be no pleasance in dat, and dere be no reasons neider: and every body ought to speak wid reasons.

SMOOTHLY.

You provoke me worser and worser with your reasons. Pleasance with such a creature as you! I shan't be able to hold up my head in the family again; no, never. I'll let them all know what kind of a man you are. I'll let Miss Charville know that you only court her for her fortune. I'll ——

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Hush, hush, hush! de poor pretty, angry, goody girl: here is de money for you.

SMOOTHLY.

I'll have none of your money. (*Going off disdainfully.*)

SMITCHENSTAULT (*following her*).

O but you will to': it is gold money, my dear, pretty, honey moute. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

The Library.

Enter CRAFTON *and* SIR LEVEL CLUMP, *by opposite sides.*

SIR LEVEL.

Good morning, Sir; you have followed my intimation pretty rapidly.

CRAFTON.

Sooner than you expected? too soon?

SIR LEVEL.

By no means; I am heartily glad of it; for it argues that you still bear the same partiality for this delightful place, and now is your favourable opportunity.

CRAFTON.

Has Charville at length resolved to sell it?

SIR LEVEL.

Resolved! I should not say resolved.

CRAFTON.

Then say what you please, and I'll listen.

SIR LEVEL.

Mr. Charville, I don't know how, for I am but just come from a little expedition in the way of my profession, has taken a disgust to it.—I don't mean such as will incline him to sell it for an old song neither; but, in short, I give you

notice as a friend, that you may have it now if you please.

CRAFTON.

And you do so with Charville's permission.

SIR LEVEL.

Yes — no — ay; in some measure I may say — I don't know that I can say so altogether.

CRAFTON.

Nay, my good Sir Level, you have taken so much pains in matters of taste to make every thing plain, and smooth, and orderly, be so obliging as to infuse a little of this same improving simplicity into matters of business. It does not signify to me two straws whether Mr. Charville sends me this notice directly or indirectly. The same reasonable offer which I made him for the property two years ago I am willing to make him again, and more than this I cannot and will not give.

SIR LEVEL.

Property! what a bargain-making name you give to it now! the place of your nativity, the beauty of which you so much and so justly admired. Can any thing of sylvan scenery be more charming?

CRAFTON.

And your tone is somewhat altered also, my good Sir Level: this same sylvan scenery was only practicable ground when you last spoke of

it to me. I must e'en repeat to you again, that I will make the same offer for it which I made to him two years ago.

SIR LEVEL.

But consider, my dear sir, how much it has been improved since then. My plans have been already executed, and this, though it may not become me to say so, should weigh with you greatly.

CRAFTON.

I am sure it weighs heavily.

SIR LEVEL.

And look here at this sketch (*unrolling a large plan upon the table*) — look what groves, what lawns, what sweeping declivities and acclivities, what harmonious undulations! you shall have this plan — the benefit of all this tasteful design into the bargain.

CRAFTON.

No, Sir Level; I am not such a Jew as to crib that in, along with the rest. I'll first, if you please, purchase the estate in my own plain way, and then you may ask as much as you like for your plan afterwards. This is, in my simple conceit, the best way of proceeding. (SIR LEVEL *turns peevishly away*.) You think differently, I see. But here comes Mr. Charville himself.

Enter CHARVILLE.

SIR LEVEL (*aside to* CHARVILLE *as he enters*).

He's a cunning hunks, — can make nothing of

him. Will only give the old price. Deal warily with him.

CRAFTON.

I am greatly obliged to you, Mr. Charville, for communicating to me, through Sir Level, your intention respecting this house and lands.

CHARVILLE.

You have a right to be first informed of it.

CRAFTON (*bowing*).

I shall be most happy to become the purchaser at what has been considered by competent judges as a reasonable price.

CHARVILLE.

This estate is a more desirable purchase to you, Mr. Crafton, than to any other man.

CRAFTON.

I have, it is true, sentiments of affection for it, the old home of my forefathers, but I am not rich enough to indulge them to the injury of a moderate fortune.

CHARVILLE.

Sir, I ask no more, if we can agree upon what really is a reasonable price. I should not wish to exact exorbitantly from the amiable and tender feelings of your nature.

SIR LEVEL (*aside to* CHARVILLE).

Pshaw! you may make him pay for all those amply enough, and take but little out of his pocket.

Enter MRS. CHARVILLE.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Good day, Mr. Crafton.

CRAFTON.

And to you, Madam, this and many good days.

CHARVILLE (*to* MRS. CHARVILLE).

We meet upon business (*turning to* CRAFTON). Let your agent and mine, Mr. Crafton, meet together, and ——

MRS. CHARVILLE (*drawing her husband aside*).

Are you wrong in the head to part with this house so suddenly, so unadvisedly?

CHARVILLE (*aside sarcastically*).

Ay, you advise me to keep it, I suppose; you have your tender feelings too, and partiality for the dear place (*turning indignantly from her to* CRAFTON). The place is yours, Sir, if our men of business can agree upon the terms, and I make no doubt they will.

SIR LEVEL (*pulling him aside*).

Rash, very rash to say so: he'll cozen your poor attorney, depend upon it.

CHARVILLE (*turning again to* CRAFTON).

That is to say, Mr. Crafton, if after examining their report, I myself approve.

MRS. CHARVILLE (*pulling him again aside*).

Do not be angry with me for interfering; but where will you find such a pleasant residence?

CHARVILLE (*as before*).

Ay, Madam, and such pleasant—very pleasant neighbours.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

What do you mean?

CHARVILLE.

O you cannot possibly divine. (*Turning to* CRAFTON.) Sir, let the business be settled as soon as you please. You shall have it at the price which you formerly offered.

SIR LEVEL (*pulling him aside as before*).

He laughs in his sleeve at your rashness. I see too well by the smile on his face that he thinks he has jockied you.

CHARVILLE (*turning to* CRAFTON).

I mean with reasonable expedition; I am by no means in any particular haste.

MRS. CHARVILLE (*going up coaxingly to* CRAFTON *as he is about to reply to* CHARVILLE).

Nay nay, my dear Sir; you must not tempt him: come to my dressing room, and let Mary and I have a few words with you. You must positively say nothing more to Mr. Charville on this business to-day. It is too bright, too pleasant a day for such ungracious dealings. Come with me, my dear Sir. You must not—you can't refuse me.

[*Exit leading off* CRAFTON.

CHARVILLE (*looking after them*).

Yes, she will lead him as she pleases. How coaxingly, how bewitchingly she speaks to him! Ah, how it once bewitched me! she is speaking so close to his face, to the old, withered, hateful visage of Crafton — is she thus with every man? is she altogether shameless? Oh, oh, oh! this is not to be endured.

SIR LEVEL (*returning from the other end of the room*).

It is provoking enough; I'm sure.

CHARVILLE.

Ha! you are here: I thought you were —— Yes, I have been really provoked; for he seems indifferent, and I don't know how, in this business.

SIR LEVEL.

He wants to buy the estate as a profitable speculation: he despises our improvements; he even laughs at my plan, and holds taste itself in derision. — Look here; I spread it out before him ——

CHARVILLE.

Well, well; another time if you please: not now, I pray (*putting it away with his hand*).

SIR LEVEL.

But do me the favour only to observe—stone-headed fellow! He would let the savage brush-

wood remain in the forest, and I 'll be hanged if he would not plant all my smooth shaven slopes with potatoes.

CHARVILLE.

Let him plant them with nettles and wormwood, an he will.

SIR LEVEL.

Your servant, Sir: I beg pardon; I intrude, I find.—(*Aside, as he retires.*) There are nettles and wormwood planted somewhere, that I was not aware of. [*Exit.*

CHARVILLE (*alone, pacing up and down in a perturbed manner*).

Ay, ay, it is very plain, it is too plain, it is shamefully plain. (*Stopping short.*) Mighty fond of this residence of a sudden. To be sure, where will she find another house so convenient, with back stairs, and panelled doors, and haunted chambers, and so many cursed conveniences? (*After pacing up and down as before.*) Because I did not find him, I did not see what was before my face as plainly as my hand, and, forsooth, it was Smitchenstault. O woman, woman! thy mysteries of cunning and contrivance! thou would'st deceive man as the evil one deceives thee. But it shall not be.—What can I do? This torment of my mind; this disgrace on my state I can disclose to no one. This cursed world is no place for a man like me to

live in: would I were out of it!—O woman, woman!

Enter ISAAC.

What do you want?

ISAAC.

Please your honour, you are wanted in the justice chamber.

CHARVILLE.

What 's the matter?

ISAAC.

Goody Bullock is come to swear the peace against her husband: he has beaten her all black and blue.

CHARVILLE.

And he has served her right. Let him beat her black and yellow next time.

ISAAC.

Why, please your honour, she is a good peaceable woman.

CHARVILLE.

Out, fool! she is a hypocrite, and a liar, and a jade. Let him beat her all the colours of the rainbow, an he will. [*Exit.*

ISAAC (*looking after him in a bewildered astonishment*).

He's surely bereft of his wits altogether. To call poor old Goody Bullock all them bad names,

goes to church every Sunday, with her stuff cloak over her arm, and knits hose for the vicar!

[*Exit.*

SCENE IV.

A Summer Parlour, with a Door opening to the Garden.

Enter MARY *and* SIR ROBERT FREEMANTLE *from the garden.*

MARY (*speaking as they enter*).

And your uncle is bent upon purchasing this place.

FREEMANTLE.

He was born in this house.

MARY.

It is natural that he should wish to possess it; yet I am sorry for it. I have an affection for it too, and so had my brother; but he has taken some capricious dislike to it, I don't know how. —(*a pause*). And you leave us so soon?

FREEMANTLE.

I feel, my dear Miss Charville, that it is right I should.

MARY.

How can that be?

FREEMANTLE.

Have you not perceived your brother's growing dislike to me?

MARY.

He is of late more ungracious to us all; but I must confess I have perceived something of what you say.

FREEMANTLE.

I perceive it whenever I come near him, in every gesture of his body, in every glance of his eye. I perceive too well that he has discovered my secret, and disapproves, more strongly than I had apprehended, my attachment to you.

MARY.

His mind is sometimes warped; he does not always judge fairly.

FREEMANTLE.

My precaution in paying my chief attentions to your sister-in-law, which, by my uncle's advice, I have practised, that I might not provoke him to discard me till a favourable turn in my affairs, then daily looked for, should entitle me to declare myself; and, I will also own, to engage Mrs. Charville more heartily in my interest, — all this precaution has been in vain; and I find that my own undirected, incautious conduct would have been the more successful of the two: at least, I am sure it could not have been less so.

MARY.

Then pursue it, now, and retrieve your error.

FREEMANTLE.

That you permit me to do so, makes me a proud and a happy man. But you forget, my dear Mary, what I told you half an hour ago.

MARY.

What was it? I ought not to be so forgetful.

FREEMANTLE.

That the papers wanting to establish my right to the Shropshire estate, which my attorney has been searching for amongst our old family records, cannot be found. The letter I received from him this morning informs me, that he now despairs of finding them; and this being the case, I must despair of ever obtaining your brother's consent to our union.

MARY.

Despair is a strong expression.

FREEMANTLE.

But is it not a just one? I have not now the face, poor as I am, and poor as I shall probably remain, to propose myself as a match for you.

MARY.

Well then, Sir Robert, what makes you timid makes me bold. Have the constancy to wait till I am twenty-five: three years will bring this to pass; and then, if you still think me worth the having, and do not consider me as altogether

antiquated, I am yours. My fortune will then be in my own power, independently of my brother's consent.

FREEMANTLE.

Is it possible that I am so happy? How frank, how noble! But should I take advantage of a sudden impulse of thy generous nature?—Alas! I should be more virtuous than I feel I am. My uncle has offered to settle his very moderate fortune upon me: but in this case, my sister would be scantily provided for, and our poor cousin, who has ruined himself at the gaming-table, would be entirely destitute. I have therefore refused it.

MARY.

You have done right, and this refusal gives you a value in my estimation beyond any acquisition of fortune. (*Noise without.*) We shall be interrupted here.

FREEMANTLE.

Let us return to the garden. My formidable rival, Mr. Smitchenstault, must, by this time, have left it.

MARY.

And I don't think he observed us as we fled from him. He was only passing on to his favourite haunt. [*Exeunt into the garden.*

ACT V.

SCENE I. — *A Grove of Trees, with a tangled Thicket in the Back-ground.* CHARVILLE *is discovered pacing to and fro, in a disturbed Manner,* SMITCHENSTAULT *peeping behind him, through the Bushes.*

CHARVILLE (*after muttering to himself confusedly*).

A cloak! a convenience! a provider for disorderly passion! — Noosed for this purpose! Her cunning, her witchery, her wickedness — who could have imagined it? (*After a pause.*) Gain her affections from me! Are his person, his manners, his intellects superior to mine? It is not so: comparison has not produced it. Any man might have had her who happened to come in her way with baseness enough to attempt it. — What can I do? There is no corroborated proof: the world would laugh me to scorn. — Oh, it is ever thus! Would I had done with this envious, malicious world! — Ha!

SMITCHENSTAULT (*coming forward*).

Don't start, my dear frent; I know all dat you do tink, and I am your frent.

CHARVILLE.

I have disclosed my thoughts to no one.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Your tongue has not; but when you come to my room secretly to ask of me if it was really Sir Robert dat I did see pass trough dat chamber, and when I tell you dat mine own two eyes do see him, your eyes, your visage, your body, your limb, every ting dat you have, speak for de tongue, and tell me dat you love no Sir Robert in de house wid your wife.

CHARVILLE (*starting away from him*).

I cannot live and bear it. [*Exit.*

SMITCHENSTAULT (*alone*).

Not live! Ah if he would be so kind! It would be good ting for me and de dear Mary. He never give consent to our matrimony; if he die, she be free to marry me, and give me de fortune. Very good ting! ay, very good ting.

Re-enter CHARVILLE.

CHARVILLE.

Forgive me, Smitchenstault; I am a miserable man, and you have discovered it. But tell no creature the disordered state in which you have found me. You are a stranger, and therefore I am the less distressed that you do know my misery; and you say you are my friend.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Yes, de true frent; all dat I do for you, I do for myself. Speak to me all dat you tink.

CHARVILLE.

That is impossible! I am miserable; I live in torture; I wish I were out of this hateful world. Could it be without crime, I would have done with it at once.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

What you call crime? Have you no more reason dat you mind all dat petty superstitions? Very pretty ting, indeed, to live, if you don't like it: who tank you for dat? I am free — I feel dat I am free. I not come here to be unhappy; when I be so, I go away.

CHARVILLE.

Ay, but where, my friend?

SMITCHENSTAULT.

To de good sound sleep; to de notting.

CHARVILLE.

That were an effectual remedy. I am miserable!

SMITCHENSTAULT.

And what oblige you to be so?

CHARVILLE.

Ha, tempter! Would you have me destroy myself?

SMITCHENSTAULT.

No! I only wish you not to be miserable.

CHARVILLE.

How can I be otherwise?

SMITCHENSTAULT.

I teach you. Do you consider now, and do you tink, and do you say to yourself; "Why be I unhappy? I have de bad wife. O very true; oder men have de bad wife also. Dey call me cocklum." What you call de man wid de (*spreading out two of his fingers significantly*) — ay, ay, cuckold. "Very well, oder men ——"

CHARVILLE (*starting from him*).

I shall run distracted!

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Ay; all dis not be pleasant, but it be foolish dat you let it make you miserable. But if you cannot help dis, where is de obligation dat you should bear it? Keep a your place, dey say: foh, foh! de place where I am best is my place.

CHARVILLE.

If I could but leave them my misery as a legacy behind me!

SMITCHENSTAULT.

O you will leave dat to Sir Robert; he will get de bad wife to torment him.

CHARVILLE.

Marry! Devil choke them! I would live to

the age of Methuselah rather, were I wretched as wretchedness could make me. Marry! (*tearing his hair extravagantly*:) it makes me mad to think of it. (*Striding rapidly to the bottom of the stage*).

SMITCHENSTAULT (*aside*).

Foolish wort! I am all wrong here.

CHARVILLE (*returning*).

And you think they would marry?

SMITCHENSTAULT.

O no, no! I speak de joke: he be too wise to marry her, and den she will say, Oh, oh! and tink of de good husband she had.

CHARVILLE.

Think of me! Yes, she will then think of me. She must think of me then. If I could but rend her guilty heart with remorse! If I could make her miserable!

SMITCHENSTAULT.

O no doubt of dat; she will be very miserable, and have de bitter misery.

CHARVILLE.

Ay, that were something; that were worth dying for. She will think of me then in the agony of repentance. If I could be sure of this, — be sure. (*A pause of thought.*) But are you a man, and advise me to such a desperate act?

SMITCHENSTAULT.

I am a philosopher, and advise you to notting. But dere is de good reason, if you will hear it; — de sober, well-considered reasons on bote sides of de question; and I will say dem all over to you in good order. First, dere be ——

CHARVILLE (*impatiently*).

Not now—not now. I am distracted. [*Exit.*

SMITCHENSTAULT (*looking after him with disappointment*).

He wont do it, after all, de chicken-heart, for as well as de English love to hang demselves. If he do, I have de sweet Mary, and all her fortune; but if he do not — O I will say it be all a joke dat I did say to him, and den dere will be no more about it. Chick-hearted fellow! (*Starting.*) *A noise amongst the bushes!* What face is dat peeping through de leaves? Dere is surely no devil in daylight. My flesh creep — foolish fear! it was noting. [*Exit, and presently* SANCHO *comes from the thicket, creeping on hands and feet.*

SANCHO.

Tat talky talky man chace him from tis spot, so convenient for it. But he no escape me. (*Looking carefully round.*) O still in te wood. Yonder he walk. I be near him again presently.

[*Exit again into the thicket.*

SCENE II.

A small Glade in the Wood, surrounded with high Fern and Bushes.

Enter CHARVILLE.

CHARVILLE (*after walking with hasty disturbed steps to the front of the stage, stops short, and continues musing for some time before he speaks*).

She will think of all this when it is too late: it will embitter her days; she will then bear her torment in secret. She will know I have loved her; she will know it then. The time runs on; it should be done. O that it were done! But the doing of it is a fearful effort. (*Pulls out a pistol, and looks at it ruefully.*) Is there no way of getting rid of this hateful world but by this miserable act of self-destruction? O that some friendly hand would rid me of my wretched life! I cannot do it. (*Throws away the pistol, which* SANCHO, *bursting from the fern, &c. takes up, and runs fiercely at him, presenting it to his head.*)

SANCHO.

Me will do it for you, and tank you too.

CHARVILLE.

Hold, hold! For Heaven's sake spare my life.

SANCHO.

Me spare you! you who ruinated my massa! You kite, you rook; you shall now be food for te rooks! (*Snaps the pistol, which misses fire; then* CHARVILLE *wrests it from him, and they both grapple with one another stoutly, when* SANCHO *being about to get the better of* CHARVILLE, SIR ROBERT FREEMANTLE *enters, and rescues the latter.*)

FREEMANTLE (*keeping fast hold of* SANCHO).

Villain, or desperado! keep still; for I will not quit my hold till thou art in safe custody.

CHARVILLE.

Brave stranger! How shall I thank — Ha! Freemantle. (*Turning away his head.*)

FREEMANTLE.

Did you not know me? But that look of distress and displeasure! What does it mean at such a moment as this?

CHARVILLE.

Do not inquire. Your own conscience will answer your question. What has been your motive for lingering about my house?

FREEMANTLE.

You have discovered my secret, then, and the sight of me is hateful to you.

CHARVILLE.

What! you own it: the poor covering of

secrecy is done away; you look in my face and own it. I am degraded even to this. [*Exit distractedly.*

FREEMANTLE (*still holding* SANCHO).

Is he mad? I cannot follow him for this fellow. Ho, help there! Holla, there!

Enter CRAFTON.

CRAFTON.

Ha! is it you, Freemantle? What do you here with that black creature whom you collar so tightly?

FREEMANTLE.

He would have murdered Charville. See, his pistol is on the ground.

CRAFTON.

Would you have murdered him, you rascal?

SANCHO.

Me true man and no rascal. Me rascal if me not kill te base cruel rook dat ruinated my massa.

CRAFTON.

Why, Sancho, my old friend Sancho, is it you?

SANCHO.

Me no your frien. You cruel to my massa.

CRAFTON.

Nay, nay, be pacified, faithful Sancho. I am

a better friend to thy master than he is to himself, and I will prove it. He shan't remain long in prison: be pacified.—(*To* FREEMANTLE.) Let him go: I'll be his warrant that he shall follow us quietly to the house.—Wont you, Sancho?

SANCHO.

Me not promise.

CRAFTON.

But I will trust you without a promise.

FREEMANTLE.

Be it so, then; but he must not have the pistol again. (*Lets go his hold, while* CRAFTON *takes the pistol from the ground.*)

CRAFTON.

But where is Charville? Let us go to him.

FREEMANTLE.

I cannot. He knows my secret, and is so sternly offended, it is impossible for me to speak to him in his present unaccountable frenzy.

CRAFTON.

Never mind that. Come along; here is a letter that will make you stand firmly before him.

FREEMANTLE (*snatching the letter*).

The long lost papers are found.

CRAFTON.

Even so; read it as we go. — Come along, Sancho. Thy master will be the better for it too; he will soon be a free man again.

SANCHO.

You say tat, — you sure of tat, — you swear tat?

CRAFTON.

Yes, yes; I'll say it and swear it too, if thou wilt not take my word for it.

SANCHO.

O good Massa Crafton! me tank you, me embrace you, me kneel to you.

CRAFTON (*raising him*).

Fy, fy, fy! Let no man be on his knees but when he is at his prayers. Come with us and fear nothing; though this was a desperate attempt, a very wicked attempt against the laws of the land.

SANCHO.

Me care for te laws when te laws care for me.

CRAFTON.

Well, well, come with us. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

A Library. Enter CHARVILLE, *in violent Agitation, followed by* MRS. CHARVILLE *and* MARY.

CHARVILLE (*speaking as he enters to* MRS. CHARVILLE).

No, madam; do not follow me; it is in vain to explain it. The secret is out — the guilty secret is out: he has had the boldness to acknowledge it himself — to acknowledge to my face. I am such a creature now as he need no longer keep measures with. Away, perverted woman! Do you follow me still? Do you look me in the face? (*Beating his forehead.*) He acknowledged it himself.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Acknowledged it?

CHARVILLE.

Yes, madam. You disdained explanation, forsooth. Your virtuous pride was offended, and since I employed disguise in the matter, I must find it out myself. I have found it out, madam; he confessed it himself.

MARY.

My dear brother, what was it he did confess?

CHARVILLE.

Art thou a fool? Canst thou not comprehend?

That woman there, whom thou callest thy sister, — thy amiable sister, — that woman whom I married, — that woman whom I loved better than myself.

MARY.

Nay, that is a mistake of yours, brother; for if you had loved any thing better than yourself, you would never have been in this condition. Your closeness and self-love have made you always suspicious. I thought, indeed, that a wife of her cheerful temper would have enlarged your heart, and ——

CHARVILLE.

Hold thy tongue, simpleton; she has enlarged my head. (*Stamping with his feet, and beating his forehead.*) The whole world must know it now. Since he brazens it out himself, the shame is public. I shall be known to be ——

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Nothing but a fool, and that you must submit to, being a distinction which you have taken so much pains to acquire.

CHARVILLE.

O woman, woman! thy audacity is amazing.

Enter CRAFTON *and* SIR ROBERT FREEMANTLE.

CRAFTON.

Excuse this intrusion, Mr. Charville. I bring a culprit in my hand, who fears he has offended you.

CHARVILLE.

O most courtly phrase! That black villain who would have murdered me, he fears, too, I suppose, that he has offended me. — Sir Robert, you have saved my life, and I cannot turn you out of my house; but you have made that life hateful to me, and I hate it the more for being preserved by you.

CRAFTON.

Be more calm, my good sir. He has, indeed, gained the lady's affections unknown to you, and ——

CHARVILLE.

And may take her and her affections also, and the devil give them his benediction.

CRAFTON.

Well, Freemantle, e'en take the lady as she is offered to you, though it be not in the most gracious manner. Fortune is no object now; take her and marry her out of hand.

FREEMANTLE.

I cannot follow more pleasing advice.

CHARVILLE.

Marry her without a divorce! I'll not divorce her. I'll be hanged if I give her up to any man alive.

CRAFTON.

Pray, good Sir, turn your eyes upon the

party. I believe this match, which my nephew has so long desired, may be accomplished without a divorce.

CHARVILLE (*turning round and seeing* SIR ROBERT *with* MARY'*s hand in his*).

My sister! you bewilder me. — Where is my wife?

CRAFTON.

Most dutifully employed laughing at you in her sleeve at the other corner of the room.

MRS. CHARVILLE (*advancing*).

My dear Charles, I told you you would prove a fool at last.

CHARVILLE.

But, Madam, you have not yet proved it. — Sister, let go that man's hand, and answer me a question. How long is it since he first paid his addresses to you?

MARY.

His addresses have been short, but I have reason to believe he has been attached to me since we first met, some months ago, in Shropshire.

CHARVILLE.

And I have reason to believe he has made thee a mere cat's paw of convenience, silly girl! —(*Turning to* FREEMANTLE.) Let me ask you, Sir, why, in my family, your marked attentions

were paid to that lady? (*pointing to* MRS. CHARVILLE.)

FREEMANTLE.

My dear uncle, you must answer this question.

CRAFTON.

Then, frankly and honestly, I'll tell you the whole truth, which, in its full extent, even Freemantle himself is ignorant of. I counselled him to pay his chief attentions to Mrs. Charville, to conceal from you his design upon your sister, lest you should forbid him your house, and blast all his pretensions in the bud, being then ill entitled to propose himself as a suitor. And besides this ——

CHARVILLE.

Why do you hesitate? Proceed. You will make your tale hang together, some way or other, I suppose.

CRAFTON.

Besides, I thought it might engage Mrs. Charville—(pardon me, Madam, you were a stranger to me, and I had heard that you were fond of such attentions,)—engage her to plead with you in his behalf.

CHARVILLE.

And this is your story? A simple plot, truly, for a simple man to listen to.

CRAFTON.

This is all my plot or story as Freemantle is privy to it; but there was another part of it concealed in my own breast, which shall be so no longer. I hoped that by making you jealous of his visits here to incline you to leave my neighbourhood, and restore to me at a reasonable price the possession of my forefathers. This sinister design has failed — deservedly failed — for I do not justify it; and now you have my sincere confession without reserve. I am sorry for the pain and trouble I have occasioned: can you forgive me, Charville?

CHARVILLE.

I will try to do it. I'm glad you have not got the manor though. — (*To* MRS. CHARVILLE.) And can you forgive me?

MRS. CHARVILLE.

I'll try to do it; and if you are very good, and very penitent, and less suspicious, and less teasing, and more docile, and more obliging, I make no doubt but I shall succeed.

CHARVILLE.

So I find I have a great many changes to make.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Yes, Mr. Charville; and in return I'll make some too. I'll be grave, orderly, and demure before all men, smiling only on mine own wedded

lord, when he encourages me to do so; three times in a week, perhaps, or oftener, as it may chance. I'll not whisper in the ear of my first cousin, unless he be blear-eyed, or have a hump on his back; and I'll neither go to grove, arbour, nor closet, till I have sent you before me to see that there be nobody there.

CHARVILLE.

Harriet, Harriet! I thought this would have moved you differently. You triumph, no doubt; but less exultation, and more candour, would surely have been as becoming. If I am more suspicious than other men — I am not aware that I am so — you must at least acknowledge that it was an extraordinary circumstance to have an honourable suitor to a young lady concealed in a family, and making his way through private doors, and by private stairs, to apartments which she did not occupy. This is no chimera of my brain, Madam; Mr. Smitchenstault saw it.

MARY.

I believe, brother, all that you really know of the matter is that Smitchenstault said so.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

But here he comes; and if he says so again, when confronted with Smoothly, we shall yield that point to you entirely.

Enter SMITCHENSTAULT.

Mr. Smitchenstault, do you seriously aver that you saw Sir Robert Freemantle pass through the haunted chamber while you were in hiding there?

SMITCHENSTAULT.

Madam, I have eyes in my head; I see what I do see, and I know what I do see.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

We don't doubt that in the least; but did you actually see a man pass? and was it this identical man? (*pointing to* FREEMANTLE.)

CHARVILLE.

Answer me, Sir, did you see this man pass through the chamber?

SMITCHENSTAULT.

In de imaginations I see one man very like dat man.

CHARVILLE.

In the imaginations! Then you have not really seen it, and you have told me an untruth.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

What you call false? What you call true? De imaginations is all dat we do know: de veritable real *true* is a foolish notion — is a notting. In mine imaginations I see Sir Robert, and if in imaginations he was not dere, what can I help dat?

CHARVILLE.

Sir, go out of my house, and never enter it again, as long as you live.

CRAFTON.

Unless it be in imaginations, Mr. Smitchenstault.

SMITCHENSTAULT (*to* CHARVILLE).

My good Sir, you are in de passion: dere be no good reason in dat. Be not in de passion: de sweet Mary will plead for me.

MARY.

Not I, Mr. Smitchenstault.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

What! you wish me to leave dis house? Ha! you only deceive; you be ashamed to own de tender toughts of your heart. You not wish me gone. It was your sweet looks dat keep me here so long.

MARY.

With the help of your imaginations.

CHARVILLE.

Out of my house, wriggling deceiver!

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Don't press him to go so immediately; for Mrs. Smoothly has some matters to settle with him before he leave the house.

SMITCHENSTAULT.

O devil! I not wait for dat. [*Exit hastily.*

CRAFTON.

Now, Mr. Charville, this point being settled, let me crave your pardon for a poor criminal in custody below: he is a faithful servant to an unfortunate master.

CHARVILLE.

Speak no more of it: my heart has often smote me on that subject. I have renounced the gaming-table for ever, and I restore to poor Henry all I have won from him, though it was, by every rule of honourable play, fairly won.

CRAFTON.

I believe so, entirely. But I wish the rules of honour came a little nearer to the good Bible precept, "Think not of your own matters, but think also every one of his neighbour's." You risked a small part of your ample fortune against the whole of poor Henry's, and you took it from him. However, in restoring it, you do what has seldom been done by men of honour; and, on the part of my thoughtless relation, I gratefully receive your generosity.

MARY (*after a pause*).

Charles, you look melancholy; what are you thinking of?

CHARVILLE.

What I never suspected before — that I have been a very selfish fellow. — Mr. Crafton, I know that this estate was purchased by my family at

an unfair price. I return it to you for the sum which was given for it.

CRAFTON.

No, Sir; after the indirect means I have used to wrest it from you, I feel that I do not deserve it. I too have been a selfish fellow.

MRS. CHARVILLE.

Nay, if you come to confessions, I must speak also; I have been a careless, thoughtless, vain and giddy wife.

CHARVILLE.

I forgive thee, Harriet; and though I cannot own entirely that character of suspicion which you would all so decidedly fasten upon me, yet I will freely confess ——

CRAFTON.

Have done with confessions. We shall all be wiser, and, I hope, better, for what has just passed, and therefore have no cause to regret it.

HENRIQUEZ:

A TRAGEDY.

IN FIVE ACTS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN.

THE KING OF CASTILE (ALONZO, *surnamed the Noble*).
DON HENRIQUEZ, *his General.*
DON CARLOS, *a noble Soldier, attached to Henriquez.*
ANTONIO, *a young Gentleman in love with Mencia.*
BALTHAZAR.
BLAS, *a Youth in the Service of Leonora.*
A FRIAR, *Confessor to Henriquez.*
DIEGO, *Steward to Henriquez.*
COURTIERS, CONFESSORS, ATTENDANTS, GAOLERS, *&c. &c.*

WOMEN.

LEONORA, *Wife of Henriquez.*
MENCIA, *Sister to Leonora.*
INEZ, *an Attendant of Leonora.*

Scene, the Castle of Henriquez, a few leagues from the Town of Zamora, and in the said Town.

Time, the beginning of the Thirteenth Century.

HENRIQUEZ.

ACT I.

SCENE I. — *A Grove near the Castle.*

Enter DIEGO *with a Letter, muttering to himself before he speaks aloud.*

DIEGO.

THE honour of the house of Altavera,
Of all those chiefs, whose bread I and my sires
So many years have ate without reproach,
Must it be sullied now? — Diego Furnez
Must take upon him, then, th' informer's office,
With all its paltry baseness and concealment.
To Altavera's lords, with manly freedom,
My fathers spoke, and so have I. But then
I did oppose this marriage which hath sunk
His noble pride so low. Such information
From me would be suspected; and his anger,
When so excited, might, perhaps, —— a blow!
Diego Furnez could not live disgraced,
And, dying unrevenged, would die disgraced.

Ay; it must be; necessity compels me. (*Lays down the letter, then looking hastily about, snatches it up again.*)
Surely I hear a stranger's voice approaching:
I 'll drop it farther on, and watch my time,
When Don Henriquez may be sure to find it.
[*Exit.*

Enter ANTONIO *and* MENCIA, *speaking as they enter.*

ANTONIO.

Forget thee, Mencia! Yes, I will forget thee
When means are found to make it possible.
Thine image, independent of my will,
Where'er I am, is with me; night and day
Before my fancy's eye it smiles or weeps;
Motions its arms as thou wert wont to do,
When distance barr'd our intercourse of words;
Is present with me more than present things,
And makes my wretched life a maniac's dream,
Lost and unprofitable.
Is there some potent spell to lay this sprite
That haunts me to my ruin? Vain, vain words!
Thou canst not be forgotten.

MENCIA.

Thou but deceiv'st thyself: there are two spells,
Absence and time, which have to many a lover
His peace restored. Fate has between us now

A barrier placed, which all my feeble strength
Could not o'erleap, therefore I have consented.

ANTONIO.

Consented! O to what hast thou consented?
To more than the rejecting of my love,
Which thy ambitious sister, since the day
That raised her, as the wife of Don Henriquez
To greatness, which she knows not how to bear,
Regards as too presumptuous. Thou art silent.
To more than this hast thou consented, Mencia?

MENCIA.

Question me not; I cannot tell thee now;
Yet thou shouldst know. I have, alas! I have,
O'ercome by prayers, and wearied with conten-
tion,
Consented to bestow my luckless hand
On one who tried, but could not win my heart,
And I am bound ——

ANTONIO.

Thou art not! no, thou art not!

MENCIA.

Alas, I am! and so will hold myself.

ANTONIO.

Thou shalt not! Hold'st thou sacred every tie
But those that bind thee to thy earliest friend;
To him who was thy playmate and thy guard;
Who through thy native woods ran by thy side;

Played with thee, sung with thee, built thy first bower,
Where thou, his mimic mistress, kept thy state,
Screen'd from the mid-day sun, when he, the while,
Still pleased thee, as thou lent'st thine eager ear,
With tales of wonderment and tales of love?
All claims but his! O say not so, sweet Mencia!
Let me implore thee on my bended knee.

MENCIA.

Hush! rise! we are observed; this spot is now
Traversed by busy feet, in preparation
For a gay feast to-night, held at the castle,
In honour of Henriquez' safe return.
Leave me, I pray!

ANTONIO.

By unfrequented paths,
Through rugged wilds I've travelled many a league:
Three irksome days and nights in that deep grove,
The ruin of an ancient sepulchre,
Like some unhallow'd spirit, I have haunted
To watch a lucky moment when thy steps
Should lead thee near the place; and having found thee,
Think'st thou to cast me off with fev'rish haste,
As thou wouldst shake an adder from thy robe?

MENCIA.

Nay, nay! for yonder Don Henriquez comes;
There's danger here.

ANTONIO.

And come who will, and let what will betide,
Despair thinks not of danger.

MENCIA.

Retire, retire, and we shall meet again.

ANTONIO.

When? where? this night? to-morrow? name
the time.

MENCIA.

To-morrow by the early dawn I'll meet thee.
No; not to-morrow, but the following morn.

ANTONIO.

And at that early hour?

MENCIA.

Ev'n so: retire.

ANTONIO.

I have thy word for this?

MENCIA.

Thou hast, thou hast. [*Exit* ANTONIO.
(*Alone.*) Ay, he has loved me as no other will,
And thus he is requited. Woe the day!
Why did my timid spirit yield so poorly
To an ambitious sister? — Must it be?

Henriquez is a man whose native feelings
Of honour and of justice rise indignant
Against the slightest breach of honest faith.
The interests of his house to him were nothing
Opposed to generous ties — to simple right.
I will to him — ah, no! I dare not do it.
(*Looking out.*) He is at hand. That paper keeps his eye
Intently occupied. — What can it be?
Perhaps some letter dropp'd by poor Antonio,
And then all is discover'd.

Enter HENRIQUEZ.

You twist that letter in your hand, my Lord,
As a most worthless thing. May I presume?
I am not curious.

HENRIQUEZ.

Yet thou hast a mind,
Not being curious, just to peep into it.
Well; it might case thy silken threads, perhaps,
Or wrap thy scented comfits. Take it then.
(*Offering her the letter, and then drawing it back.*)
No; spells lurk in such crooked lines as these
To work unhappy fancies out of nothing.
Perhaps some hateful witch has mutter'd o'er it
Her blasting benison; thou shalt not have it:
I'll put it up to light my ev'ning lamp.
Thou goest?

MENCIA.

I have been too long truant here,
And my neglected task calls me within. [*Exit.*

HENRIQUEZ (*alone*).

Why look I still upon this foolish scroll?
As foolish as 't is spiteful. Leonora
Has for her wicked solace in my absence
My noble friend — my second self received!
Good likely tale! (*Reads again.*)

"An unknown friend cautions thee to beware of Don Juen. He has played thee false in thine absence, and destroyed thy wife's virtue and thine own honour. Look to it, if thou wouldst not become the most contemptible of all doating husbands: for thy fond security will make them bold, and the world will point at thee ere long."

The common cant of all those friends unknown.
Juen and Leonora! blest, most blest,
In friendship and in love! This canker'd fiend
Is stung therewith. Envy most devilish,
Yet not uncommon in this wicked world.
Well; it shall serve to light my evening lamp;
God mend the wretch who wrote it. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

A small ornamented Apartment in the Castle.

Enter BLAS *and* INEZ, *carrying different things in their hands, speaking as they enter.*

INEZ.

I leave thee too these cases of perfume,
And this small book of tales and warlike sports.
Place them as I have said, and be thou secret:
Be sure thou tell to no one for what guest
This chamber is prepared.

BLAS.

But if I should, I should not break my word.
I guess'd it out myself; thou did'st not trust me.

INEZ.

Yes, but I did confirm thy guess, more surely
To rivet thee to secrecy. Thy lady
Will greatly be displeased, should thou divulge
it;
Therefore be prudent.—When thy task is done,
Thou 'lt find me in the lower corridor. [*Exit.*

BLAS (*murmuring to himself*).

Be secret, tell to no one, and thy lady
Will greatly be displeased! What is't to me?

And yet I do not like this strange concealment.
(*Employs himself in arranging different things, whilst he sings part of an old ballad.*

SONG.

The watch-dog bays from the southern wall,
And hounds and spaniels repeat his call;
The warders in the court are speaking,
The merlins on their perch are shrieking.

The dame she started from her seat,
And her lover's heart did quickly beat.
"The wall is gain'd, the drawbridge crost,
Your lord is return'd, and we are lost."

"Nay, fy upon thy witless fear!
See, quickly don this woman's gear;
And boldly cross the crowded hall,
Mid serfs and grooms and spearmen all.

"They with glad greetings are, I trow,
Too busy by far to heed thee now;
Yet word or answer give to none,
But straight to the portal and swiftly be gone."

The dame put on her joyous face,
And she welcomed her lord with a hearty embrace.
Quoth she to herself, "Some warlike fray
Will call him forth another day."

A fray full soon hath call'd him forth,
And he is gone to the restless north;
But he — beshrew the wayward wight!
Returns again at the dead of night.

The lover's face turn'd cold and pale,
But never a whit did the lady quail.
"A friar's cowl and frock thou'lt find
Securely pent that chest behind:

"Be thou a friar instantly,
And to the castle's chapel fly,
And in the pale lamp's flickering shine
Bend lowly at Saint Martin's shrine."

Enter HENRIQUEZ.

HENRIQUEZ.

And is it thou, good Blas, who sing'st so well?
I heard thee as I cross'd the gallery,
And was led hither by the well-known tune
That, when a boy, I have so often heard.
But cease not; sing the rest of that old story.

BLAS.

In sooth, my Lord, I have forgot the rhimes.

HENRIQUEZ.

But canst thou not, without the rhimes, remember
The third escape which for her lawless lover
The wily dame devised?

BLAS.

Yes, in a groom's attire she sent him forth
To hold her husband's stirrup at the gate,
As he alighted from his warlike barb.

HENRIQUEZ.

Was not her simple lord at length revenged?
And how was that, I pray?

BLAS.

She had a stepson, who from Palestine
Return'd, and hearing of his father's wrongs
Swore to revenge them.

HENRIQUEZ.

E'en so; I now remember it distinctly,
And the concluding lines sound in my ears.

They fought in the portal,
They fought in the tower,
They fought in the hall, and the lady's high bower,
There they struggled and fought, till the lady at last,
A pale bleeding corse, from the lattice was cast.

Ay, many a time I've listened to that ditty:
She was a wicked dame of whom it tells.
Think'st thou the rhymster knew of such a one?
Or be there any such?

BLAS.

I do not know: there may—and there may not.

HENRIQUEZ.

May, or may not! thou need'st not blush so deeply.
What's thy employment here? Some new arrangement.
Thy lady's private closet so disturb'd!

Ay, and this curtain'd couch! — For whom, I pray,
Prepare ye this, good Blas?

BLAS.

I do not know, my Lord.

HENRIQUEZ.

Thou dost not know!
Why dost thou blush so strangely as thou speak'st?
Compose thyself; I do not seek to know.
What scented thing is this? it smells most sweetly.

BLAS.

It is a box of aromatic gums.

HENRIQUEZ.

It needs must be some dainty fair for whom
Such delicacies are provided. Ay,
And learned too, I guess, for here are books.
A soldier's book! (*Turning over its leaves.*)
Ha! 'tis mine own old friend.

BLAS.

His name is then upon it.

HENRIQUEZ.

Thou seem'st alarm'd, methinks: how's this? whose name?

BLAS.

I do not know, my Lord. Your own old friend.

HENRIQUEZ.

It was the book I call'd so: in my youth
It was my favourite study.

BLAS.

I had forgot; the book is yours, my Lord,
And only borrow'd now for his amusement.

HENRIQUEZ.

For hers, thou mean'st: is't not a female guest?
Blushing again! What mystery is here?
Tell me for whom this chamber is prepared.
(*Pause.*)
Thou wilt not answer. Nay, I will not force
thee;
But tell me only — is this guest a woman?
What! silent still! 't is not a woman then?

BLAS.

No, good my Lord.

HENRIQUEZ.

Some fav'rite page, perhaps, who for the night
Must near his dame be lodged. — It is not this.
I do command thee tell me who it is;
(*Taking hold of him roughly.*)
For by thy face I see too well thou knowest.
What guest sleeps here to-night?

BLAS.

Don Juen is the guest; this is the room
Where he is wont to sleep.

HENRIQUEZ.

Is wont to sleep! Has he been here of late?

BLAS.

'T is said he has been here; for me, I know not.

(HENRIQUEZ, *turning slowly from him, walks to the bottom of the stage.*)

BLAS (*aside, looking after him*).

Surely he heard my words; yet calm and silent!
No further question following my reply!
Fool that I was to be so much afraid,
Since he regards it lightly.

HENRIQUEZ (*returning*).

Where is thy lady?

BLAS.

She gives directions in the pillar'd hall;
At least I left her there a short time since.

HENRIQUEZ.

Go, see, and bring me word. [*Exit* BLAS.
Question a youth — a menial — any one,
Of what regards the honour of my wife!
I married her in the full confidence
That she possess'd all good and noble virtues
Which should become a brave Castilian's wife,
And from herself alone will I be certified
Of what this hateful mystery imports. (*After a pause, and then muttering indistinct words.*)

Peace, bad suggestions, from mean baseness sprung!
No! till I hear from her own falt'ring tongue
The glossing poor pretences of the guilty,
And see upon her once ingenuous face
The varied hues of shame, I 'll not believe it.
I am a fool to take it so intently.
This casket here, which was my earliest gift;
And does it still contain that golden heart,
The token of my love? I fain would know.
(*Looking at it near, and taking it in his hands.*)
It is not lock'd; the lid is slightly latch'd:
In mine own house, methinks, without reproach,
I may undo the bauble. (*Opens it.*) What is here?
Don Jueu's picture, and a letter, too;
I know the writing well.

(*Reads*). "Dear mistress of my soul! How shall I thank thee for that favour which has raised me from despair! Though thy heart has not always been mine, and I have sighed long to subdue it, yet I cherish my present felicity as if thou hadst loved me always, and no other had ever touched thy heart. I will come to the feast as a masquer, and for the reason suggested to me, unknown to Henriquez. The bearer of this will return with the key of the private door to the grove, and I shall come through the narrow path about night-fall. (*After a pause*).

Things have been done, that, to the honest mind,

Did seem as adverse and impossible
As if the very centre cope of heaven
Should kiss the nether deep.
And this man was my friend!
To whom my soul, shut from all men besides,
Was free and artless as an infant's love,
Telling its guileless faults in simple trust.
Oh the coil'd snake! It presses on me here (*his hand on his heart.*) As it would stop the centre throb of life. (*Returning to the casket, and taking out other papers.*)
And sonnets, too, made on her matchless beauty,
Named Celia, as his cruel shepherdess.
Ay; she was matchless, and it seems was cruel,
Till his infernal arts subdued her virtue.
I 'll read no more. What said he in the letter?

(*Reads again.*) The bearer will return with the key, and I 'll come by the path at night-fall.
Night falls on some who never see the morn.

Re-enter BLAS.

BLAS.

My Lord, I 've found her: Donna Leonora
Has bid me say she will be with you instantly.

HENRIQUEZ.

I cannot see her now; I am not well.
I shall be better shortly: tell her so.
I 'll rest me in my chamber for an hour,

And would not be disturb'd. Prevent her coming;
And say I would repose. Go, tell her quickly.
[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE III.

Enter LEONORA *and* MENCIA, *followed by* DIEGO, *speaking as they enter.*

DIEGO.

It shall be done; I understand you, Madam;
Those lofty plumes must grace the seat of honour,
The chair of Don Henriquez.

LEONORA.

Yes; and the chair of Don Henriquez's wife:
See that they both be graced.

DIEGO.

Never but once,
(Lady, forgive the freedom of my words,)
Never but once before was chair of state
Beneath this roof so crested: years gone by,
When Don Henriquez's father, from the king,
Held in these parts, then threaten'd with commotions,
A regent's power. And then his noble lady,
Although the blood of kings ran in her veins,

Did at due distance humbly take her place
On a low stool, unmark'd by any honour.

LEONORA.

Ay, good Diego, such meek humble dames
Have lived, as we are told, in former days.
Do as I have desired thee.

DIEGO (*aside, murmuring as he goes out*).

Lofty dame!
Making so proud a stir, like some pert hedgeling,
Chirping and flutt'ring in an eagle's nest. [*Exit.*

MENCIA.

Sister, you aggravate the mark'd dislike
That old domestic bears you: be more gentle.

LEONORA.

O he dislikes me not; it is his humour.
Dislike me! Have I not to him and his
Been even profuse in gifts? The foolish thought!

MENCIA.

Ay; but the meekness of his former lady,
She, too, who had a king's blood in her veins,
Dwells in his heart, and beggars all thy gifts.

LEONORA.

Thou 'rt fanciful.

MENCIA.

Nay, nay! And why so fond
Of splendid pomp? Compared to what thou wert,

Thy marriage with Henriquez made thee great;
This doth not make thee greater; woe the day!
Nor happier neither.

LEONORA.

Woe the day! Poor dove!
That would beneath the cottage eaves for ever
Sit moping in the shade with household birds,
Nor spread thy silver plumage to the sun.

MENCIA.

The sun hath scorch'd my wings, which were not made
For such high soaring.
He who would raise me to his nobler rank
Will soon perceive that I but grace it poorly.

LEONORA.

Away with such benumbing diffidence!
Let buoyant fancy first bear up thy merit,
And fortune and the world's applause will soon
Support the freight. When first I saw Henriquez,
Though but the daughter of a humble house,
I felt the simple band of meadow flowers
That bound my hair give to my glowing temples
The pressure of a princely coronet.
I felt me worthy of his love, nor doubted
That I should win his heart, and wear it too.

MENCIA.

Thou dost, indeed, reign in his heart triumphant;
Long may thy influence last.

LEONORA.

And fear not but it will. These pageantries
Give to the even bliss of wedded love
A varied vivifying power, which else
Might die of very sloth. And for myself,
My love for him, returning from the wars,
Blazon'd with honours, as he now returns,
Is livelier, happier, and, methinks, more ardent,
Than when we first were married. Be assured
All things will favour thee, if thou hast spirit
To think it so shall be. Thou shak'st thy head.
It is not reason, but thy humble wishes,
Thy low ignoble passion that deceives thee,
And conjures up those fears. Weak, wav'ring
girl!
Art thou not bound?

MENCIA.

Weakness in yielding to your will, indeed,
Has fetter'd me with bands my heart disowns.

LEONORA.

Fy! say not so. Hush! let not that sad face
O'ercloud the joy my gen'rous lord will feel
When he discovers what we have conceal'd,
With playful art, to make his joy the keener.
Hush! here comes Blas again.

Enter BLAS.

How is my Lord?
Will he not see me now?

BLAS.

He will not yet.
I have been watching near his chamber door,
And when I gently knock'd, as you desired,
He answered me with an impatient voice,
Saying his head was drowsy, and lack'd rest.

LEONORA.

I 'll go myself.

BLAS.

Nay, Madam, do not yet.
I guess that some cross humour has disturb'd
him;
Sleep will compose it.

LEONORA.

Humour, dost thou say!
He ne'er was cross with me. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I. — *The private Apartment of* HENRIQUEZ, *with his Chair and Table, and a Lamp burning on the Table; the Stage lighted only by this Lamp.*

Enter HENRIQUEZ *with a sword in his hand, which he lays on the table in the light, shrinking back as he looks at it.*

HENRIQUEZ.

The blood! — this blood! — his blood! — O dismal change!
When rose the sun of this sad day; how gladly
Would I have shed mine own, to have sav'd one drop
Of what was then so dear! (*Pushing it into the shade.*) Be from my sight.
It wrings my heart: and yet so black a stream,
So base, so treacherous, did never stain
The sword of holy justice. (*After sitting down, and gazing some time on the ground.*)
This is a pause of rest from the first act,
The needful act of righteous retribution.
Oh! is it rest? The souls that fell from light
Into the dark profound, cut off from bliss,

Had rest like this. (*Pressing his temples tightly with both hands.*)
How furiously these burning temples throb!
Be still! be still! there's more behind to do;
But no more blood: I will not shed her blood.
(*Knocking at the door.*) Who's there?

VOICE.

Are you awake, my Lord?

HENRIQUEZ.

What dost thou want?

VOICE (*without*).

The banquet is prepared, the guests assembled,
Your grooms are waiting, and your vestments ready.
Will you not please, my Lord, to let them enter?

HENRIQUEZ (*to himself*).

The guests assembled! Vile bewild'ring dream!
I had forgot all this. I must appear.

VOICE (*without*).

Will you be pleased, my Lord, to let them enter?

HENRIQUEZ.

Be still — be still; I'll open to them presently.
[*Exit hastily into an inner chamber, taking the sword with him.*

SCENE II.

The grand Hall of the Castle lighted up magnificently. LEONORA, MENCIA, CARLOS, *and Company discovered; Music, which presently ceases, and*

Enter a SERVANT.

LEONORA (*aside to Servant*).

How is thy master? Has he left his chamber?

SERVANT (*aside to* LEONORA).

Yes; he will soon appear; he is preparing.

LEONORA (*aloud*).

Indeed, indeed, I have been much concern'd
That Don Henriquez has, from sudden illness,
Been tardy in respect to noble guests
Whom he so truly honours; but I hope——
(*Flourish of trumpets.*) Ha! who is this? Some guest in princely state.

Enter SERVANT.

SERVANT.

The King is at the gate.

LEONORA.

The King! a great surprise! unlooked-for honour.
I'll to the gate. (*To the music.*) Strike up a royal welcome. [*Exeunt* LEONORA, CARLOS, *and others, while the music plays a grand martial air; then*

Re-enter LEONORA, *&c., conducting the King, attended, who receives the homage, and continues speaking in dumb-show to many of the Company, till the music ceases.*

KING (*to* LEONORA).

Fair hostess, I am come in homely trim
For such a gay assembly.

LEONORA.

Your poor servants
Are greatly honoured by this condescension;
A glad surprise, so far beyond our hopes.

KING.

Ay, and beyond mine own, fair dame; but finding
From wrecks of mountain torrents, or neglect,
The straight road to Zamora was impassable,
I took the wider compass, and proceeding
Through these domains by favour of the night,
Your castle from its woods looked temptingly,
And beckoned me afar to turn aside.
The light from every lattice gaily streamed,
Lamps starr'd each dusky corridor, and torches
Did from the courts beneath cast up the glare
Of glowing flame upon the buttress'd walls
And battlements, whilst the high towers aloft
Show'd their jagg'd pinnacles in icy coldness,
Clothed with the moon's pale beam.

—— It pleased my fancy;
And here I am, a hasty visiter,
Who must Zamora reach by early day;
Where many a lofty lord, and learned clerk,
And all the rogues and robbers of the district
Await my coming.

CARLOS.

All of them, my Liege?

KING.

I spoke at random, like a graceless layman:
More than the church's portion were presumption,
A tithe of them will do. — Here is Henriquez.

Enter HENRIQUEZ, *richly dressed.*

HENRIQUEZ.

My humble homage to your Highness: welcome
To my poor house, so honour'd by your presence.

KING.

I thank thee, brave Henriquez, but I fear
'T is an untimely visit; thou 'rt unwell.

HENRIQUEZ.

Nought but a passing ailment; do not name it.

KING.

In faith your face is wan, and strangely changed,
And would become a sober beadsman's frock
More than a festive mantle. How is't with you?
Retire again to rest.

HENRIQUEZ.

My face speaks falsely, I am much recover'd.
Here is the cup of welcome; will your Grace
Be pleased to honour me. (*Taking a cup from a servant, and presenting it on one knee to the King.*)

KING.

All good be on your head, and this fair dame's.
(*Bowing to* HENRIQUEZ *and* LEONORA, *and then drinking.*)
Fair ladies and brave lords, well be ye all.
(*Bowing to the company, and drinking again.*)

HENRIQUEZ (*to the servant, who is pouring out a cup for him*).

Up; fill it to the brim.
Health to the king, and a long happy reign.
(*Drinks.*)
To all my honour'd guests health and good welcome. (*Drinks again.*)

KING.

A goodly company: here are, methinks,
High blood enough, plumed hats and coronets,
To furnish out a court.

LEONORA.

They honour this poor feast which I have fashioned
To grace my Lord's return.

KING.

You have done well; and I should grace it too,
Who was the greatest gainer by his absence,
When he with brave companions like himself
Against the Moors did for the state good service,
As Alcantura, by their valour won,
And now a noble hold for Christian knights,
Can nobly testify.
I speak not of the Navas de Tolosa,
Where he upon that memorable day
Broke through the Moslem chain of armed guards,
Changing their strength to slaughter and dismay:
We are too apt to speak of recent services.
Former or recent, would I could repay them!

HENRIQUEZ.

Your bounty has already done it nobly.

KING.

Fy, fy! a trifle; what would scarce maintain
A rustic lord, who dozes life away
In his porch'd hall, where hawks wink on the perch,
And hounds lie sleeping round him. Take this ring,
My royal father wore it many a day;
And whatsoe'er thou shalt request of me,
Returning to my hand this pledge again,
It shall be granted, were it half the realm.

HENRIQUEZ (*receiving it on his knee*).

I thus receive it with all humble duty.
(*Rising with forced animation.*)
But let us now be gay: the time wears on.
By early dawn I must attend your Highness,
To reach Zamora by th' appointed hour.

LEONORA.

I am rejoiced to see you so recovered.
(*To* HENRIQUEZ.)

HENRIQUEZ.

I thank you, Lady; let your guests receive
Your present courtesies.—Where are the min-
strels?
Let them strike up a dance: we are too still.

LEONORA.

Doubt not we shall be gay; but we expect
Some merry masquers here to join our revels;
They should have come ere now.

HENRIQUEZ.

Wait ye for such? Are they not come already?

LEONORA.

How so, my Lord?

HENRIQUEZ.

The world is full of them:
Who knows the honest unclothed worth of those
That by your side may stand, drink from your
cup,
Or in your bosom lie? We are all masquers.

KING.

Your wine has cheer'd you to a gibing humour;
You are severe, my Lord, on this poor world.

HENRIQUEZ.

If I have said amiss, ev'n let it pass:
A foolish rev'ller may at random speak:
Who heeds his idle words? — Music strike up.

(*Music: the* King *retires with* HENRIQUEZ *to the bottom of the stage, and the guests prepare to dance, when* BLAS *with a face of horror enters the hall and beckons* CARLOS *aside.*)

CARLOS.

What dost thou want?

BLAS.

A fearful thing has happen'd;
And to my Lord, or Donna Leonora,
It may not hastily be told.

CARLOS.

What is 't?

BLAS.

A murder'd body near the Castle lies,
But newly slain; and they who found it swear
(For well they know his form and countenance),
It is Don Juen's body.

LEONORA.

(*Who has stolen near them to listen.*)
Don Juen's *body*, said'st thou? Is he dead?

BLAS.

Yes, Madam, they have found him in the wood
Lifeless and ——

LEONORA.

Oh, I guess thy horrid look!
And he is murder'd? Dreadful, barbarous deed!
(*Exclaiming aloud.*)
(*All quit their places for the dance, and crowd round* LEONORA, *who is supported by* MENCIA, *appearing also affected, whilst* HENRIQUEZ, *at a distance, observes them intently.*)

LEONORA (*recovering*).

O Carlos! tell my Lord the horrid tale.
I must retire.
[*Exit with* MENCIA *and other ladies.*

KING (*coming forward with* HENRIQUEZ).

Some strange commotion here!

HENRIQUEZ (*to* CARLOS).

What has befallen?

CARLOS.

What will most keenly rend your noble heart;
Yet to a soldier I should tell it plainly:
Don Juen, from some secret villain's stroke,
Has met his fate this night, and near your walls.

HENRIQUEZ.

Away! Howl not so wild a dirge to me;
Far distant from these walls, full many a league,
Don Juen is. Ye are deceived.

BLAS (*shaking his head*).

No, no!

CARLOS.

I fear he tells us true.

HENRIQUEZ.

He wrote to me, not many days ago,
A letter, dated from his northern seat,
Which made no mention of his visit here:
If what you say be true, it is most strange.
I'll be assured if it, indeed, be so. (*Going hastily*).

CARLOS (*preventing him*).

Retire, and I will see it ascertain'd:
You shall not look upon so sad a sight.

KING (*to* HENRIQUEZ).

Retire, my Lord: it were not fit you went.
Your noble guests beseech you to retire.

HENRIQUEZ.

I will obey your Grace. I thank ye all.
[*Exeunt* HENRIQUEZ *and* CARLOS *severally*.

KING (*to the guests*).

Were it not well that we should all retire?
Our banquet to a funeral wake is turu'd,
And cannot cheer us now. [*Exeunt*.

SCENE III.

An inner Court of the Castle, lighted by a Lamp over the Gateway, the Stage otherwise dark.

Enter DIEGO *and two Servants, with dark lanterns, speaking loud and confusedly as they enter.*

FIRST SERVANT.

I could be sworn to it. Go tell my Lord:
Why hold we here such idle altercation?

DIEGO.

He must not be disturbed.

FIRST SERVANT.

How not disturbed?

Enter CARLOS *above, looking down from an open corridor.*

CARLOS.

Ho! who are ye who talk so eagerly?
What is the matter?

FIRST SERVANT.

The murderer is found: come down, Don Carlos,
For we would fain pursue him through the wood,
But thus unarm'd we dare not.

[*Exit* CARLOS *above.*

SECOND SERVANT.

Ay, he is coming: he will be our warrant,
And tell us what to do.

Re-enter CARLOS *below.*

CARLOS.

Well, friends, what did you say? the murderer?

FIRST SERVANT.

Yes; I can swear 't is so: I would have followed
him,
But, lacking arms, I durst not.

SECOND SERVANT.

So would I.

FIRST SERVANT.

Give us some stout companions and good weapons,
And, scatt'ring different ways, we 'll scour the
wood,
And seize him shortly.

CARLOS.

In the wood ye found him?

SECOND SERVANT.

Yes; as we went out-stripping our companions
To bear Don Juen's body to the Castle.

CARLOS.

How guess you 't is the murderer?

FIRST SERVANT.

A youthful cavalier for several days

Has been secreted in the wood. I've seen him;
And the dark form that cross'd my light ev'n now
I could be sworn is he.

DIEGO.

It is not likely that the murderer
Should be so near the slain. He would, methinks,
Run from the spot forthwith.

CARLOS.

True, ne'ertheless
A mind distracted in a wood so tangled
Might run and make no way. (*To Servants.*)
Go ye forth;
I will myself assist your search. But, first,
We'll fetch our weapons. Ha! what noise is
that? (*Noise without.*) 'T is voices at
the gate.

FIRST SERVANT.

It is the body.
(*Voice calling from the outer court.*) Ho, there!
Who watch within? Lend us your aid,
We know not where to bear it.

OMNES.

It is the body.

[*Exeunt, running eagerly through the gateway.*

Enter MENCIA *below, who has appeared before listening in the corridor.*

MENCIA.

He will be found and seiz'd: they'll have no
mercy.

The dreadful doom! O Heaven have pity on him!

Enter INEZ.

INEZ.

What is the matter, Madam? Whither go you?

MENCIA.

I cannot tell.

INEZ.

Go in, I do beseech you,
And stay in your apartment. I, mean time,
Will be upon the watch, and bring you word
When they return. Think you that there has been,
For I have listened too, a cavalier
Secreted in the wood?

MENCIA.

No; heed me not;
I know not what I say.

INEZ.

Yet stay not here, lest you should raise suspicion;
Return to your apartment; be entreated.

[*Exeunt* INEZ, *leading off* MENCIA.

SCENE IV.

Enter LEONORA *and* CARLOS *by opposite sides.*

CARLOS.

Madam, I have obey'd your summons; say
Whate'er my humble service may perform.
How fare you after this most dismal shock?

LEONORA.

As one who hath a friend and husband both
In one dire tempest lost. And, noble Carlos,
Grief triumphs over pride, when even to thee,
Though knowing well thy friendly worth, I own it.
He was — I mean Henriquez — Oh! he was
To me most strangely alter'd ere this stroke.

CARLOS.

You are deceived; expecting to retain
The undiminish'd empire of his heart
Beyond the usual term of bridegroom weakness.
It could not be.

LEONORA.

No; I am not deceived.
Sickness did yesterday for many hours
Confine him to his chamber; yet in vain
Did I entreat admittance — I who used
To soothe his saddest hours, if any sad
Could pass when I was near him. —
And now again he is shut up alone,
And has refused to see me. Worthy Carlos,

Do me a kindness: go thou to his door,
And beg admittance; then in my behalf;
Since by another's influence I must move him,
Crave audience even for a few short moments.

CARLOS.

Nay, charming Leonora, urge him not:
He will admit thee when he is disposed
For soothing sympathy; to press it sooner
Were useless — were unwise.

LEONORA.

Yet go to him; he will, perhaps, to thee,
So long his fellow-soldier and his friend,
Unburthen his sad heart.

CARLOS.

You are in this deceived. His fellow-soldier
I long have been. In the same fields we've fought;
Slept in one tent, or on the rugged heath,
Wrapt in our soldier's cloaks, have, side by side,
Stretch'd out our weary length like savage beasts
In the same cheerless lair; and many a time,
When the dim twilight of our evening camp
Has by my foolish minstrelsy been cheer'd,
He has bent o'er me, pleased with the old strains
That pleased him when a boy; therefore I may,
As common phrase permits, be call'd his friend.
But there existed one, and only one,
To whom his mind, with all its nice reserve
Above the sympathies of common men,

He freely could unfold; and having lost him,
Can I intrude upon his private thoughts
Like one who would supply a vacant place?
His heart, I know it well, would from such boldness
Revolt, even with disgust.

LEONORA.

Yet Juen's death did seem to move him less
Than such dear friendship might have warranted.

CARLOS.

It was his custom to restrain his looks
When strongly moved, or shun all observation.

LEONORA.

And I am now become that humble thing,—
A wife shut out from equal confidence!

CARLOS.

Have patience, Madam; take it not so deeply.

LEONORA.

I would have patience,—

CARLOS.

Hush! we're interrupted,

Enter BLAS.

BLAS (*to* LEONORA.)

Don Juen's secretary is arrived,
Who brings with him — so has he bid me say —
Papers of great importance, which he begs
May, and without delay, to Don Henriquez,
In presence of due witnesses, be read.

LEONORA.

It is a happy thing; this call will rouse him;
Be thou the bearer of this message, Carlos;
He cannot think thee an intruder now.

CARLOS.

I will obey you.

LEONORA.

And be sure immediately
To give me notice how he has received it.

CARLOS.

I will not fail. [*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE V.

A spacious Apartment.

Enter BALTHAZER, *followed by* BLAS, *carrying a case with papers, which he lays on a table.*

(BALTHAZER, *after examining it*).

Is Don Henriquez ready, gentle youth?

BLAS.

He'll soon be here; the Lady is at hand,
With others, who will witness what you read.

BALTHAZER.

I'm glad she comes to soothe his gloomy grief,
For I have that to read will move him greatly.

BLAS.

I doubt it not: Don Juen loved him well,
As it was thought.

BALTHAZER.

Say'st thou, *as it was thought!*
I've often seen them spend whole days together,
Neglecting all the sports of hall or field,
In some sequester'd corner, side by side,
Pacing, though young, with the slow steps of age,
Each like the other's shadow; whilst, by turns,
Such power of words flow'd from them, and their eyes
With pleasure or with gentle anger flush'd,
As the keen wilful sporting of their minds
Through some wild chace of thought pursued the game.
I mark'd them oft: it was a pleasing sight.

BLAS.

Were they, indeed, such dear and loving friends?

BALTHAZER.

Yes, gentle youth, they were. — It seem'd, in truth,
As though each kept his thoughts i' th' other's breast,
Lock'd up even from himself; having when met,
And only then, free use of his own treasure.

BLAS.

So closely knit?

BALTHAZER.

Yes; I have seen Henriquez
By Juen's sick-bed sit, night after night,
Like tenderest nurse watching her infant charge;
And then I've seen the tears course down his
cheeks —
His youthful face all shrunk and pale with grief.
Such dear and manly fiiendship knew I never.

Enter LEONORA *and* CARLOS, *followed by* DIEGO, *who then retires with* BLAS *to the bottom of the Stage.*

LEONORA (*after a pause*).

I think I hear him coming.

CARLOS.

I think so too; yet grief is slow of foot,
And those are rapid strides like one in haste.

Enter HENRIQUEZ, *who returns slight and sullen acknowledgments to their civilities, and going directly to a seat prepared for him, sits down without speaking.*

BALTHAZER (*to* HENRIQUEZ, *after a pause*).

My Lord, here is a will, with other papers,
Which your deceased friend, my noble master,
Committed to my keeping six days since,
When he departed from his native home.
His ancient fav'rite hound howl'd piteously

As from the gate we prick'd our steeds, and yet
We took no heed of it, nor thought, alas!
That he would ne'er return. — Please you, my
Lord,
That it should first be read?

HENRIQUEZ.

Proceed; I 'll listen.

BALTHAZER.

From the great love, above all men besides,
Which living he did bear you ——

HENRIQUEZ.

Nay, proceed;
There needs no prologue to it.

BALTHAZER (*reading*).

"The last will of me, Juen de Torva, written and signed by mine own hand, as these characters testify, is this. I bequeath to my beloved, my early, my only friend, Don Henriquez d'Altavera, the whole of my lands, my castles, my dependencies, my treasures, to be possessed by him and his heirs for ever; and for as much as I have more confidence in the wisdom and generous propriety of his judgment than my own, I leave those whose names (also by mine own hand) are herein written, to be provided for, as he, thinking and acting for me when I shall no longer be able to think and act for myself, shall deem right. These, with the last love and blessing of my heart I bequeath to him; desiring that

my poor earthly remains may be laid in the
same spot where he himself shall be interred.
May God have mercy on the soul of a humble
sinner! Done with mine own signature.

JUEN DE TORVA."

Here follow names of many old dependents,
And witnesses who saw him sign this deed;
Shall I repeat them?

HENRIQUEZ (*motions him to forbear, and after covering his face with his hands for a moment or two*).

You also spoke, I think, of other papers:
The date of this is, as I guess, remote.

BALTHAZER.

Nay, it is recent — only two months since.

HENRIQUEZ.

So late as that!—You mention'd other deeds.

BALTHAZER.

Yes, good my Lord; entrusted to my keeping,
Here is besides a marriage contract made
Between himself and the fair Mencia.

HENRIQUEZ (*starting from his chair with violent gesture*).

What did'st thou say? The sister of my wife?
Say it again: I know not what thou said'st.

BALTHAZER.

It is, my Lord, a marriage contract made

Between himself and Donna Mencia,
The sister of your wife; to whom by stealth,
The Lady being somewhat disinclined,
He has of late made frequent visits; hoping
Last night, with her consent, to have surprised
you,
When as a masquer he should join the guests,
By asking from your love a brother's blessing.
(HENRIQUEZ *falls back into his chair, uttering a deep groan.*)

LEONORA (*rushing to him in great alarm*).
Alas! so strong an agony is here,
The hand of death is on him.

CARLOS.
'T is but the pitch and crisis of his grief:
Be not alarm'd; he will recover presently.
(DIEGO, *coming forward, speaks aside to* LEONORA.)

DIEGO.
Bid all withdraw, and be with him alone
When he recovers.

LEONORA (*aside*).
How when he recovers?
Alone with him! I know not what thou mean'st.

DIEGO (*speaking to her aloud*).
My Lord has from his youth been thus affected,
When press'd by grief; I've seen him so before.
And when the fit goes off, I've known him also

Utter wild ravings. Solitude and stillness
Are necessary. Pardon me this boldness.

LEONORA.

Thou'st seen him thus before?

DIEGO.

It is a natural infirmity;
Let all retire and leave him.

LEONORA (*motions all to retire but* Carlos).

Don Carlos will remain. (*To* DIEGO.)

DIEGO.

None but yourself, I do beseech you, Madam;
And I will watch by you till he recover.

[*Exeunt all but* DIEGO, LEONORA, *and* HENRIQUEZ, *who, while she hangs over him, groans as before.*

LEONORA.

That groan again! My dear—my dear Henriquez!
Alas! that look! thine agony is great:
That motion too. (*He rises.*) Why dost thou stare around?
We are alone; surely thou wilt not leave me.
Where would'st thou be?

HENRIQUEZ.

I' the blackest gulph of hell;
The deepest den of misery and pain;
Woe bound to woe—the cursed with the cursed!

LEONORA.

What horrible words, if they have any meaning!
If they have none, most piteous! —
Henriquez; O, my Lord! — My noble husband!
I thought not thou would'st e'er have look'd on me
As thou hast done, with such an eye of sternness.
Alas! and had'st thou nothing dear on earth
But him whom thou hast lost?

HENRIQUEZ.

I had, I had! Thy love was true and virtuous.
And so it is: thy hand upon my breast. (*Pressing her hand, which she has laid upon his breast.*)
I feel it — O how dear! (*Is about to kiss it, but casts it from him.*)
It must not be!
Would thou wert false! Would grinding contumely
Had bow'd me to the earth — worn from my mind
The very sense and nature of a man!
Faithful to me! Go, loose thee from my side;
Thy faithfulness is agony ineffable,
It makes me more accursed. Cling not to me:
To taste the slightest feeling of thy love
Were base — were monstrous now. — Follow me not!
The ecstasy of misery spurns all pity. [*Exit.*

DIEGO.

And do not follow him: O do not, Madam!
This fearful fit will soon exhaust its strength,
And leave his reason free.

LEONORA.

God grant it may! It is a fearful fit.
But thou thyself look'st strangely, and thy visage
Seems haggard with a passing consciousness——
Thou dost not think ——

DIEGO.

No, no! what should I think?
Retire to your apartment: I meantime
Will watch my Lord, that none may cross his way
Till he be safely lodged within his chamber.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI.

A narrow Hall or Passage.

Enter CARLOS *and* BALTHAZER.

CARLOS (*calling to somebody behind him as he enters*).

Go, bid those spearmen from the armourer
Receive their pageant suits, and let the warder
Hang o'er the battlements his sable flag.

BALTHAZER.

And will not Don Henriquez, then, in person
Attend the funeral rites?

CARLOS.

His ancient steward
Has signified to me his Lord's desire
That I should fill his place in every thing
Respecting this sad ceremony.

BALTHAZER.

Have you not seen himself?

CARLOS.

No; grief so stern, so cover'd and profound,
I never knew: he has refused to see me.

BALTHAZER.

They say his ghostly father hath been summon'd:
He'll try to soften his untoward grief.

CARLOS.

I hope he will; but pass we on, I pray.

BALTHAZER.

The murd'rer has, I hear, escaped their search.

CARLOS.

He did escape, if it was any thing
Those frighten'd peasants saw.

BALTHAZER.

In truth it is a black, mysterious deed;
And, as it strikes my mind——

CARLOS.

Some other time:
Pass on, I pray, our business must proceed.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The grand Court of the Castle.*

Enter a pompous funeral procession by an arched way at the right side of the bottom of the Stage, and crossing it in a diagonal line, passes out by the left side of the front; which joins the massed richness of a perspective to the distinctness of a side view.

SCENE II.

A small private Apartment.

Enter LEONORA, *walking thoughtfully across the Stage; then enter* DIEGO, *upon which she turns, and goes up to him, without speaking.*

DIEGO (*after pausing for her to speak first*).
They told me, Madam, you desired to see me.

LEONORA.

Yes, good Diego, I would speak with thee;
Yet what I have to say comes of no sense,—
Mere curiosity,—a woman's humour.
Looking from my apartment not long since,
Methought I saw thee in the inner court,
Earnest in conversation with Balthazer.
I mark'd you for a while, and his strange gestures
Seem'd those of anger rather than of grief.

DIEGO.

He was, in truth, somewhat intemperate.

LEONORA.

What has disturb'd him?

DIEGO.

He is a man by nature cross and captious,
And hardly to be satisfied.

LEONORA.

How so?
Has aught been wanting in the funeral honours
Paid to his master?

DIEGO.

No; it is not that.
He rather thinks we have been more intent
On idle pageantry, than truly zealous
In finding out the murd'rer of his Lord;
And this did move him to unseemly warmth,
And words which I may not repeat.

LEONORA (*eagerly*).

What words?
Does he suspect—No; what should he suspect?
(*Pausing and gazing on* DIEGO, *who is silent.*)
Thy face looks pale and haggard. Did he name him?

DIEGO.

Name whom?

LEONORA.

No, no one. This bewilder'd brain
Will run on things too wildly fanciful.
I'll speak to him myself; he shall be satisfied.
Search shall be made without delay. Go to him,
And tell him I would see him privately.

DIEGO.

He is not here.

LEONORA.

What! not within the walls?

DIEGO.

Mounted upon his master's swiftest steed,
He left the castle short while since; ere this
He must be near Zamora.

LEONORA.

Why such haste?

DIEGO.

I know not; 'tis, perhaps, to gain admission,
Before the opening of his royal court,
To the King's private ear.

LEONORA (*alarmed*).

Most strange! some thought — some dark imagination
Has work'd him to this frenzy. — Tell me truly
Where his suspicions rest: for he has spoken
Words which thou would'st conceal. Spoke he in hints?
O tell me all! — He did not name Henriquez?

DIEGO.

No; by the noble house of Altavera,
Had he so done, that word had been his last.
Diego Furnez, aged as he is,
Had ne'er stood by with rapier by his side
To hear his master's honour rudely stain'd
With horrid imputation.

LEONORA.

Hush! speak low.
I meant not that: a thing too wild and frightful
Even for a hasty thought. — But does he know
A lurking stranger in the wood was found,
With scared and hasty fear, confessing guilt?
(MENCIA, *entering behind them, and listening to the last words, rushes forward in great alarm.*)

MENCIA.

Confessing guilt! O trust not his confession!
Believe not what he says! a frenzied dream!
For mercy's sake, my sister! O, for mercy!

LEONORA.

Mencia; what sudden madness seizes thee?
Mercy! for whom dost thou implore my mercy?

MENCIA.

Cruel thou art to ask! My first, my dearest:
O had no other ever look'd upon me,
This misery had not been.

LEONORA.

It is Antonio, then, for whom thou fearest?
Is he the stranger who escaped their search?

MENCIA.

Has he escaped? Then Heaven be praised he has.

LEONORA.

And thou didst know that he was lurking here?

MENCIA.

Catch not so eagerly my foolish words;
I think of him when any youth is mention'd.

DIEGO.

Lady, we only said, "a lurking stranger:"
It is yourself who marks him as a youth.

MENCIA.

I know not what I say;—I 'm most unhappy:
I will retire.

LEONORA.

Yes; thou hadst best retire;
And be appeased; Antonio is not found,
Though now we know on whom to fix the charge.

[*Exit* MENCIA.

(*Gladly to* DIEGO.) Now it is clear: it is a blest relief!
My good Diego, faithful, kind, old friend;
Even for the love which thou dost bear thy lord,
I call thee friend;—it is a blest relief. (*Taking his hand.*) It comes upon my heart, — a loaded heart,
That was with horror press'd, and brings these tears.

DIEGO.

God bless you, lady! Had I sooner known
The steady truth and kindness of your nature,
It had been well, for I have been perverse;
But henceforth I will curb all wayward thoughts,
And honour you as Don Henriquez's wife,
And worthy so to be.

LEONORA.

Cease, friend; all thy perverseness is forgotten.

Enter CARLOS.

In a good time thou comest, my noble friend.

CARLOS.

How's this? Strange joy has lighten'd up your eyes,
Unsuited to these hours of sable sadness.

LEONORA.

We have discover'd Jueu's murderer.

CARLOS.

I 'm glad to hear it: have you certain proof?

LEONORA.

Antonio, Mencia's lover; a wild youth,
Whose most presumptuous love, not long ago,
She had for Juen's nobler suit rejected,
Is the mysterious stranger, here, by night,
Found lurking in the wood, whose hasty flight
So well betrayed his guilt.

CARLOS.

I will, and instantly,
Despatch a swift pursuit, to trace his flight.
I 've seen the youth, and can describe his mien,
And slender, graceful form. O most unlike
One who could do a fell and bloody deed!

LEONORA.

A gentle form the fellest heart may shroud.

DIEGO.

I have known such to anger and to blood
More prone than sterner men.

CARLOS.

You seem offended with me, but I meant not
To question what you say. The time is precious:
I 'll send, without delay, on every tract,
Those who, I trust, will shortly seize upon him,
Guilty or innocent. I came to say
Those maids and holy men, as you appointed,
Are in the chapel met, and wait your presence,

To sing a nightly requiem for the dead,
Who, in the vault beneath, his first still night
Of the grave's rest doth pass.
But we'll postpone these rites till we have done
What must not be delayed.

LEONORA.

Ay; let us lose no time. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

The burying Vault of the Castle, with Monuments of the Dead; and near the Front of the Stage, a new covered Grave, seen by the Light of a Lamp placed on a neighbouring Tomb, the Stage being otherwise dark. A solemn Requiem for the Dead is heard at a distance, sounding from above. As it draws to a close, Henriquez appears at the further End of the Vault with a Light in his Hand, which he holds out from him, as if in search of some Object, and, seeing the Grave, casts the Light from his Hand, and rushes towards it.

HENRIQUEZ (*after gazing some time on the grave*).

And here thou liest with all thy noble parts,
Thy lofty, liberal soul, and goodly form,
And heart of love so thorough and so true!
This is thy rest, the meed and recompense

Thy generous worth hath from thy friend received!
Thy friend! O savage heart and cruel hand!
Fell, hateful, faithless, cowardly, and base!
Of every baleful thing, by heaven cast off,
Most cursed and miserable! —
O that ere this the dust had cover'd me
Like a crush'd snake, whose sting is yet unsheath'd!
Would in the bloody trench some sabred Moor
Had lanced this hold of life — this latent seat
Of cruelty! or rather that some dart,
Shot erring in our days of boyish sport,
Had pierced its core! Then by my early grave
He had shed over me a brother's tears;
He had sat there and wept and mourn'd for me,
When from all human thoughts but his alone
All thoughts of me had been extinguish'd. Juen!
My Juen, dear, dear friend! Juen de Torva!
Thy name is on my lips, as it was wont;
Thine image in my heart like stirring life;
Thy form upon my fancy like that form
Which bless'd my happy days. How he would look,
When with his outspread arms, as he return'd
After some absence! — Oh, it tortures me!
Let any image cross my mind but this!
No, no! not this! — Sable, sepulchral gloom!
Embody to my sight some terrible thing,
And I will brave it (*pausing and looking round*).

It doth! it doth! there's form and motion in it.
Advance, thou awful shade, whate'er thou art.
Those threat'ning gestures say thou art not Juen.
(*Rubbing his eyes.*)
It was but fancy. — No; the soul to Him
Who is the Soul of souls ascended hath,
Dust to its dust return'd. There is nought here
But silent rest that can be roused no more.
Beneath this mould, some few spans deep he lies.
So near me, though conceal'd! — Cursed as I am,
The cords of love ev'n through this earth have
power,
Like a strong charm, to draw me to him still.
(*Casting himself upon the grave.*)
Burst, guilty heart! rend every nerve of life,
And be resolved to senseless clay like this,
So to enlap his dearer clay for ever.

Enter CARLOS.

CARLOS (*looking round him*).
He is not here: nought see I through the gloom
Save the cold marble of those tombs which,
touch'd
With the wan light of yon sepulchral lamp,
Show their scroll'd ends to the uncertain sight,
Like shrouded bodies rising from the earth.
(*Going towards the grave.*)
Ha! something stirring on the new-raised earth!
It is Henriquez, wrapped in frantic sorrow.
(*Advancing to him.*)

Henriquez! hear'st thou not, noble Henriquez?
Nay, nay! rise from the earth: such frantic grief
Doth not become a man, and least of all
A man whose firm endurance of misfortune
Has hitherto so graced his noble worth.
Giv'st thou no answer but these heavy groans?
Thou canst not from the tomb recall the dead,
But rouse thy spirit to revenge his death.

HENRIQUEZ (*raising his head*).

What said'st thou?

CARLOS.

Quit this dismal bed of death,
And rouse thee to revenge thy murder'd friend.

HENRIQUEZ.

He is revenged; Heaven deals with guilt so monstrous:
The hand of man is nothing.

CARLOS.

Ay, but the hand of man shall add its mite.
(*Taking hold of his hand to raise him.*)
Up from the earth! I've found the murderer.

HENRIQUEZ (*springing up fiercely, and seizing him by the throat*).

Lay'st thou thy hand on me! What is or is not,
The God of heaven doth know, and he alone.
Darest thou with mortal breath bestow that name,
To the dishonour of a noble house,
On one of ancient princely lineage born?

CARLOS.

Let go thy frenzied grasp! Should brave Castilians
Thus grapple hand to hand, like angry boys?
Fit time and place shall justify my words,
If they indeed offend. — Our watch hath seiz'd
In hiding near the castle, most suspiciously,
A youth who hath to Meneia's love pretended,
Whose hand, we cannot doubt, hath done the deed;
But if he be of such high lineage born,
'T is more than he hath claim'd or we will credit.
Why drop your arms thus listless by your side?
Your eyes upon the ground? Will you not go
And see the prisoner, and hear him question'd?

HENRIQUEZ.

Ay, ay, this is required: I 'll go with thee;
I comprehend thee now.

CARLOS.

And yet thou movest not:
Does any sudden pain arrest thy steps?

HENRIQUEZ.

I am benumb'd and faint. — I 'll follow thee.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I. — *A Prison in the* Castle. ANTONIO *discovered disconsolate near the Front of the Stage. A high Door at the Bottom, with Stairs from it, leading down into the Prison.*

ANTONIO (*after shifting his posture several times, and sighing heavily, raises his eyes on hearing the door open gently*).

Another visit! do they vainly think,
By oft-repeated questions, to betray
A spent, enfeebled mind into confession?
It is a woman! it is Meneia's self!

Enter MENCIA, *descending the steps into the prison.*

And comest thou to visit me, to bless
My dismal prison-house with what were bliss
Ev'n in the lowest state of human misery?
Sweet Mencia! thou hast pity on me then.
Pity embedded lies where love hath been,
And love again doth from that pity spring,
As the dropp'd seed of some fair faded flower
Shoots its sheath'd bud from the cleft mould, first

peeping

In timid beauty, after April showers,
Then swelling, bursting, spreading its soft leaves
To the free air, more fragrant than before.
Yes, I am happy, gentle Mencia,
In spite of fate, if thou still carest for me.

MENCIA.

This is no time for words like these. I dread
Ev'n but to look upon thee, wretched man!
Take this disguise; it will insure escape.
There is a faithful friend who waits without,
And by the postern will direct thy flight.
Speak not, but throw these weeds about thee quickly;
The time is precious. (*Holding out garments which she bears over her arm.*)

ANTONIO.

Thou dread'st to look upon me, yet thou comest
To save my life — to save a murderer's life?

MENCIA.

I said not so in pity of thy state;
That bloody deed I know hath been the act
Of frenzied passion: in some foreign land
Live and repent: Heaven grant thee grace for this!
Let not man's hand, the brand of public shame,
Be on thy wretched head.

ANTONIO.

The hand of man, the brand of public shame,
Falls on the guilty head, by Heaven's appointment.
Thou riskest the salvation of thy soul
In aiding my escape; and for my life,
If of thy love bereft, I care not whether
The headsman's axe, or the slow hand of nature,
Shall rid me of it. Nay; the first were best.

MENCIA.

O no! upon my knees I do conjure thee.
(*Attempting to kneel, but prevented by him.*)
If I offend in this, Heaven will forgive me:
For, oh! if thou art lost, I am most wretched.
My misery or peace hangs on thy life;
Therefore, upon my bended knees, I beg.
(*Sinking from his hold to the ground.*)
'T is for myself I plead; fly instantly.

ANTONIO (*raising her*).

Ah dear, dear Mencia! And ear'st thou thus,
For a foul criminal, — a man of blood?
What, then, had been thy care — may I not say —
What, then, had been thy love, — had he been innocent?

MENCIA.

Alas, alas! hadst thou been innocent,
I had defied the world, with all its lures,
Again to sever us. Yet, as thou art ——

ANTONIO.

Misfortune thanks! Thou hast done more for me
Than the devoted care of many years.
Come, then, defy the world to sever us,
My generous Mencia; I am innocent.

MENCIA.

Ha! dost thou say it? Said'st thou innocent?
And say'st thou truly so? Hast thou not done it?
Is it no mockery of joy? O no!
That look, that smile! Yes, thou art innocent;
And, Heaven be praised, thou art.

ANTONIO.

I am, indeed, of Juen's death most innocent.
And though some circumstances do at present
Accuse me strongly, yet, I trust in Heaven,
That on my trial so it will appear.

MENCIA.

Nay; do not trust. O no! for Don Henriquez,
Made savage by despair, will have a victim,
And catch with eagerness at every proof,
How slight soe'er it be. Fly; quickly fly,
And I will follow thee and share thy fortune,
Or be it good or ill.

ANTONIO.

O blessed words! my dear, my gen'rous love!

My heart throbs at the thought, but cannot thank
thee.
And thou wilt follow me and share my fortune,
Or good or ill!
Ah! what of good can with a skulking outlaw
In his far wand'rings, or his secret haunts,
E'er be? O no! thou shalt not follow me.

MENCIA.

Good may be found for faithful, virtuous love,
In every spot; and for the wand'ring outlaw,
The very sweetest nooks o' the earth are his.
And be his passing home the goatherd's shed,
The woodman's branchy hut, or fisher's cove,
Whose pebbly threshold by the rippling tide
Is softly washed, he may contented live,
Ay, thankfully; fed like the fowls of heaven
With daily food sent by a Father's hand.

ANTONIO (*pressing both her hands to his heart, and then kissing them*).

Thanks, gentle, virtuous Mencia; but, alas!
Far different is the hapless outlaw's home
From what thy gentle fancy fashioneth.
With lawless men he must protection find.
Some murky cavern where the light of day
Hath never peer'd — where the pitch'd brand,
instead,
Sheds its red glare on the wild revelry
Of fierce banditti; or the pirate's bark,

Where stalks the sabred ruffian o'er the deck,
Watching his distant prey — some home-bound ship,
With all its stores and freight of precious souls,
Who ne'er shall greet their native shores again,
Must be his guilty home.

MENCIA.

Alas, alas!

ANTONIO.

Thou shalt not follow me, nor will I fly.
Sever'd from thee I will not live, sweet love,
Nor shalt thou be the mate of one disgraced,
And by the good disown'd. Here I'll remain,
And Heaven will work for me a fair deliv'rance.

MENCIA.

No, no! the present means for thy escape
Are sent to thee by Heaven. Be not so stub-born!
With or without me fly, even as thou wilt,
But do not linger here.
(*Looking to the door on hearing it move.*)
The door — O misery! we are surprised.
It is Henriquez; Heaven have pity on us!

Enter HENRIQUEZ, *while* MENCIA *shrinks behind* ANTONIO.

HENRIQUEZ (*advancing*).

Ha! not alone! Who is it? Wretched Mencia.

MENCIA (*rushing forward*).

Oh he is innocent! Have pity on us!
Turn not away from me, noble Henriquez.
(*Catching hold of him eagerly.*)
Heaven knows that he is innocent.

HENRIQUEZ.

Then, pray thee, be at peace; Heaven will protect him.

MENCIA.

Frown not; my wretchedness has made me bold.

HENRIQUEZ.

Away, away! I do not frown on thee.
Thou art the baleful cause of all this misery,
And yet I blame thee not. Away, and leave us.

ANTONIO.

Retire, dear Mencia; to thy chamber go;
It is not fit that thou should'st tarry here.
(*She retires unwillingly;* HENRIQUEZ *waving his hand to quicken her retreat, and waiting in gloomy silence till she is gone.*)

HENRIQUEZ.

Unhappy youth; thou hast to thine accusers
Thine innocence asserted with the earnest
And simple manliness of truth; yet truth,
Supported only by the word of him
Who is accused, will nought avail. How is it?
If there be any circumstance that may

Support or prove thy words, I do entreat thee
To tell me freely, and I will, with speed,
Use every means that may unfold it fully
To aid thy exculpation. (*Pauses.*) Is there none?
Bethink thee well: how slight soever it be,
It may to others lead of more import.

ANTONIO.

Thanks, generous man!

HENRIQUEZ.

Nay, nay! What is thine answer?

ANTONIO.

Alas! four days within that fatal wood
I have been hid; unseen of every one
But Mencia, and those hinds who did pursue me.
What circumstance can then avail me? No;
Heaven, in its justice, will unfold the truth;
In this I put my trust; proofs I have none.

HENRIQUEZ.

Take the deliv'rance, then, which Heaven has sent thee.
Fly, save thy life. (*Offering a purse.*) This will procure the means,
When thou hast clear'd the precincts of the forest.
All now is still, and favours thy escape.

ANTONIO.

My Lord, like one stunn'd with astonishment,

I thank your gen'rous care. But, Don Henriquez,
Though born of blood less noble than your own,
An outlaw's fate, from friends and country banish'd,
My honest fame blurr'd with imputed guilt,
Is not deliv'rance such as I accept,
Such as a true Castilian can accept.
You offer it in pity of my youth,
Therefore I thank you; but I 'll here abide
Such vindication as becomes mine honour.

HENRIQUEZ.

But should it fail thee, canst thou better brook
A malefactor's death, the public gaze,
The scaffold's open shame, the executioner,
All the degrading ministry of death;
Even that which so attainteth noble blood
That ages wear not out th' abhorr'd blot,
Disgracing all thy line? Ay, think of this:
It makes me shudder as I utter it,
Who have in battle faced all dreadful things.

ANTONIO.

In truth, it makes your strengthen'd features wear
A ghastly hue of horror. How is this,
That such strong sympathy should move you so?
You think me guiltless in the very front
Of proof that should condemn me: then, belike,
Some shrewd suspicion of the actual hand
That did th' accursed deed lurks in your mind.

HENRIQUEZ.

Ha! Cast an accusation on mine honour!

ANTONIO.

No, Don Henriquez; with a friendly wish
To do me service cam'st thou here, and sacred
Is all that thou in privacy hast done
Or utter'd. Yea; though thou shouldst now confess
That thou thyself wert Juen's murderer
(Start not, these are but words of argument);
Yea; ev'n supposing this, and that my rescue
From the uplifted axe depended on it,
Yet would I not betray thee.

HENRIQUEZ (*turning away haughtily*).

Thou art incorrigible: take thy will. (*Returning and laying down a key.*)
I leave thee this; thou wilt consider of it.
Say, is there aught that thou wouldst have me do?

ANTONIO.

Send me a priest. Though only such transgressions
As youthful folly prompts rest on my mind,
Yet would my soul, shrived by some holy man,
His ghostly counsel take, and be at peace.

HENRIQUEZ.

And be at peace! Ay, ghostly counsel may
To such as thou give peace. O could it also ——.

I know an aged friar, wise and prudent:
Thou shalt be satisfied. [*Exit.*

ANTONIO (*after following him with his eye as he ascends the stair at the bottom of the stage*).

But that it were so horrid and unnatural,
A thing at strife with all consistent thoughts,
I could believe —— No; 't is impossible.

(*Retires to the bottom of the stage, and the scene closes.*)

SCENE II.

An Antichamber.

Enter CARLOS *and* FRIAR *by opposite Sides.*

CARLOS.

Good morning, Father! you are early here.
Whom come you to confess?

FRIAR.

I have already been with the poor prisoner.

CARLOS.

And thou hast heard, no doubt, the horrid truth
Which he denies to every one besides?

FRIAR.

I 've heard all he confesses.

CARLOS.

Ay; what strange tales, what secret horrid things,
In thy long course of ghostly ministry,
Have in thine ear been pour'd! By this good hand,
But that I did prefer the jointed mail
And weapon's stroke to haircloth and the scourge,
The roar of battle to the chaunting choir,
I had become a friar, to learn, like thee,
All those dark mysteries of human nature
To which thy mind is conscious.

FRIAR.

Gentle son!
Pardon my words; thou talk'st in ignorance.
A tale of guilt, wrung from the sinner's soul,
Strikes not the fancy like a winter's tale
Of moonlight witchery, or murder done
I' th' secret chamber. No; a counter sympathy
Doth quell the fancy then. Thou speak'st in ignorance.

CARLOS.

True, Father, this may be. With your permission
I will attend you to the gate.

FRIAR.

Not now.
I'm summon'd: Don Henriquez waits for me.

CARLOS.

At the confessional?

FRIAR.

So I believe; I meet him in the chapel.

CARLOS.

I am right glad of this. We marvell'd much
He did not sooner think of ghostly comfort.

FRIAR.

I have been summon'd by him once before;
But when I came, capricious in his sorrow,
He would not see me.

CARLOS.

Speak comfort to him, and enjoin some penance
For the indulgence of such frantic grief,
So wayward, so excessive. May God bless thee!

[*Exit* FRIAR.

Here comes our keen and fiery secretary.

Enter BALTHAZER.

Return'd so soon! And hath the royal ear
Inclin'd to thy petition?

BALTHAZER.

Ay; every cot and castle in th' realm
At my command must open gate and hold,
Chamber and bower; even the sepulchral vault,
Whose sable scutcheon'd door hath not for years
Upon its hinges jarr'd, must be unlock'd,

And show its secrets to the searching light.
But as I learn you have secured the murderer,
I am content; here ends my brief commission.
I pray you lead me to the prison-house:
I burn to see the wretch.

CARLOS.

Come, follow me.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

A Chapel. HENRIQUEZ *discovered on his Knees by the Confessional, the* FRIAR *bending over him, and muttering Words in a low Voice.*

FRIAR (*aloud*).

Rise, son, in humble but assured faith
Repentance, and these penances endured,
Will gain from heavenly grace full absolution
Of this most guilty deed — of all thy sins.
Rise, and be comforted. (*Raising him, and leading him forward.*) Be comforted!
The worst of sinners league not with despair,
But by their own untoward disbelief;
The greatest sin of all. Thou smit'st thy breast,
And shak'st thy drooping head: thou must not doubt.

All sin is finite, mercy infinite;
Why shouldst thou doubt that God will pardon thee?

HENRIQUEZ.

I doubt it not. God's mercy pardons all
Who truly do repent; and O how truly,
How deeply, how intensely I repent!
But in my breast there is a goading sense,
An inward agony, a power repelling
In dire abhorrence every better thought.
The bliss of heaven for me! incongruous hope!
My soul, my fancy, yea my very will
Is link'd to misery; and happiness
Comes to my thoughts like gleams of painful day
To owls and bats, and things obscene and hateful,
Fitted by nature for their dismal dens.
O that I were like such! in the reft rock
Of some dank mine coil'd up, dull and unconscious
Of the loud hammer's sound, whose coming stroke
Should crush me from existence!

FRIAR.

Alas, alas, my son! have better thoughts.

HENRIQUEZ.

Let them arise in better hearts, for mine
A nest of stinged scorpions hath become,
And only fit for such. Each recollection,
Each waking fancy, like a barbed fang,
Pierces its core with thrilling agony,

Which yields to a succeeding, sharper sting,
And that again to others keener still.
So kind, so dear, such manly, true affection!
Friendship so pure! such noble confidence!
Love that surmounted all things! When, in passion,
I did an outrage on his fiery blood,
What would have hurl'd on any other head
The instant stroke of death — he only waited ——

FRIAR.

Give o'er, my son; thou art too vehement.

HENRIQUEZ.

He waited till my senseless rage was spent,
Then smiled — O such an upbraiding smile!
Open'd his arms, and clasp'd me to his heart.
That smile, those open'd arms, I see them now, —
I see them constantly; where'er I turn,
They front me like a vision of delight
Changed to a gorgon terror.
But no restraining love did plead for him:
As though he had some faithless rav'ller been,
All base suggestions were received against him,
Were cherish'd, brooded on, by dint of thought
Work'd to a semblance of consistent truth,
Which, but for this —— Base, black ingratitude!
Passing all crimes, detested, monstrous!
(*Beating his forehead violently as he strides rapidly away.*)
This base, believing heart, this ruffian's hand!

FRIAR.

My son, this is wild ecstasy of passion,
Which leads not to that humble true repentance
Our holy church enjoins.

HENRIQUEZ (*returning*).

Or had I met him as an open foe,
With accusation of defiance fairly
Preceding vengeance; but unheard, i' th' dark!
Tremble, ye venerable roofs, ye towers
Of my brave fathers, men without reproach!
Fall on my cursed head, and grind to dust
What bears the honour'd semblance of their son,
Although unmeet to bear the human form.

FRIAR.

Nay, nay! I pray forbear; this violent grief
For thy soul's weal is most unprofitable.
Betake thyself betimes to prayer and penance.
The sufferings of the body will relieve
The suff'rings of the mind.

HENRIQUEZ.

The sufferings of the body! They are powerless.
(*Shewing his hand.*)
See here, short while, in agony of thought,
Pacing the armory where hangs the mail
Which Juen wore, when in Tolosa's field
We fought the turban'd Moslems side by side;
It was his gift, which I did beg of him,

In the proud joy I felt at his high deeds.
How swell'd my heart! A braver knight in arms
Fought not that day. Bold heart and potent hand,
And lofty mien and eyes that flash'd with valour.
Where run my words? I have forgot their drift.

FRIAR.

Something which happened in the armory.

HENRIQUEZ.

Ay, in the armory, as I have said,
I struck my hand, in vehemence of action,
On a spik'd shield, nor knew till afterwards,
When the wild fit was past, and oozing blood
Loaded my clammy touch, that in my flesh
The broken iron was sheath'd.
No; what can corporeal pain or penance do?
That which inflicts the mental wound, which rends
The hold of pride, wrenching the bent of nature;
'T is that alone hath power. Yet from the effort
Nature starts back; my mind, stunn'd at the thought,
Loses the use of thought.

FRIAR.

I do not understand you; good, my Lord.

HENRIQUEZ.

It matters not; you will, perhaps, hereafter.

FRIAR.

You are at present feeble and exhausted,
And lack repose; retire a while, my son.
Hark! on the walls without, do you not hear
The warder's call to note the rising morn?

HENRIQUEZ.

The morn! And what have I to do with morn?
The redd'ning sky, the smoking camp, the stir
Of tented sleepers rousing to the call,
The snorting steed, in harness newly dight,
Did please my fancy once. Ay; and the sweetness
Of my still native woods, when, through the mist,
They showed at early dawn their stately oaks,
Whose dark'ning forms did gradually appear
Like slow approaching friends, known doubtfully.
These pleased me once in better days; but now
My very soul within me is abhorrent
Of every pleasant thing; and that which cheers
The stirring soldier or the waking hind,
That which the traveller blesses, and the child
Greets with a shout of joy, as from the door
Of his pent cot he issues to the air,
Does but increase my misery. ——
I loathe the light of heaven: let the night,
The hideous unblessed night, close o'er me now,
And close for ever!

FRIAR.

Cease, cease! and cherish not such dark despair.
Retire to your apartment, and in prayer
Beseech Almighty Goodness to have pity
On a perturbed soul.

HENRIQUEZ.

Pray thou for me; I will pray when I can.

FRIAR.

Hark! steps along the corridor; they come
To say an early mass for the repose
Of the interr'd: they must not find you here.

HENRIQUEZ.

And to the dead they give repose! What mass,
What prayers, what chaunted hymns can to the living
Give respite from this agony of soul?
Alas, alas! there is no cure for this. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

A small Court before the Door of the Prison, which is open. BLAS *and other Domestics discovered waiting near it.*

FIRST DOMESTIC (*to* BLAS).

Goes Don Henriquez with the prisoner?

BLAS.

He does; his noble courser at the gate,

Black Sultan, saddled stands, champing the bit,
And casting fiom his mouth the flaky foam.
Stand back; they 're coming now.

Enter ANTONIO, CARLOS, FRIAR, BALTHAZER, *and* DIEGO, *from the Prison.*

FRIAR (*to* ANTONIO).

Be not cast down, my son, but trust in Heaven.

ANTONIO.

And so I do; that is my stay, good father;
And yet, methinks, these fetters might be spared.
By Don Henriquez' orders am I thus
Like a vile felon chain'd?

CARLOS.

'T is by his orders; 't is a stated form.
I fear they gall you; are they clench'd too tightly?

BALTHAZER.

Who doth a felon's deeds must e'en submit
To bear a felon's manacles.

ANTONIO (*to* BALTHAZER).

Yes; man of pens, and records, and old lore,
Such is thy narrow and ungen'rous nature.
(*Turning to* CARLOS.)
This rough but noble soldier, bred in camps
And midst the broil of battle, is more gentle.
Henriquez seem'd inclined to pity me,
To think me innocent; then, wherefore these

CARLOS.

Come, we lose time; we must begin our journey
To reach the town by close of day, Henriquez
Being intent to gain a royal audience
Before the sitting of to-morrow's court.
[*Exeunt all but* DIEGO, *to whom enters*
LEONORA, *with something in her hand.*

LEONORA.

My good Diego, hie thee to the gate;
And ere thy master mount, give him this scarf,
These gloves too, and his signet, which, in haste,
He left behind. (*Giving them to him.*)
He has forbidden me to follow him,
And he must be obeyed.

DIEGO.

He shall receive them.

LEONORA.

How look'd Antonio when they led him forth?
Greatly dejected?

DIEGO.

No; he bears it stoutly.

LEONORA.

Asserting still that he is innocent?

DIEGO.

Ay, ay; but every villain does the same.
Does not my Lord believe that he is guilty?

LEONORA.

I cannot doubt it. When he left the chapel
A long time in his chamber he remain'd;
When he came forth again, I watch'd his eye,
And it was calm, though gloomy. Then, forthwith,
He gave his orders that a band of spearmen
Should be in readiness to guard the prisoner
Bound to Zamora; and were he in doubt,
He were not now so calm, being before
So greatly agitated. Hie thee quickly.

[*Exeunt severally.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

The Court at Zamora, a Grand Hall of Audience. NOBLES, PRELATES, OFFICERS, *&c. discovered in waiting; a Flourish of Trumpets; enter the* KING *and his Train, who walks slowly, as he receives their Homage, to a Chair of State near the front of the Stage.*

FIRST NOBLEMAN (*presenting a petition*).

May't please your highness, look on this petition,
Humbly presented to your royal notice
By one of noble blood.

KING.

And noble conduct, too, I hope, Don Pedro.
What is its plea?
(*After reading the paper slightly.*)
That he beneath a lady's window hath
A most audacious suitor slain, who there
Did charm her ear with love-sick ditties. — Slew
him!
A harsh device to win the lady's favour;
Had she not ears to be again enthrall'd?
Another song had been a fitter weapon
Of opposition than a sword, methinks. (*Giving
the paper to a secretary.*)
Note down that I will look on this again.

SECOND NOBLEMAN (*giving a paper*).

Deign, royal Sir, to look upon this paper.

KING.

Freely, Don Blas; from such a noble hand
It needs must be an honourable suit. (*Reading
the paper.*)
Don Julian, of the noble house of Guzman,
Hath, by the cadet of a meaner house,
Been elbow'd from his place, who most nefa-
riously
Refused to yield to him the dexter side. (*Read-
ing on more slightly.*)
Honour repair'd — that he be forced — a blow!
(*Shaking his head.*)

We are too learned in this ancient kingdom.
Nay, reverend Prelate, no offence to you;
The Clergy stand acquitted of this charge.

PRELATE.

I know not how to comprehend your Highness.

KING.

We should be spared full many a deadly broil,
Did we not know our right hand from our left.
We are in this, good sooth! too nicely learn'd,
Which doth but scantily, in my opinion,
Supply the want of every other lore.

SECOND NOBLEMAN (*aside to first*).

Never may I again i' th' royal presence
Wear hat and plume, if this is not derision.

FIRST NOBLEMAN (*aside*).

'T is Don Henriquez we may thank for this.
He spoke not to us thus when the arm'd Moor
Was nearer to his doors.

KING (*to* PRELATE).

And now, my Lord, let me receive your paper.

PRELATE.

Most humbly to your Highness I present it,
From pious men, whose prayers are offer'd up
For your prosperity. (*Gives the paper.*)

KING (*reading it slightly*).

"That the free hinds of Tormes and their wives
Refuse their wonted offerings to the convent,

And therefore humbly—the adjoining lands—
A royal compensation."—So it runs.
And it must cost me many a fruitful field,
Because those villagers love fatted pullets,
As well as sober, self-denying monks!
This also at our leisure we'll consider.

(*Gives the paper to the* Secretary, *and sitting down, receives other petitions, when a confused noise is heard.*)

What noise is that without?

Enter an Officer.

OFFICER.

May't please you, Don Henriquez waits without.

KING.

Henriquez, my brave general? How is this?

OFFICER.

He comes attended by a goodly train,
Guarding a prisoner, and humbly begs
To be admitted to the royal presence,
Before your court shall sit.

KING.

Most willingly: say, I am ready now
To give him audience. [*Exit Officer.*
I marvel much
How it should be. In this unwonted form
To bring his prisoner!—But here he comes.

Enter HENRIQUEZ, *followed by* CARLOS *and* ANTONIO, *going up to the* KING, *who rises to meet him.*

KING.

Thou too, my valiant friend, a suitor here?

HENRIQUEZ.

A humble supplicant.

KING.

Who needs not sue.
Say freely what thou would'st, and it is granted.

HENRIQUEZ.

But what I beg, an earnest boon, must be
Confirm'd to me with all solemnity,
Before I utter it.

KING.

A strange request!
But that thy services have been to me
Beyond all recompense, and that I know
Thy country's welfare and thy sovereign's honour
Are dear to thee, as thou full well hast proved,
I should with some precaution give my word.
But be it so; I say thy suit is granted.

HENRIQUEZ.

Nay, swear it on this sword.

KING.

Where doth this tend? Doubt'st thou my royal word?

HENRIQUEZ.

When honour'd lately by your princely presence,
You gave to me this ring with words of favour;
And said if I should e'er, by fortune press'd,
Return the same to you, whatever grace
I then might ask, should be conceded to me.
(*Giving the ring.*)
Receive your royal token: my request
Is that you swear upon my sword to grant
This boon which I shall beg. (*Holds out his sword to the* KING, *who lays his hand on it.*)

KING.

This sword, this honour'd blade, I know it well,
Which thou in battle from the princely Moor
So valiantly did'st win: why should I shrink
From any oath that shall be sworn on this?
I swear, by the firm honour of a soldier,
To grant thy boon, whatever it may be.
Declare it then, Henriquez. (*A pause.*)
Thou art pale
And silent too: I wait upon thy words.

HENRIQUEZ.

My breath forsook me. 'Tis a passing weakness:
I have power now. — There is a criminal,
Whose guilt before your Highness in due form
Shall shortly be attested; and my boon
Is, that your Highness will not pardon him,
However strongly you may be inclined

To royal clemency, — however strongly
Entreated so to do.

KING.

This much amazes me. Ever till now,
Thou 'st been inclined to mercy, not to blood.

HENRIQUEZ.

Yea; but this criminal, with selfish cruelty,
With black ingratitude, with base disloyalty
To all that sacred is in virtuous ties,
Knitting man's heart to man —— What shall I
say?
I have no room to breathe. (*Tearing open his doublet with violence.*)
He had a friend,
Ingenuous, faithful, generous, and noble:
Ev'n but to look on him had been full warrant
Against th' accusing tongue of man or angel
To all the world beside, — and yet he slew him.
A friend whose fost'ring love had been the stay,
The guide, the solace of his wayward youth, —
Love steady, tried, unwearied, — yet he slew him.
A friend, who in his best devoted thoughts,
His happiness on earth, his bliss in heaven,
Intwined his image, and could nought devise
Of sep'rate good, — and yet he basely slew him;
Rush'd on him like a ruffian in the dark,
And thrust him forth from life, from light, from
nature,
Unwitting, unprepared for th' awful change

Death brings to all. This act so foul, so damned,
This he hath done: therefore upon his head
Let fall the law's unmitigated justice.

KING.

And wherefore doubt'st thou that from such a man
I will withhold all grace? Were he my brother
I would not pardon him. Produce your criminal.

(*Those who have* ANTONIO *in custody lead him forward.*)

HENRIQUEZ (*motioning with his hand to forbid them*).

Undo his shackles; he is innocent.

KING.

What meaneth this? Produce your criminal.

HENRIQUEZ (*kneeling*).

My royal Master, he is at your feet.

(*A cry of astonishment is heard through the hall; the* KING, *staggering back from the spot, is supported by an Attendant, while* CARLOS *and* ANTONIO, *now free from his fetters, run to* HENRIQUEZ, *who continues kneeling, and bend over him in deep concern.*)

KING (*recovering*).

A fearful shock! Mine ears are ringing still.
Rise, Don Henriquez d'Altavero, rise. (*Turning away his head.*)

Raise him: O do not let me see him thus!
(*Motions the crowd to withdraw, who go off, leaving the* KING, HENRIQUEZ, CARLOS, *and* ANTONIO *only on the stage.*)

KING (*fiercely*).

Carlos, on thee my anger rests, who thus
Stood'st by and suffer'd me to be deceived.

CARLOS.

Condemn me not, my Liege; I was myself;
Convinced this youth had done the deed, de-
ceived.
This on a soldier's honour I aver.

KING.

Alas, Henriquez! thou hast practised on me
With cruel guile. I would right gladly forfeit
The fairest town thy sword e'er won for me,
And be again at liberty to pardon
Whatever thou hast done. A deed, most surely,
By thy high nature all too rudely charged.
Thou in the frenzy of some headlong passion
Hast acted as a madman, who still wreaks
His direst wrath on those he loves the most.

HENRIQUEZ.

No, no! it was an act of brooding thought,
Of slow intent, of dark consideration.
Our early love, with all his fair endowments
And noble qualities, before my mind

Did clearly pass; pass and return again,
And strongly plead for him, and were rejected.

KING.

Go to! thou hast a wild imagination,
Which has o'erreach'd thy judgment.—Set me free.
The public weal requires thy service: oaths
Adverse to this do not, and should not, bind.

HENRIQUEZ.

There are within your kingdom many chiefs
Who may do better service to the state,
Though not with better will than I have done;
(*Laying his sword at the* KING'*s feet.*)
Here do I part with ensigns, arms, and war;
Nor soldier's brand, nor baton of command,
This hand accursed shall ever grasp again.
Your Highness by the honour of a prince
Stands bound to me in this, and you are bound.

KING.

Ay, if it needs must be, determined spirit.
Yet, think again; be it a while deferr'd,
This dismal trial, for a month—a year.

HENRIQUEZ.

Not for a day.

KING.

Thou art too boldly stubborn.
By what authority dost thou oppose it,
If 't is my pleasure it should be deferr'd?

HENRIQUEZ.

The law's authority emboldens me.
I am Don Juen's heir, and do by right
Demand the speedy trial of his murderer.
Nor think the law's delay would aught avail.
How many secret ways there may be found
To rid a wretch of life, who loathes to live.
My soul demands this sacrifice — pants for it,
As that which can alone restore to it
The grace of Heaven, and the respect of men.

CARLOS.

Noble Henriquez, thy too stubborn virtue ——

HENRIQUEZ.

Nay, Carlos, hold thy peace. Be not my foe:
He were my greatest enemy who should
Impede this consummation. When 't is past,
Then let the favour of my princely master,
Of loving camp-mates, and all virtuous men,
Return to me again. A noble treasure
That will redeem my memory from shame.

KING (*embracing him*).

Living or dead, brave man, thou must be honour'd,
I will no more contend with thy desires.
Some preparation for this solemn ceremony
Thou wilt require; Don Carlos will conduct
thee
Where thou may'st rest and find all needful aid.
[*Exit.*

HENRIQUEZ.

Come, friends, till I am summon'd to my trial :
The time is short, and we must husband it. (*Going and stopping again.*)
I shun not now thy friendly aid, good Carlos ;
My heart is lighten'd of its heavy load,
And I can take a good man by the hand,
And feel we are akin.

CARLOS.

To all that is most great and admirable
Thou art akin. I have no words to speak
The thoughts I have of thee, thou noble man!

HENRIQUEZ (*to* ANTONIO).

And thou, too, gentle youth ; give me thy hand.
Thy noble confidence did point to me
The true and honour'd path. For, hadst thou fled,
I might have shrunk aside, and been on earth
A sullen secret thing of wretchedness,
Cursing the light of heaven. Gentle youth,
I've felt the kindly pressure of thy hand,
And all thy gen'rous sympathy : forgive me,
That I did hold thy mind so long in doubt.

ANTONIO.

O nothing did I doubt that thou did'st know
My innocence, and would protect it ; yet,
This noble, terrible act I ne'er divined.
Would I had fled my prison at thy bidding,

And lived a vagabond upon the earth,
Ere this had been! What was my name or worth?
But thou ——

HENRIQUEZ.

Cease, cease! repent it not, sweet youth;
For all the friends on earth would not have done
me
Such true and worthy service. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A royal Apartment. Enter LEONORA *and* FRIAR.

FRIAR.

The king will from his council come ere long;
Then wait, I pray, and take a little respite
From this impatient fever of your mind.

LEONORA.

Take respite! this impatience! O good father!
Thou canst not know this agony, and speak'st
Like one secured from human misery.
Heaven grant me patience! I have need of it;
But it must come from heaven.

FRIAR.

See; now his Highness comes.

Enter KING *attended; and* LEONORA, *running to him, casts herself at his feet, embracing his knees.*

KING.

The Lady Leonora! rise, dear Lady.

LEONORA.

No; to your knees I 'll cling, nor quit my hold,
Till from your royal pity I obtain
The mercy I implore. — My Lord Henriquez —
Your valiant general — my dear, dear husband —
Say that he shall not die. This execution!
This malefactor's end! O save him! save him!

KING (*raising her*).

As far as I have power, your suit is granted.

LEONORA.

Then he is saved — he lives? Is it not so?

KING.

Alas! I would it were. Your Lord refuses
All royal mercy. I have sworn to him
Never to pardon Jueu's murderer.
If thou canst move his stubborn spirit, kneel,
And at his feet implore him to release me
From this most fatal oath.

LEONORA.

Move him! Alas, alas! this will not be;
I know him well: in what he deems the right,
He is inflexible. But solemn oaths,

Ev'n oaths upon the holy reliques sworn,
The holy church annuls: it will release you.
Then say not you are bound.

KING.

From oaths upon the holy reliques sworn
The church can loose, as thou, no doubt, hast learnt
From sacred books and this good Father's lore;
But, solemnly, upon Henriquez's sword
I've pledged a prince's word — a soldier's honour,
From which nought can release me, but the will
And free consent of him to whom 't is pledged.
Hie, therefore, to thy Lord: kneel at his feet,
And may Heaven give thee power to touch his heart.

LEONORA.

Is all my hope in this! Unhappy woman!
By Heaven and man abandon'd!—Dismal doom!
The woe of desperation! (*Franticly wringing her hands, and then turning in anger to the* KING.)
There's mockery in this. Thou art a king,
And canst command what I would beg in vain;
Command him, as his royal Liege and Master,
That he release thee from this fatal pledge.
A king, and not obey'd! deceitful shadow!
Doth not thy power o'er all things reign supreme?

KING.

Not o'er men's wills. —
This is a power Heaven to itself retains,
And ne'er did delegate to mortal being.

LEONORA (*pacing about as before*).

Despair, despair! What see I but despair,
Shame, infamy, a malefactor's end?

KING.

Wring not thy hands so wildly, wretched lady.
His life, indeed, we must despair to save;
But infamy is from his name removed,
As heaven from hell. Yea, his proud house shall boast
Of this its noble malefactor, more
Than all its trophied chiefs.
When at the bar he stood arraign'd, and pled,
Proving his secret guilt, against himself,
Ne'er rose his form so nobly on the mind,
Even in his days of triumph. —
But when the fatal sentence was pronounced,
He raised his head, and sent a look to Heaven
Of pleased appeal and solemn thankfulness;
A look of pious hope, so dignified,
He seem'd like some fall'u seraph that again
Had won his way to bliss. — A general murmur
Of admiration from deep silence rose.
Old men did clasp their hands, and young men wept;

And those who on his victories bestow'd
A cold and niggard praise, now, with full hearts,
Gave boundless tribute to his lofty virtue.

LEONORA.

And he was honour'd thus! high Heaven be praised! (*Bursting into tears.*)
It makes me weep that they did weep for him.
Heaven's will be done!
I've been too stern and violent in my grief:
God grant me more submission to his will,
And I will learn to bear it. — My Henriquez!
The brave with tears of admiration grace
Thy hapless end, and rescue thee from shame.

KING.

Rescue! far more than rescue: his proud house
The very implements of execution
Will henceforth in their banners proudly weave.

LEONORA.

I needs must weep; but let my tears have vent,
And I shall be resign'd.

Enter CARLOS *and* ANTONIO.

KING (*to them*).

How is Henriquez? came ye from his tower?

CARLOS.

Most admirably well; his soul is up:
I left him shaking hands most cordially

With his worst enemy, and he intends,
Ere close the night's first watch, to spend an hour
In social converse with some early friends,
Who shared his first campaigns, and have desired
To see his face once more. —
His soul seems open'd now, and raised above
That close reserve, which was his greatest blemish.

KING.

Some noble minds do from misfortune rise,
Yea, ev'n from guilt, more noble than before;
As by the hardest blow the smitten ball
Bounds highest from the earth. ——
Retire, fair Leonora: this good man (*pointing to* FRIAR)
Will heavenly comfort to thy soul impart,
And strengthen it to bear the coming trial.

(FRIAR *supports her on one side, while* ANTONIO *offers his aid also, as she goes off.*)

LEONORA (*to* ANTONIO).

Not thou; the hidden cause of all this woe.

FRIAR.

Nay, daughter, be not angry with this youth.
The will of Heaven must be; the means appointed
Must also be: he is most innocent,
Since ignorant of ill.

LEONORA.

My grief is wayward still; but I'll subdue it.

(Takes hold of ANTONIO, *and exit with him and* FRIAR, *while* KING, CARLOS, *and attendants go out by another door.)*

SCENE III.

Before the Gate of the Prison; the Stage dark, excepting a Lamp hung over the Gate: Centinels discovered on watch.

Enter BALTHAZER *with a dark lantern.*

FIRST CENTINEL.

Stand! Who art thou?

BALTHAZER.

A friend, connected with the noble prisoner.

CENTINEL.

Stand there aloof; thou may'st not enter yet.

Enter FRIAR *by the opposite side.*

FIRST CENTINEL.

Ho there!

FRIAR.

A friend.

SECOND CENTINEL.

A friend! What seek'st thou here?

FRIAR.

I am a priest, confessor to Henriquez.

FIRST CENTINEL.

Thou shalt have entrance presently.

FRIAR.

I thank thee. (*Going up close to* BALTHAZER.)
Thou art Balthazer?

BALTHAZER.

And thy servant, father.

FRIAR.

Thou'rt up by times; it is still pitchy night.

BALTHAZER.

Nay; look thou eastward; yon dull line of light,
Bounding the sable darkness of the earth
From the sky's fainter gloom: it is the dawn.

FRIAR.

Ha! runs the time so fast! What noise is that?

BALTHAZER.

The hum of distant voices, and the sound
Of preparation for the awful morn.
As I now pass'd along, in every street
I heard the eager citizens astir,
While light from many a lattice gleam'd. And
onward,
As I approach'd th' appointed place, I saw
Round the fenced spot, already gather'd, groups
Of men and women, young and old, whose faces
Did seem, from darkness, as from nothing sprung,

Touch'd with the torches' glaring light, which downward
Stream'd from the lofty scaffold, whereon forms
Of busy artists at their fatal work,
And ghastly headsmen moving to and fro,
Appear'd like blacken'd fiends. Dost thou not hear
The stroke of hammers, and that sounding plank?
There comes a strange and thrilling coldness o'er me. (*A pause, and noise without.*)
I little thought to feel such ruth for him,
The man who slew my good and noble master.

FRIAR.

Why should'st thou not? The feeling does thee honour;
And he doth for that rash and rueful deed
Make dear and great amends. The gate is open'd. [*Exeunt into the Prison.*

SCENE IV.

A Passage Way in the Prison. Enter FRIAR *and* GAOLER, *speaking as they enter.*

GAOLER.

But it is past the hour; he must be waked.

FRIAR.

Waked! dost thou think he sleeps?

GAOLER.

Yes, father; he hath slept, I guess, since midnight.

FRIAR.

How know'st thou this?

GAOLER.

I've listen'd at his door
From time to time, and nought have heard within
But a deep silence, once or twice broke faintly
By slow-heaved breathings, as of heavy sleep.

FRIAR.

So sound asleep, and such a morn to wake to!

GAOLER.

Nay, they who sleep before their day of doom
Sleep often thus,—a deathlike, dreamless sleep.
(*Speaking as he goes off.*)
I well remember one, who, on the morn——

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.

The Prison Chamber. HENRIQUEZ *discovered asleep on a Couch, near the Front of the Stage.*

Enter FRIAR *and* GAOLER.

FRIAR.

Still fast asleep: it grieves my soul to wake him.
No trace of trouble on his face! He lies

Like a tired hunter after toilsome chace.
Call to him, friend, I cannot.

GAOLER.

Ho! Don Henriquez! ho, my Lord! awake!
Awake, my Lord! — He is in heavy sleep,
Like the dull rest of death, which hath no ear.

FRIAR.

Oh that it were indeed the rest of death!
It is a woful service to awake him.
How goes the time? Might he still sleep awhile?

GAOLER.

'Tis past the hour at which he charged me strictly
To call him up.

FRIAR.

Then he must be obey'd.

GAOLER (*touching him gently*).

Wake! Don Henriquez, wake! it is the hour.
He moves him now: the sound is in his ears;
The light annoys his eyes. Awake, my Lord.
(*Touching him again.*)

HENRIQUEZ (*raising his head*).

What is it?

GAOLER.

'Tis the hour; the morning breaks.

HENRIQUEZ (*starting from his couch*).

Bring me my armour: have ye roused the camp?

Bid every soldier dight him for the field:
I've slept too long.

GAOLER.

It is the very hour
At which you did give orders to be waked.

HENRIQUEZ.

Ha! Yes, I understand thee: it is morn,—
The fated morn that brings to me no noon.
Sleep from the tablet of my brain had razed
All present things, and in my waking fancy
Had led me back to what I was so lately.
I thank you. Dawns the light?

FRIAR *and* GAOLER (*both at once*).

The morning breaks.

HENRIQUEZ.

Your voices sound like midnight, not like morn.
Welcome, good Father; thou art come, in truth,
To wake me for the fight, and brace my strength,
Not with corporeal arms.

FRIAR.

No, good my Lord;
A nobler armour, for a nobler warfare:
And the Almighty King, whose valiant soldier
Thou wilt this day approve thyself to be,
Will gird thee for the field. Receive from him
His high commission, worthy of a man.

HENRIQUEZ (*looking upward, and then kneeling with his arms on his breast, and his head bowed to the ground*).

I do receive it, Father, most devoutly. (*Rising with solemnity.*)
Let me be forward in my work, good Father.
I would retire, and give my thoughts to heaven
Ere earthly things shall press to mingle with them.
Come, then, and join thy fervent prayers with mine,
And teach my dying voice to sue for mercy.
[*Exit with* FRIAR.

GAOLER (*looking after* HENRIQUEZ).

The right true metal this; 't will bear the furnace.
Ah! who would once have thought that from my custody
He should pass forth to such a death? Heaven doomed it. (*Noise and bustle without.*)
What noise is that without? — Ho! who would enter?

VOICE (*without*).

Open; it is the King. (GAOLER *opens the door, and enter the* KING, CARLOS, ANTONIO, *and* BALTHAZER.)

KING (*to* GAOLER).

Where is thy noble charge?

GAOLER.

With his confessor, in the private chapel.

KING.

How is he, Gaoler? Has he through the night
Had any rest?

GAOLER.

Yes, may it please your Highness,
He hath slept soundly.

KING.

Sound sleep in such a state! Yet, wherefore marvel:
He has been used to look death i' the face.

CARLOS.

Ay, in the field; but many brave him there
Who on a scaffold feel their manhood quail.

KING.

Is it so, Gaoler? Thou hast good experience.

GAOLER.

Some years ago, two brothers suffered here,
For an offence of state; the one a soldier,
Stout, brave, and bold in war; the other bred
To a quiet life at home; but on the scaffold
The man of peace did bear the loftier brow,
And beat the hardy vet'ran shamefully.

KING.

Strange creatures are we all! and who is known
Until his trial comes? — I think, good Carlos,
Thou told'st me he conversed with cheerfulness
Till a late hour last night.

CARLOS.

Yes, good my Liege.

Having first settled all his worldly cares,
Like one, who, from a heavy load released,
Unclasps his vest to recreate himself;
He with two ancient campmates and your liege-
man
Conversed with kindlier, more enliven'd freedom
Than he was wont: spoke of their old adventures,
Praised many a valiant heart, fall'n in the field,
And of the fate of others did inquire
With kindly interest, as though his soul
Upon the very parting verge of nature
Felt nature's sympathies more warmly. Truly
His spirit seem'd already to have doff'd
Its earthly coat, and gain'd a purer being.

KING.

Ay; he is passing to a higher state:
So teach our holy men, and I believe them.
Doth aught approaching to a final end
Of dark extinction rise to meet it thus?
It doth not:—no, it cannot.
But first he settled all his worldly cares.
And what are his bequests?

CARLOS.

Balthazer, thou canst tell.

BALTHAZER.

He first of all provides a noble monument
To Juen's mem'ry near his native town,
Desiring he himself may be interr'd
In the same vault with him, and by his side.

For many friends, and all his ancient servants,
Forgetting none, he hath made kind provision.
His Lady's dowry is enlarg'd, and Mencia
Receives a noble portion to bestow
Upon her early lover, this good youth,
Whom he hath named with words of special love.

KING (*to* ANTONIO, *who turns aside to weep*).

Weep freely, gentle youth; whom he hath loved
Shall ever in his Prince's favour hold
An honourable place. — Pray thee, proceed.

BALTHAZER.

He hath besides, for good and pious ends,
A large benevolence ——

CARLOS.

Hush! he approaches.

Re-enter HENRIQUEZ *and* FRIAR.

KING (*advancing to meet him*).

My noble friend, I felt a strong desire
Once more — a short intrusion.

HENRIQUEZ.

Say not so.
Your Grace is come to wish me a good morrow,
And cheer me on this outset of my way.

KING.

Alas! a dismal cheer, a woful morrow!

HENRIQUEZ.

Nay, three successive days have dawu'd upon
me
Through such a gloom of hopeless misery,
That this, comparatively, seems indeed
A morn of cheer. Then so consider it.
And now, in parting, I would beg of you
To pardon whatsoe'er, in my long service,
I've done, in ignorance or stubborn will,
To prejudice the service of the state,
Or to offend your Grace. Once at Cuenca
I rashly hazarded some brave men's lives;
And, for th' unmeaning triumph of a day,
Those brave men's lives were lost. My heart for
this
Has suffer'd many a pang; but pride till now
Restrain'd confession. Pardon me for this.

KING.

Thou need'st from me no pardon; yet thou hast it,
And with it, too, my thanks, — my solemn thanks,
For all the noble service thou hast done me.
And is there no request thou hast to make?

HENRIQUEZ.

Yes, if I might presume. Here is a list (*giving the* KING *a paper.*)
Of some brave officers, whose worthy services
Deserve promotion: let them, for my sake,
Find favour with your Grace. This is my suit.

KING.

It shall be done. Oh that a suit of mine
Could, in return, move thine obdurate bosom!

HENRIQUEZ.

What is't, my gracious Master?

KING.

If I have been to thee a gracious Master,
Be thou a gracious Liegeman, and restore —
Restore to me that honour of my reign,
That pride, and fence, and bulwark of my land,—
Restore to me again my gallant General,
Henriquez d'Altavera.

HENRIQUEZ.

Alphonso of Castile, I 've serv'd thee long,—
Yea, though I say it, I have served thee bravely.
Have I from fire, or flood, or havoc shrunk?
What battle have I lost? what town abandon'd,
That now I may not, like a noble Spaniard,
My earthly station quit, from insult spared?
I've owed you service as my rightful King;
I've owed you service as my gracious Master:
But not for man on earth, nor saint in heaven,
Would I submit a loathed life to live,
After the horrid deed that I have done.

FRIAR (*laying his hand gently on* HENRIQUEZ).

My son, my son! where is the Christian meek-
ness

Which, at the Throne of Grace, some moments since,
Thou didst devoutly pray for?

HENRIQUEZ.

Father, I am reproved: my mortal frailty
Was smother'd, not extinct. (*Turning to the* KING.)
I will not, standing on this awful verge,
To mortal greatness bend, else on my knees
I'd crave forgiveness of this new offence: (*laying his hand sorrowfully on his breast.*)
An unrein'd mind, offending to the last. (*The* KING *rushes into his arms and embraces him; then turns away, retiring to the bottom of the stage, to conceal strong emotion.*)

HENRIQUEZ.

Carlos, thou wilt not leave me till the end;
But thou'lt forgive me now the many wrongs
I've done thine honest worth, fastidiously
Bestowing confidence on one alone. (*Taking his hand affectionately.*)
(*Turning to* ANTONIO.) And thou, brave youth,
I know thy gen'rous soul.
Though I have held thee long in doubt, I trust
Thou part'st with me in charity.

ANTONIO (*catching his hands, and kissing them fervently*).

In love,
In deepest admiration, in devotion
That for thy sake would make me welcome death,
Yea, suffer shame, or be an outlaw'd wretch,
Cast off from all my kind.

HENRIQUEZ.

Come to my heart! think of me when I'm gone;
And be my fate thy warning. For I see
Keen passions and affections in thy nature,
Akin to those I felt in early youth.
And when thou think'st of me, consider this:
The law condemneth not a man unheard,
Be he the veriest wretch upon the earth:
But I unheard condemn'd my dearest friend.
Balthazer, thou dost know how very dear—
No, no! thou could'st not know how well I loved him.
Farewell, good Secretary, and be sure
Thou mind thy charge. See that it be erected
With strength and skill; a noble monument,
That will resist the silent strokes of time.
(*Looking round.*) Where is my ancient servant, good Diego?
How is it that I do not see him here?

BALTHAZER.

On learning that your sentence was pronounced,
He took his bed; and whether violent grief

Or other means did speed his end, I know not:
He died last night.

HENRIQUEZ.

Then I shall meet him shortly, where the servant,
Freed from his master, fears his wrath no more.
My poor Diego! he did live with me
In too much awe: and yet he loved me well.
I was to blame in this.

Enter LEONORA *and* MENCIA.

CARLOS.

Thy Leonora comes.

HENRIQUEZ.

Ah! would she had been spared this dismal parting.

CARLOS.

She would not be restrain'd.

HENRIQUEZ.

My Leonora, wherefore art thou come?
Yet thou art welcome to my heart once more.
Farewell in love, — in true, in most dear love,
My dearest wife.

LEONORA.

Oh no! thy cruel wife,
The cause of all thy misery, — thy bane.

HENRIQUEZ (*embracing her*).

Hush, hush! thou wert my torment and my bliss,

But O! far more my bliss! So be content.
I have had many days of prosperous life
Before this storm of misery broke upon me,
Thy love the flower and crown of all. Be comforted.
And Mencia, too, sweet maid, I understand
Thy mute farewell, which I accept. God bless thee!
Antonio, take thy charge. (*Putting* MENCIA's *hand in his.*)
Heaven bless thee, and farewell, my dearest wife!

LEONORA.

Not yet, not yet! my swelling heart will burst.
It tries to utter what it cannot. — Oh! (*A bell tolls, and she, giving a loud shriek, falls into the arms of* MENCIA *and* ANTONIO.)

HENRIQUEZ.

Bear her away; I may not look again. (*As she is borne off, the* KING *advances to the front.*)

KING.

Farewell, thou noble man! Part we in charity?

HENRIQUEZ.

In charity; and on your royal head
My dying blessing rest! [*Exit* KING.
Here comes the Marshal.

Enter MARSHAL *and other* OFFICERS.

(*To the Marshal.*) Are all things ready, then?
(*The Marshal bows.*)
(*To* CARLOS *and* FRIAR.) My faithful friends,
Who still cling to my latest throb of life,
I claim of you a kind but painful service.
(*He begins to move, the* FRIAR *walking by his Side, and* CARLOS *following, while the Bell tolls, and a large Door in the Centre of the back Scene being thrown open, discovers a grand arched Passage, lined with Guards and other public Officers, who, as he passes along, join the Procession. The Curtain drops.*)

THE MARTYR:

A DRAMA.

IN THREE ACTS.

PREFACE

TO THE FOLLOWING DRAMA, WHEN FIRST PUBLISHED IN THE YEAR 1826.

Of all the principles of human action, Religion is the strongest. It is often, indeed, overcome by others, and even by those which may be considered as very weak antagonists; yet, on great emergencies it surmounts them all, and it is master of them all for general and continued operation. In every country and nation, under som form or other, though often dark and distorted, it holds warfare with vice and immorality; either by destroying corrupted selfishness, or by rendering it tributary. And dear and intolerable to the feelings of nature are the tributes it will voluntarily offer, — fasting, scourging, wounds and humiliation; — the humiliation of all worldly distinction, when the light of reason as well as the robe of dignity are thrown aside. A great philosophical writer * of our own days, after having mentioned some of the sceptical works of Hume, says, "Should not rather the melancholy

* Stewart's Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind, vol. i. p. 368.

histories which he has exhibited of the follies and caprices of superstition direct our attention to those sacred and indelible characters of the human mind, which all these perversions of reason are unable to obliterate—? * * * * In truth, the more striking the contradictions and the more ludicrous the ceremonies, to which the pride of human reason has thus been reconciled, the stronger is our evidence that Religion has a foundation in the nature of man. * * * * * * * * Where are those truths in the whole circle of the sciences, which are so essential to human happiness, as to procure an easy access, not only for themselves, but for whatever opinions may happen to be blended with them? Where are the truths so venerable and commanding, as to impart their own sublimity to every mode of expression by which they are conveyed; and which, in whatever scene they have habitually occupied the thoughts, consecrate every object which it presents to our senses, and the very ground we have been accustomed to tread? To attempt to weaken the authority of such impressions, by a detail of the endless variety of forms which they derive from casual association, is surely an employment unsuitable to the dignity of philosophy. To the vulgar it may be amusing in this as in other instances, to indulge their wonder at what is new or uncommon; but to the philosopher it belongs to perceive, under all

these various disguises, the workings of the same common nature; and in the superstitions of Egypt, no less than in the lofty visions of Plato, to recognise the existence of those moral ties which unite the heart of man to the Author of his being."

Many various circumstances, which it suits not my present purpose to mention, have produced this combination of gloomy, cruel, and absurd superstitions with Religion, even in nations and eras possessing much refinement of literature and perfection of the arts. But Religion, when more happily situated, grows from a principle into an affection,—an exalted, adoring devotion; and is then to be regarded as the greatest and noblest emotion of the heart. Considering it in this light, I have ventured, with diffidence and awe, to make it the subject of the following Drama.

The Martyr whom I have endeavoured to portray, is of a class which I believe to have been very rare, except in the first ages of Christianity. There have been many martyrs in the world. Some have sacrificed their lives for the cause of reformation in the Church, with the zeal and benevolence of patriotism: some for the maintenance of its ancient doctrines and rites, with the courage of soldiers in the breach of their beleagured city: some for intricate points of doctrine, with the fire of controvertists, and the honour of men who disdained to compromise

what they believed to be the truth, or under impressions of conscience which they durst not disobey; but, from the pure devoted love of God, as the great Creator and benevolent Parent of men, few have suffered but when Christianity was in its simplest and most perfect state, and more immediately contrasted with the mean, cheerless conceptions and popular fables of Paganism.

We may well imagine that, compared to the heathen deities, those partial patrons of nations and individuals, at discord amongst themselves, and invested with the passions and frailties of men, the great and only God, Father of all mankind, as revealed in the Christian Faith, must have been an idea most elevating, delightful, and consonant to every thing noble and generous in the human understanding or heart. Even to those who, from the opinions of their greatest philosophers, had soared above vulgar belief to one universal God, removed in his greatness from all care or concern for his creatures, the character of the Almighty God and beneficent Parent joined, who cares for the meanest of his works, must have been most animating and sublime, supposing them to be at the same time unwarped by the toils and pride of learning.

But when the life and character of Jesus Christ, so different from every character that had ever appeared upon earth, was unfolded to them

as the Son, and sent of God, — sent from Heaven to declare his will on earth, and with the love of an elder brother, to win us on to the attainment of an exalted state of happiness, which we had forfeited, — sent to suffer and intercede for benighted wanderers, who were outcasts from their Father's house; can we conceive mingled feelings of gratitude, adoration, and love, more fervent, and more powerfully commanding the soul and imagination of man, than those which must then have been excited by this primitive promulgation of the Gospel? Such converts, too, were called from the uncertain hope (if hope it might be termed) of a dreary, listless, inactive existence after death, so little desirable, that their greatest poet makes his chief hero declare, he would prefer being the meanest hind who breathes the upper air, to the highest honours of that dismal state.

"Through the thick gloom his friend Achilles knew,
And as he speaks the tears descend in dew:
Com'st thou alive to view the Stygian bounds,
Where the wan spectres walk eternal rounds;
Nor fear'st the dark and dismal waste to tread,
Throng'd with pale ghosts, familiar with the dead?
To whom with sighs: I pass these dreadful gates
To seek the Theban, and consult the Fates:
For still distress'd I roam from coast to coast,
Lost to my friends, and to my country lost.

But sure the eye of time beholds no name
So blest as thine in all the rolls of fame;
Alive we hail'd thee with our guardian gods,
And dead, thou rul'st a king in these abodes.
Talk not of ruling in this dolorous gloom,
Nor think vain words (he cried) can ease my doom;
Rather I'd choose laboriously to bear
A weight of woes, and breathe the vital air,
A slave to some poor hind that toils for bread,
Than reign the scepter'd monarch of the dead." *

They were called, I repeat it, from hopes like these to the assurance of a future life, so joyful, active, spiritual, and glorious, that the present faded in the imagination from before it as a shadow. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart, the joy that is prepared for those who love God," is one of the many expressions of the Christian apostles on this lofty theme; who counted the greatest happiness of the present life as unworthy to be compared to the rewards of the righteous after death, where, according to their different degrees of worth, unsullied with any feeling of envy, they should shine in their blessedness as one star differeth from another star in glory. A transition from prospects so mean and depressing as the former to hopes so dignified, spiritual, and animating as the latter, might well have a power over the mind which nothing

* Pope's Odyssey, 11th book.

could shake or subdue; and this transition none but the first race of Christians could experience, at least in so great a degree.

And those enlarged conceptions, those ennobling and invigorating hopes came to them in the pure simplicity of the Gospel as taught by Christ and his apostles. They had no subtle points of faith mixed with them as matters of necessary belief, which the fathers of succeeding times, and too often the pious missionaries of the present, have pressed upon their bewildered converts with greater perseverance and earnestness than the general precepts and hopes of Christianity.* Those ancient converts also had

* Dr. Samuel Clarke, in a sermon on the Powers and Wisdom of the Gospel, hath this passage: "And whereas the best and greatest philosophers were in continual disputes, and in many degrees of uncertainty, concerning the very fundamentals and most important doctrines of truth and reason, amongst those, on the contrary, who embraced the Gospel of Christ, there never was the least room for dispute about any fundamental; all Christians at all times and in all places having ever been baptized into the profession of the same faith, and into an obligation to obey the same commandments. And it being notorious that all the contentions that ever arose in the Christian world have been merely about several additions which every sect and party, in direct contradiction to the express command of their Master, have endeavoured presumptuously to annex by their own authority to his doctrines and to his laws. How much, therefore, and how just ground soever has been given by those who call themselves Christians to the reproach of

before their eyes a testimony of heroic endurance which till then had been unknown to the world. Who, in preceding times, had given his body to the flames for his belief in any religious notions, taught or entertained by the learned or unlearned? It was a thing hitherto unknown to the heathens; and it is not very marvellous that abstract doctrines of philosophers, taught to their disciples as such, or popular deities, many in number, and of local, limited power, with moral attributes ascribed to them inferior to those of a virtuous mortal man, should be little calculated to raise those strong excitements in the mind, from which religious persecutions did at first proceed amongst Christians, who, from intemperate zeal and narrow conceptions, deemed a right belief in every doctrine of the Church necessary to salvation. Diana of the Ephesians could peaceably hold her state in conjunction with any god or goddess of Greece, Scythia, Persia, or Egypt; but this toleration, which proceeded from any cause rather than the excellence of their religion, was changed into the most bloody and ferocious persecution upon

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them which are without, yet Christ himself, that is, the Gospel in its native simplicity as delivered by him, has abundantly to all reasonable persons among the Gentiles manifested itself to be the wisdom of God; as well as it appeared to be the power of God in signs and wonders to the Jews." — Clarke's Sermons, vol. v. Serm. 12th.

the divulging of a faith which was altogether incompatible with their theologies, and must, therefore, should it prevail, overturn them entirely. Under these circumstances, the most enlightened Pagans, whose toleration has so often been praised, became the first persecutors, and Christians the first martyrs. And then it was that a new spectacle was exhibited to mankind; then it was that the sublimity of man's immortal soul shone forth in glory which seemed supernatural. Men and women, young and old, suffered for their faith all that flesh and blood can suffer; yea, joyfully and triumphantly.

In beholding such terrific and interesting spectacles, many were led to inquire into the cause of such superhuman resolution, and became converts and martyrs in their turn; and it will be found, in the accounts of those ancient persecutions, that many Roman soldiers, and sometimes officers of high rank, were amongst the earlier Christians who laid down their lives for their religion. It was, indeed, natural that the invincible fortitude of those holy sufferers, fronting death with such noble intrepidity, should attract the admiration and sympathy of the generous and brave, whose pride it was to meet death undauntedly in a less terrific form; and we may easily imagine also, that a generous and elevated mind, under the immediate pressure of such odious tyranny as some of the Roman

emperors exercised on their senators and courtiers, would turn from this humiliating bondage to that promise of a Father's house in which there are many mansions, and turn to it with most longing and earnest aspirations. The brave man, bred in the camp and the field, encompassed with hardships and dangers, would be little encumbered with learning or philosophy, therefore more open to conviction; and when returned from the scenes of his distant warfare, would more indignantly submit to the capricious will of a voluptuous master. These considerations have led me to the choice of my hero, and have warranted me in representing him as a noble Roman soldier;—one whose mind is filled with adoring awe and admiration of the sublime, but parental character of the Deity, which is for the first time unfolded to him by the early teachers of Christianity;—one whose heart is attracted by the beautiful purity, refinement, and benignant tenderness, and by the ineffable generosity of him who visited earth as his commissioned Son,—attracted powerfully, with that ardour of affectionate admiration which binds a devoted follower to his glorious chief.

But though we may well suppose unlearned soldiers to be the most unprejudiced and ardent of the early Christian proselytes, we have good reason to believe that the most enlightened minds of those days might be strongly moved

and attracted by the first view of Christianity in its pure, uncorrupted state. All their previous notions of religion, as has been already said, whether drawn from a popular or philosophical source, were poor and heartless compared to this. Their ideas on the subject, which I have already quoted, having passed through the thoughts and imagination of their greatest poet, could surely contract no meanness nor frigidity there, but must be considered as represented in the most favourable light which their received belief could possibly admit. We must place ourselves in the real situation of those men, previous to their knowledge of the sacred Scripture, and not take it for granted that those elevated conceptions of the Supreme Being and his paternal Providence which modern deists have in fact, though unwilling to own it, received from the Christian revelation, belonged to them. It has been observed by an author, whose name I ought not to have forgotten, that the ideas of the Deity expressed in the writings of philosophers, subsequently to the Christian era, are more clear and sublime than those which are to be found in heathen writers of an earlier period. I therefore represent him also as a Roman, cultivated, contemplative, and refined.

Martyrs of this rank and character were not, I own, mentioned amongst those belonging to the first persecutions under Nero, but in those

which followed, during the first and second century of the Christian era, when the stories which had been propagated of the shocking superstitions and wickedness of the sect began to lose their credit. But I conceive myself warranted to take this liberty, as the supposed recentness of the promulgation of the Gospel gives (if I may so express it) a greater degree of zest to the story, and by no means alters the principles and feelings which must have actuated the martyrs. The whole of this period was still one of pure Christianity unencumbered with many perplexing and contradictory doctrines which followed, when churchmen had leisure to overlay the sacred scriptures with a multitude of explanatory dissertations, and with perverse, presumptuous ingenuity to explain the plain passages by the obscure, instead of the obscure by the plain.

In this representation of religious devotion in its early primitive state, it has been my desire to keep clear from all fanatical excess which in after-times too often expressed itself in the wildest incoherent rhapsodies; the language of a natural delirium, proceeding from a vain endeavour to protract, by forced excitement, the ecstacy of a few short moments, and to make that a continued state of the mind which was intended, by its beneficent Creator, only for its occasional and transient joy. Of this we may

be well assured; for if otherwise indulged, it would have rendered men incapable of the duties of social life; those duties which the blessed founder of our religion did so constantly and so earnestly inculcate. That I am too presumptuous in attempting to represent it at all, is a charge which, if it be brought against me, I ought to bear with meekness; for when it first offered itself to my mind as the subject of a drama, I shrunk from it as a thing too sacred to be displayed in such a form. But, in often considering the matter, this impression at last gave way to a strong desire of showing the noblest of all human emotions in a light in which it has but seldom been contemplated; and I trust that through the following pages, whatever defects may be found, and no doubt there are many, want of reverence will not be amongst the number.

I would gladly pass over the lyrical part of the piece without remark, were it not that I fear I may have offended the classical reader, by having put into the mouths of Roman soldiers a hymn in honour of their deities so homely and unpoetical. This too will more likely offend, after the beautiful and splendid effusions on this subject which have been so much and justly admired in a recent drama. But I wished to make them express what I conceived to be the actual feelings and notions of such men regard-

ing the objects of their worship, not the rich descriptive imaginations of a learned and poetical high priest. Besides, had I possessed talents requisite for the successful imitation of such classical affluence, it would scarcely have accorded with the general tenor of the piece and the simplicity of the hymns of the Christians: I should therefore have injured the general effect, as well as the supposed faithfulness of the particular passage, regarding its description of real characters. At least it appears so to me.

I need scarcely observe to the reader, that the subject of this piece is too sacred, and therefore unfit, for the stage. I have endeavoured, however, to give it so much of dramatic effect as to rouse his imagination in perusing it to a lively representation of the characters, action, and scenes, belonging to the story; and this, if I have succeeded, will remove from it the dryness of a mere dramatic poem. Had I considered it as fit for theatrical exhibition, the reasons that withhold me from publishing my other manuscript plays, would have held good regarding this.

Before I take leave of my reader, I must be permitted to say, that the following Drama has been written for a long time, and read by a few of my friends several years ago. When Mr. Milman's beautiful drama on a similar subject was published, I began to be afraid that, were I

to keep it much longer in manuscript, some other poet, in an age so fertile in poetic genius, might offer to the public that which might approach still nearer to the story of my piece, and give it, when published, not only all its own native defects to contend with, but those also arising from the unavoidable flatness of an exhausted subject. I therefore determined to publish it as soon as other duties permitted me, and many have intervened to prevent the accomplishment of my wish. In preparing it for the press, I have felt some degree of scruple in retaining its original title of *The Martyr*, but I could not well give it any other. The public, I hope, and Mr. Milman, I am certain, are sufficiently my friends not to find fault with this circumstance, which has not arisen from presumption.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN.

NERO, *Emperor of Rome.*
CORDENIUS MARO, *Officer of the Imperial Guard.*
ORCERES, *a Parthian Prince, visiting Rome.*
SULPICIUS, *a Senator.*
SYLVIUS, *a brave Centurion.*
Roman Pontiff.
Christian Father or Bishop, Christian Brother, *&c.*
A Page, *in the family of Sulpicius.*
Senators, Christians, Soldiers, *&c.*

WOMEN.

PORTIA, *Daughter of Sulpicius.*
Christian Women.

Scene, ROME.

THE MARTYR.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A private Apartment in the house of* SULPICIUS.

Enter SULPICIUS *and* ORCERES *by opposite sides.*

SULPICIUS.

So soon return'd!—I read not in thy face
Aught to encourage or depress my wishes.
How is it, noble friend?

ORCERES.

Ev'n as it was ere I received my mission.
Cordenius Maro is on public duty;
I have not seen him.—When he knows your offer,
His heart will bound with joy, like eaglet plumed,
Whose outstretch'd pinions, wheeling round and round,
Shape their first circles in the sunny air.

SULPICIUS.

And with good cause.

ORCERES.

Methinks I see him now!
A face with blushes mantling to the brow,

Eyes with bright tears surcharged, and parted lips
Quiv'ring to utter joy which hath no words.

SULPICIUS.

His face, indeed, as I have heard thee say,
Is like a wave which sun and shadow cross;
Each thought makes there its momentary mark.

ORCERES.

And then his towering form, and vaulting step,
As tenderness gives way to exultation!
O! it had been a feast to look upon him;
And still shall be.

SULPICIUS.

Art thou so well convinced —
He loves my little damsel? — She is fair,
But seems to me too simple, gay, and thoughtless,
For noble Maro. Heiress as she is
To all my wealth, had I suspected sooner,
That he had smother'd wishes in his breast
As too presumptuous, or that she in secret
Preferr'd his silent homage to the praise
Of any other man, I had most frankly
Removed all hindrance to so fair a suit.
For, in these changeling and degenerate days,
I scarcely know a man of nobler worth.

ORCERES.

Thou scarcely know'st! Say certainly thou dost not.
He is, to honest right, as simply true
As shepherd child on desert pasture bred,
Where falsehood and deceit have never been;

And to maintain them, ardent, skilful, potent,
As the shrewd leader of unruly tribes.
A simple heart and subtle spirit join'd
Make such an union as in Nero's court
May pass for curious and unnatural.

SULPICIUS.

But is the public duty very urgent
That so untowardly delays our happiness?

ORCERES.

The punishment of those poor Nazarenes,
Who, in defiance of imperial power,
To their forbidden faith and rites adhere
With obstinacy most astonishing.

SULPICIUS.

A stubborn contumacy unaccountable!

ORCERES.

There's sorcery in it, or some stronger power.
But be it what it may, or good or ill,
They look on death in its most dreadful form,
As martial heroes on a wreath of triumph.
The fires are kindled in the place of death,
And bells toll dismally. The life of Rome
In one vast clust'ring mass hangs round the spot,
And no one to his neighbour utters word,
But in an alter'd voice, with breath restrain'd,
Like those who speak at midnight near the dead.
Cordenius heads the band that guards the pile;
So station'd, who could speak to him of pleasure?
My words had come like sounds of evil omen.

SULPICIUS.

Cease; here comes Portia, with a careless face:
She knows not yet the happiness that waits her.

ORCERES.

Who brings she with her thus, as if compell'd
By playful force?

SULPICIUS.

'T is her Numidian Page; a cunning imp,
Who must be woo'd to do the thing he's proud of.

Enter PORTIA, *dragging* SYPHAX *after her, speaking as she enters.*

PORTIA.

Come in, deceitful thing! — I know thee well;
With all thy sly affected bashfulness,
Thou 'rt bold enough to sing in Cesar's court,
With the whole senate present. (*To* ORCERES.)
Prince of Parthia,
I knew not you were here; but yet I guess
The song which this sly creature sings so well,
Will please you also.

ORCERES.

How can it fail, fair Portia, so commended?

SULPICIUS.

What is this boasted lay?

PORTIA.

That tune, my father,
Which you so oft have tried to recollect;

But link'd with other words, of new device,
That please my fancy well. — Come, sing it, boy!

SULPICIUS.

Nay, sing it, Syphax, be not so abash'd,
If thou art really so. — Begin, begin!
But speak thy words distinctly as thou sing'st,
That I may have their meaning perfectly.

SONG.

The storm is gath'ring far and wide,
Yon mortal hero must abide.
Power on earth, and power in air,
Falchion's gleam and lightning's glare;
Arrows hurtling thro' the blast;
Stones from flaming meteor cast;
Floods from burthen'd skies are pouring,
Mingled strife of battle roaring;
Nature's rage and Demon's ire,
Belt him round with turmoil dire:
Noble hero! earthly wight!
Brace thee bravely for the fight.

And so, indeed, thou tak'st thy stand,
Shield on arm and glaive in hand;
Breast encased in burnish'd steel,
Helm on head, and pike on heel;
And, more than meets the outward eye,
The soul's high temper'd panoply,
Which every limb for action lightens,
The form dilates, the visage brightens:
Thus art thou, lofty, mortal wight!
Full nobly harness'd for the fight.

ORCERES.

The picture of some very noble hero
These lines portray.

SULPICIUS.

So it should seem; one of the days of old.

PORTIA.

And why of olden days? There liveth now
The very man — a man — I mean to say,
There may be found amongst our Roman youth,
One, who in form and feelings may compare
With him whose lofty virtues these few lines
So well describe.

ORCERES.

Thou mean'st the lofty Gorbus.

PORTIA.

Out on the noisy braggart! Arms without
He hath, indeed, well burnish'd and well plumed,
But the poor soul, within, is pluck'd and bare,
Like any homely thing.

ORCERES.

Sertorius Galba then?

FORTIA.

O, stranger still!
For if he hath no lack of courage, certes,
He hath much lack of grace. Sertorius Galba!

ORCERES.

Perhaps thou mean'st Cordenius Maro, lady.
Thy cheeks grow scarlet at the very name,
Indignant that I still should err so strangely.

PORTIA.

No, not indignant, for thou errest not;
Nor do I blush, albeit thou think'st I do,
To say, there is not of our Romans one,

Whose martial form a truer image gives
Of firm heroic courage.

SULPICIUS.

Cease, sweet Portia!
He only laughs at thy simplicity.

ORCERES.

Simplicity seen through a harmless wile,
Like to the infant urchin, half concealed
Behind his smiling dam's transparent veil.
The song is not a stranger to mine ear,
Methinks I've heard it passing thro' those wilds,
Whose groves and caves, if rumour speak the truth,
Are by the Nazarenes or Christians haunted.

SULPICIUS.

Let it no more be sung within my walls:
A chaunt of their's to bring on pestilence!
Sing it no more. What sounds are those I hear?

ORCERES.

The dismal death-drum and the crowd without.
They are this instant leading past your door
Those wretched Christians to their dreadful doom.

SULPICIUS.

We'll go and see them pass.

[*Exeunt hastily*, SULPICIUS, ORCERES.

PORTIA. (*Stopping her ears.*)

I cannot look on them, nor hear the sound.
I'll to my chamber.

PAGE.

May not I, I pray,
Look on them as they pass?

PORTIA.

No; go not, child:
'Twill frighten thee; it is a horrid sight.

PAGE.

Yet, an it please you, lady, let me go.

PORTIA.

I say it is a horrid, piteous sight,
Thou wilt be frighten'd at it.

PAGE.

Nay, be it e'er so piteous or so horrid,
I have a longing, strong desire to see it.

PORTIA.

Go then; there is in this no affectation:
There's all the harden'd cruelty of man
Lodged in that tiny form, child as thou art.

[*Exeunt, severally.*

SCENE II.

An Open Square, with Buildings.

Enter CORDENIUS MARO, *at the head of his Soldiers, who draw up on either Side; then enters a long Procession of public Functionaries, &c. conducting Martyrs to the Place of Execution, who, as they pass on, sing together in unison: one more noble than the others walking first.*

SONG.

A long farewell to sin and sorrow,
To beam of day and evening shade;
High in glory breaks our morrow,
With light that cannot fade.

We leave the hated and the hating,
Existence sad in toil and strife;
The great, the good, the brave are waiting
To hail our opening life.

Earth's faded sounds our ears forsaking,
A moment's silence death shall be;
Then to heaven's jubilee awaking,
Faith ends in victory.

[*Exeunt Martyrs, &c. &c.* CORDENIUS *with his Officers and Soldiers still remaining; the Officers on the front, and* CORDENIUS *apart from them in a thoughtful posture.*

FIRST OFFICER.

Brave Varus marches boldly at the head
Of that deluded band.

SECOND OFFICER.

Are these the men who hateful orgies hold
In dens and deserts, courting, with enchantments,
The intercourse of demons?

THIRD OFFICER.

Ay, with rites
Cruel and wild. To crucify a babe,
And, while it yet hangs shrieking on the rood,
Fall down and worship it! device abominable!

FIRST OFFICER.

Dost thou believe it?

THIRD OFFICER.

I can believe or this or any thing
Of the possess'd and mad.

FIRST OFFICER.

What demonry, thinkest thou, possesses Varus?

SECOND OFFICER.

That is well urged. (*To the other.*) Is he a maniac?
Alas, that I should see so brave a soldier
Thus, as a malefactor, led to death!

FIRST OFFICER.

Viewing his keen enliven'd countenance
And stately step, one should have rather guess'd
He led victorious soldiers to the charge:
And they, indeed, appeared to follow him
With noble confidence.

THIRD OFFICER.

'Tis all vain seeming.
He is a man, who makes a show of valour
To which his deeds have born slight testimony.

CORDENIUS, (*advancing indignantly.*)

Thou liest; a better and a braver soldier
Ne'er fronted foe, or closed in bloody strife.
[*Turning away angrily to the back-ground.*

FIRST OFFICER.

Our chief, methinks, is in a fretful mood,
Which is not usual with him.

SECOND OFFICER.

He did not seem to listen to our words,
Yet they have moved him keenly. —
But see, he gives the signal to proceed;

We must advance, and with our closing ranks
The fatal pile encircle.

[*Exeunt in order, whilst a chorus of Martyrs is heard at a distance.*

SCENE III.

An Apartment in a Private House.

Enter two CHRISTIAN WOMEN, *by opposite sides.*

FIRST WOMAN.

Hast thou heard any thing?

SECOND WOMAN.

Nought, save the murmur of the multitude,
Sinking at times to deep and awful silence,
From which again a sudden burst will rise
Like mingled exclamations, as of horror
Or admiration. In these neighbouring streets
I have not met a single citizen,
The town appearing uninhabited.
But wherefore art thou here? Thou should'st
have stayed
With the unhappy mother of poor Cælus.

FIRST WOMAN.

She sent me hither in her agony
Of fear and fearful hope.

SECOND WOMAN.

Ha! does she hope deliverance from death?

FIRST WOMAN.

O no! thou wrong'st her, friend; it is not that:
Deliverance is her fear, and death her hope.
A second time she bears a mother's throes
For her young stripling, whose exalted birth
To endless life is at this fearful crisis,
Or earned or lost. May heaven forfend the last!
He is a timid youth, and soft of nature:
God grant him strength to bear that fearful proof!

SECOND WOMAN.

Here comes our reverend father.

Enter a CHRISTIAN FATHER.

What tidings dost thou bring? are they in bliss?

FATHER.

Yes, daughter, as I trust, they are ere this
In high immortal bliss. Cælus alone —

FIRST WOMAN.

He hath apostatised! O woe is me!
O woe is me for his most wretched mother!

FATHER.

Apostatised! No; stripling as he is,
His fortitude, where all were braced and brave,
Shone paramount.

For his soft downy cheek and slender form
Made them conceive they might subdue his firmness:
Therefore he was reserved till noble Varus
And his compeers had in the flames expired.
Then did they court and tempt him with fair promise
Of all that earthly pleasure or ambition
Can offer, to deny his holy faith.
But he, who seem'd before so meek and timid,
Now suddenly embued with holy grace,
Like the transition of some watery cloud
In passing o'er the moon's refulgent disc,
Glowed with new life; and from his fervid tongue
Words of most firm indignant constancy
Pour'd eloquently forth; then to the pile
Sprung he as lightly as a dauntless warrior
Scaling the breach of honour; or, alas!
As I have seen him midst his boyish mates,
Vaulting aloft for very love of motion.

FIRST WOMAN.

High heaven be prais'd for this! — Thine eyes beheld it?

FATHER.

I saw it not: the fiiend who witness'd it,
Left him yet living midst devouring flame;
Therefore I spoke of Cælus doubtfully,
If he as yet belong'd to earth or heaven.

[*They cover their faces and remain silent.*

Enter a CHRISTIAN BROTHER.

BROTHER.

Lift up your heads, my sisters! let your voices
In grateful thanks be rais'd! Those ye lament,
Have earthly pangs for heavenly joy exchanged.
The manly Varus and the youthful Cælus,
The lion and the dove, yoke-fellows link'd,
Have equal bliss and equal honour gain'd.

FIRST WOMAN.

And prais'd be God, who makes the weakest strong!
I'll to his mother with the blessed tidings.

[*Exit.*

FATHER.

Let us retire and pray. How soon our lives
May have like ending, God alone doth know!
O! may like grace support us in our need!

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

An open Space in front of a Temple.

Enter CORDENIUS, *as returned from the Execution with his Soldiers, who, upon a signal from him, disperse and leave him alone. He walks a few paces slowly, then stops and continues for a short time in a thoughtful posture.*

CORDENIUS.

There is some power in this, or good or ill,

Surpassing nature. When the soul is roused
To desp'rate sacrifice, 'tis ardent passion,
Or high exalted virtue that excites it.
Can loathsome demonry in dauntless bearing
Outdo the motives of the lofty brave?
It cannot be! There is some power in this
Mocking all thought—incomprehensible.

[*Remains for a moment silent and thoughtful, while* SYLVIUS *enters behind him unperceived.*

Delusion! ay, 'tis said the cheated sight
Will see unreal things; the cheated ear
List to sweet sounds that are not; even the reason
Maintain conclusions wild and inconsistent.
We hear of this:—the weak may be deluded;
But is the learn'd, th' enlighten'd noble Varus
The victim of delusion?—Can it be?
I'll not believe it.

SYLVIUS (*advancing to him*).

No, believe it not.

CORDENIUS (*starting*).

Ha! one so near me!
I have seen thy face before; but where?—who art thou?

SYLVIUS.

Ev'n that Centurion of the Seventh Legion,
Who, with Cordenius Maro, at the siege
Of Fort *Volundum* *, mounted first the breach;

* A strong fort in Armenia, taken by Corbulo in Nero's reign.

And kept the clust'ring enemy in check,
Till our encouraged Romans followed us.

CORDENIUS.

My old companion then, the valiant Sylvius.
Thou'st done hard service since I saw thee last:
Thy countenance is mark'd with graver lines
Than in those greener days: I knew thee not.
Where goest thou now? I'll bear thee company.

SYLVIUS.

I thank thee: yet thou may'st not go with me.
The way that I am wending suits not thee,
Though suiting well the noble and the brave.
It were not well, in fiery times like these,
To tempt thy generous mind.

CORDENIUS.

What dost thou mean?

SYLVIUS (*after looking cautiously round to see that nobody is near*).

Did I not hear thee commune with thyself
Of that most blessed Martyr gone to rest,
Varus Dobella?

CORDENIUS.

How blessed? My unsettled thoughts were busy
With things mysterious; with those magic powers
That work the mind to darkness and destruction;
With the sad end of the *deluded* Varus.

SYLVIUS.

Not so, not so! The wisest prince on earth,
With treasured wealth and armies at command,

Ne'er earn'd withal such lofty exaltation
As Varus now enjoys.

CORDENIUS.

Thy words amaze me, friend; what is their meaning?

SYLVIUS.

They cannot be explain'd with hasty speech
In such a place. If thou would'st really know—
And may such light——

CORDENIUS.

Why dost thou check thy words,
And look so much disturb'd, like one in doubt?

SYLVIUS.

What am I doing! Zeal, perhaps, betrays me.
Yet, wherefore hide salvation from a man
Who is so worthy of it?

CORDENIUS.

Why art thou agitated thus? What moves thee?

SYLVIUS.

And would'st thou really know it?

CORDENIUS.

Dost thou doubt me?
I have an earnest, most intense desire.

SYLVIUS.

Sent to thy heart, brave Roman, by a Power
Which I may not resist. [*Bowing his head.*
But go not with me now in open day.
At fall of eve I'll meet thee in the suburb,
Close to the pleasure-garden of Sulpicius;
Where in a bushy crevice of the rock

There is an entry to the catacombs,
Known but to few.

CORDENIUS.

Ha! to the catacombs!

SYLVIUS.

A dismal place, I own, but heed not that;
For there thou'lt learn what, to thy ardent mind,
Will make this world but as a thorny pass
To regions of delight; man's natural life,
With all its varied turmoil of ambition,
But as the training of a wayward child
To manly excellence; yea, death itself
But as a painful birth to life unending.
The word eternal has not to thine ears,
As yet, its awful, ample sense conveyed.

CORDENIUS.

Something possesses thee.

SYLVIUS.

Yes, noble Maro;
But it is something which can ne'er possess
A mind that is not virtuous.—Let us part;
It is expedient now.—All good be with thee!

CORDENIUS.

And good be with thee, also, valiant soldier!

SYLVIUS (*returning as he is about to go out*).

At close of day, and near the pleasure-garden,—
The garden of Sulpitius.

CORDENIUS.

I know the spot, and will not fail to meet thee.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The Catacombs, showing long low-roofed aisles, in different directions, supported by thick pillars of the rough unhewn rock, with rude tombs and heaps of human bones, and the walls in many places lined with human skulls.*

Enter CORDENIUS MARO, *speaking to a* CHRISTIAN FATHER, *on whose arm he leans, and followed by* SYLVIUS.

CORDENIUS.

One day and two bless'd nights, spent in acquiring
Your heavenly lore, so powerful and sublime,—
Oh! what an altered creature they have made me!

FATHER.

Yes, gentle son, I trust that thou art altered.

CORDENIUS.

I am, methinks, like one who, with bent back
And downward gaze—if such a one might be—
Hath only known the boundless azure sky
By the strait circle of reflected beauty,
Seen in the watery gleam of some deep pit:
Till of a sudden roused, he stands erect,
And wondering looks aloft and all around
On the bright sunny firmament:—like one
(Granting again that such a one might be)

Who hath but seen the element of fire
On household hearth or woodman's smoky pile,
And looks at once, midst stounding thunder-
peals,
On Jove's magnificence of lightning. — Pardon,
I pray you pardon me! I mean *his* lightning,
Who is the Jove of Jove, the great Jehova.

FATHER (*smiling*).

Be not disturb'd, my son; the lips will utter,
From lengthen'd habit, what the mind rejects.

CORDENIUS.

These blessed hours which I have pass'd with you
Have to my intellectual being given
New feelings and expansion, like to that
Which once I felt, on viewing by degrees
The wide developement of nature's amplitude.

FATHER.

And how was that, my son?

CORDENIUS.

I well remember it; even at this moment
Imagination sees it all again.
'Twas on a lofty mountain of Armenia,
O'er which I led by night my martial cohort,
To shun the fierce heat of a summer's day.
Close round us hung, the vapours of the night
Had form'd a woofy curtain, dim and pale,
Through which the waning moon did faintly mark
Its slender crescent.

FATHER.

Ay, the waned moon through midnight vapours seen,
Fit emblem is of that retrenching light,
Dubious and dim, which to the earliest Patriarchs
Was at the first vouchsafed; a moral guide,
Soon clouded and obscured to their descendants,
Who peopled far and wide, in scatter'd tribes,
The fertile earth.— But this is interruption.
Proceed, my son.

CORDENIUS.

Well, on the lofty summit
We halted, and the day's returning light
On this exalted station found us. Then
Our brighten'd curtain, wearing into shreds
And rifted masses, through its opening gave
Glimpse after glimpse of slow revealed beauty,
Which held th' arrested senses magic bound,
In the intensity of charm'd attention.

FATHER.

From such an eminence, the op'ning mist
Would to the eye reveal most beauteous visions.

CORDENIUS.

First, far beneath us, woody peaks appear'd
And knolls with cedars crested; then, beyond,
And lower still, the herdsmen's cluster'd dwellings,

With pasture slopes, and flocks just visible;
Then, further still, soft wavy wastes of forest,
In all the varied tints of sylvan verdure,
Descending to the plain; then, wide and boundless,
The plain itself, with towns and cultured tracts,
And its fair river gleaming in the light,
With all its sweepy windings, seen and lost,
And seen again, till through the pale grey tint
Of distant space, it seem'd a loosen'd cestus
From virgin's tunic blown; and still beyond,
The earth's extended vastness from the sight
Wore like the boundless ocean.
My heart beat rapidly at the fair sight —
This ample earth, man's natural habitation.
But now, when to my mental eye reveal'd,
His moral destiny, so grand and noble,
Lies stretching on even to immensity,
It overwhelms me with a flood of thoughts,
Of happy thoughts.

FATHER.

Thanks be to God that thou dost feel it so!

CORDENIUS.

I am most thankful for the words of power
Which from thy gifted lips and sacred scripture
I have received. What feelings they have raised!
O what a range of thought given to the mind!
And to the soul what loftiness of hope!
That future dreamy state of faint existence
Which poets have described and sages taught,

In which the brave and virtuous pined and droop'd
In useless indolence, changed for a state
Of social love, and joy, and active bliss,—
A state of brotherhood,—a state of virtue,
So grand, so purified;—O it is excellent!
My soul is roused within me at the sound,
Like some poor slave, who from a dungeon issues
To range with free-born men his native land.

FATHER.

Thou may'st, indeed, my son, redeem'd from thraldom,
Become the high compeer of blessed spirits.

CORDENIUS.

The high compeer of such!—These gushing tears,
Nature's mysterious tears, will have their way.

FATHER.

To give thy heart relief.

CORDENIUS.

And yet mysterious. Why do we weep
At contemplation of exalted virtue?
Perhaps in token of the fallen state
In which we are, as thrilling sympathy
Strangely acknowledges some sight and sound,
Connected with a dear and distant home,
Albeit the mem'ry hath that link forgotten:—
A kind of latent sense of what we were,
Or might have been; a deep mysterious token.

FATHER.

Perhaps thou'rt right, my son; for even the wicked
Will sometimes weep at lofty, generous deeds.
Some broken traces of our noble nature
Were yet preserved; therefore our great Creator
Still loved his work, and thought it worth redemption.
And therefore his bless'd Son, our generous Master,
Did, as the elder brother of that race,
Whose form he took, lay down his life to save us.
But I have read thee, in our sacred book,
His gentle words of love.

CORDENIUS.

Thou hast! thou hast! they're stirring in my heart:
Each fibre of my body thrills in answer
To the high call.—

FATHER.

The Spirit of Power, my son, is dealing with thee.

CORDENIUS (*after a pause*).

One thing amazes me, — yet it is excellent.

FATHER.

And what amazes thee? Unbosom freely
What passes in thy mind.

CORDENIUS.

That this religion which dilates our thoughts
Of God Supreme to an infinity

Of awful greatness, yet connects us with him,
As children, loved and cherish'd; —
Adoring awe with tenderness united.

SYLVIUS (*eagerly*).

Ay, brave Cordenius, that same thought more moved
My rude unletter'd mind than all the rest.
I struck my hand against my soldier's mail,
And cried, "This faith is worthy of a man!"

CORDENIUS.

Our best philosophers have raised their thoughts
To one great universal Lord of all,
Lord even of Jove himself and all the gods;
But who durst feel for that high, distant Essence,
A warmer sentiment than deep submission?
But now, adoring love and grateful confidence
Cling to th' infinity of power and goodness,
As the repentant child turns to his sire
With yearning looks, that say, "Am I not thine?"
I am too bold: I should be humbled first
In penitence and sorrow, for the stains
Of many a hateful vice and secret passion.

FATHER.

Check not the generous tenour of thy thoughts:
O check it not! Love leads to penitence,
And is the noblest, surest path; whilst fear
Is dark and devious. To thy home return,
And let thy mind well weigh what thou hast heard.

If then thou feel'st within thee faith assured;
That faith, which may, ev'n through devouring flames,
Its passage hold to heaven, baptismal rites
Shall give thee entrance to a purer life,
Receive thee, as thy Saviour's valiant soldier,
For his high warfare arm'd.

CORDENIUS.

I am resolved, and feel that in my heart
There lives that faith; baptize me ere we part.

FATHER.

So be it then. But yet that holy rite
Must be deferr'd; for, lo! our brethren come,
Bearing the ashes of our honour'd saints,
Which must, with hymns of honour, be received.

Enter CHRISTIANS, *seen advancing slowly along one of the aisles, and bearing a large veiled urn, which they set down near the front. They then lift off the veil and range themselves round it, while one sings and the rest join in the Chorus at the end of each short verse.*

SONG.

Departed brothers, generous brave,
Who for the faith have died,
Nor its pure source denied,
Your bodies from devouring flames to save,

CHORUS.

Honour on earth, and bliss in heaven,
Be to your saintly valour given!

And we, who, left behind, pursue
A pilgrim's weary way
To realms of glorious day,
Shall rouse our fainting souls with thoughts of you.

Honour on earth, &c.

Your ashes, mingled with the dust,
Shall yet be forms more fair
Than e'er breathed vital air,
When earth again gives up her precious trust.

Honour on earth, &c.

The trump of angels shall proclaim,
With tones far sent and sweet,
Which countless hosts repeat,
The generous martyr's never-fading name.

Honour on earth, and bliss in heaven,
Be to your saintly valour given!

CORDENIUS (*to Father*).

And ye believe those, who a few hours since
Were clothed in flesh and blood, and here, be-
fore us,
Lie thus, ev'n to a few dry ashes changed,
Are now exalted spirits, holding life
With blessed powers, and agencies, and all

Who have on earth a virtuous part fulfill'd?
The dear redeem'd of Godlike love, again
To their primeval destiny restored?
It is a generous, powerful, noble faith.

SYLVIUS.

Did I not tell thee, as we pass'd along,
It well became a Roman and a soldier?

FATHER.

Nay, worthy Sylvius, somewhat more of meekness
And less of martial ardour were becoming
In those whose humble Lord stretch'd forth his hand,
His saving hand, to ev'n the meanest slave
Who bends beneath an earthly master's rod.
This faith is meet for all of human kind.

CORDENIUS.

Forgive him, father: see, he stands reproved;
His heart is meek, though ardent;
It is, indeed, a faith for all mankind.

FATHER.

We feel it such, my son, press'd as we are;
On every side beset with threatening terrors.
Look on these ghastly walls, these shapeless pillars,
These heaps of human bones, — this court of death;
Ev'n here, as in a temple, we adore

The Lord of life, and sing our song of hope,
That death has lost his sting, the grave his triumph.

CORDENIUS.

O make me then the partner of your hopes!
(*Taking the hand of* SYLVIUS, *and then of several other* CHRISTIANS.)
Brave men! high destined souls! immortal beings!
The blessed faith and sense of what we are
Comes on my heart, like streams of beamy light
Pour'd from some opening cloud. O to conceive
What lies beyond the dim, dividing veil
Of regions bright, of blest and glorious being!

FATHER.

Ay, when it is withdrawn, we shall behold
What heart hath ne'er conceived, nor tongue could utter.

CORDENIUS.

When but a boy, I've gazed upon the sky,
With all its sparks of light, as a grand cope
For the benighted world. But now my fancy
Will greet each twinkling star, as the bright lamp
Of some fair angel on his guardian watch.
And think ye not, that from their lofty stations
Our future glorious home, our Father's house,
May lie within the vast and boundless ken
Of such seraphic powers?

FATHER.

Thy fancy soars on wide and buoyant wings;
Speak on, my son, I would not check thy ardour.

CORDENIUS.

This solid earth is press'd beneath our feet,
But as a step from which to take our flight;
What boots it then, if rough or smooth it be,
Serving its end?—Come, noble Sylvius!
We've been companions in the broil of battle,
Now be we fellow-soldiers in that warfare
Which best becomes the brave.

SYLVIUS.

Cordenius Maro, we shall be companions
When this wide earth with all its fields of blood
Where war hath raged, and all its towers of strength
Which have begirded been with iron hosts,
Are shrunk to nothing, and the flaming sun
Is in his course extinguish'd.

CORDENIUS.

Come, lead me, father, to the holy fount,
If I in humble penitence may be
From worldly vileness clear'd.

FATHER.

I gladly will, my son. The Spirit of Grace
Is dealing with thy spirit: be received,
A ransom'd penitent, to the high fellowship
Of all the good and bless'd in earth and heaven!

Enter a CONVERT.

Whence comest thou, Fearon? Why wert thou prevented
From joining in our last respectful homage
To those, who have so nobly for the truth
Laid down their lives?

CONVERT.

I have been watching near the grated dungeon
Where Ethocles, the Grecian, is immured.

FATHER.

Thou say'st not so! A heavier loss than this,
If they have seiz'd on him, the righteous cause
Could not have suffer'd. Art thou sure of it?
We had not heard of his return from Syria.

CONVERT.

It is too true: he landed ten days since
On the Brundusian coast, and, as he enter'd
The gates of Rome, was seized and dragg'd to prison.

FATHER.

And we in utter ignorance of this!

CONVERT.

He travell'd late and unaccompanied,
So this was done at night-fall and conceal'd.
But see his writing given me by a guard,
Who has for pity's sake betray'd his trust:
It is address'd to thee. (*Giving him a paper.*)

FATHER (*after reading it*).

Alas, alas! it is a brief account
Of his successful labours in the East:
For with his excellent gifts of eloquence,
Learning and prudence, he has made more converts
Than all our zealous brotherhood besides.
What can we do? He will be sacrificed:
The church in him must bleed, if God so wills.
It is a dreadful blow.

CORDENIUS (*to the* CONVERT).

I pray thee, in what prison is he kept?

CONVERT.

In Sylla's tower, that dwelling of despair.

CORDENIUS.

Guarded by Romans?

CONVERT.

Yes; and strongly guarded.

CORDENIUS.

Yet, he shall be released.

FATHER (*to* CORDENIUS).

Beware, my son, of rash, imprudent zeal:
The truth hath suffer'd much from this; beware:
Risk not thyself: thy life is also precious.

CORDENIUS.

My whole of life is precious; but this shred,
This earthly portion of it, what is that,
But as it is employ'd in holy acts?
Am I Christ's soldier at a poorer rate
Than I have served an earthly master? No;
I feel within my glowing breast a power
Which says I am commission'd for this service.
Give me thy blessing—thy baptismal blessing,
And then God's spirit guide me! Serving God,
I will not count the cost but to discharge it.

FATHER.

His will direct thee then, my gen'rous son!
His blessing be upon thee!—Lead him, Sylvius,
To the blest fount, where from his former sins
He shall by heavenly grace be purified.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

The Garden of Sulpicius.

Enter SULPICIUS *and* PORTIA, *with flowers in her hand.*

PORTIA.

Was it not well to rise with early morn
And pay my homage to sweet Flora? Never
Were flowers by mid-day cull'd so fair, so fragrant,
With blending streaky tints, so fresh and bright.

See; twinkling dew-drops lurk in every bell,
And on the fibred leaves stray far apart,
Like little rounded gems of silver sheen,
Whilst curling tendrils grasp with vigorous hold
The stem that bears them! All looks young and
fresh.
The very spider through his circled cage
Of wiry woof, amongst the buds suspended,
Scarce seems a lothly thing, but like the small
Imprison'd bird of some capricious nymph.
Is it not so, my father?

SULPICIUS.

Yes, morn and youth and freshness sweetly join,
And are the emblems of dear changeful days.
By night those beauteous things—

PORTIA.

And what of night?
Why do you check your words? You are not sad?

SULPICIUS.

No, Portia; only angry with myself
For crossing thy gay stream of youthful thoughts
With those of sullen age. Away with them!
What if those bright-leaved flowers, so soft and
silken,
Are gathered into dank and wrinkled folds
When evening chills them, or upon the earth
With broken stems and buds torn and dispers'd,
Lie prostrate, of fair form and fragrance reft
When midnight winds pass o'er them; be it so!

All things but have their term.
In truth, my child, I am glad that I indulged
thee
By coming forth at such an early hour
To pay thy worship to so sweet a goddess,
Upon her yearly feast.

PORTIA.

I thank you, father! On her feast, 'tis said,
That she, from mortal eye conceal'd, vouchsafes
Her presence in such sweet and flowery spots:
And where due offerings on her shrine are laid,
Blesses all seeds and shoots, and things of promise.

SULPICIUS.

How many places in one little day
She needs must visit then!

PORTIA.

But she moves swift as thought. The hasty
zephyr,
That stirr'd each slender leaf, now as we enter'd,
And made a sudden sound, by stillness follow'd,
Might be the rustling of her passing robe.

SULPICIUS.

A pleasing fancy, Portia, for the moment,
Yet wild as pleasing.

PORTIA.

Wherefore call it wild?
Full many a time I've listen'd when alone

In such fair spots as this, and thought I heard
Sweet mingled voices uttering varied tones
Of question and reply, pass on the wind,
And heard soft steps upon the ground; and then
The notion of bright Venus or Diana,
Or goddess-nymphs, would come so vividly
Into my mind, that I am almost certain
Their radiant forms were near me, tho' conceal'd
By subtle drapery of the ambient air.
And oh, how I have long'd to look upon them!
An ardent strange desire, tho' mix'd with fear.
Nay, do not smile, my father: such fair sights
Were seen—were often seen in ancient days;
The poets tell us so.
But look, the Indian roses I have foster'd
Are in full bloom; and I must gather them.

[*Exit, eagerly.*

SULPICIUS (*alone*).

Go, gentle creature, thou art careless yet:
Ah! couldst thou so remain, and still with me
Be as in years gone by!—It may not be;
Nor should I wish it: all things have their season:
She may not now remain an old man's treasure,
With all her woman's beauty grown to blossom.

Enter ORCERES.

The Parthian prince at such an early hour?

ORGERES.

And who considers hours, whose heart is bent
On what concerns a lover and a friend?
Where is thy daughter?

SULPICIUS.

Within yon flowery thicket, blythe and careless;
For tho' she loves, 'tis with sweet, maiden fancy,
Which, not impatient, looks in cheering hope
To future years.

ORCERES.

Ay, 'tis a sheltered passion,
A cradled love, by admiration foster'd:
A showy, toward nurse for babe so bashful.
Thus in the shell athwart whose snowy lining
Each changeful tint of the bright rainbow plays,
A little pearl is found in secret value
Surpassing all the rest.

SULPICIUS.

But sayest thou nothing
Of what I wish to hear? What of Cordenius?

ORGERES.

By my good war-bow and its barbed shafts!
By the best war-horse archer e'er bestrode!
I'm still in ignorance; I have not seen him.

SULPICIUS.

Thou hast not seen him! this is very strange.

ORCERES.

So it indeed appears.—My wayward friend
Has from his home been absent. Yesterday,
There and elsewhere I sought, but found him not.
This morning by the dawn again I sought him,
Thinking to find him surely and alone;
But his domestics, much amazed, have told me,
He is not yet return'd.

SULPICIUS.

Hush! through yon thicket I perceive a man.

ORCERES.

Some thief or spy.

SULPICIUS.

Let us withdraw awhile,
And mark his motions; he observes us not.

Enter CORDENIUS *from a Thicket in the back ground.*

CORDENIUS (*after looking round him with delight*).

Sweet light of day, fair sky, and verdant earth,
Enrich'd with every beauteous herb and flower,
And stately trees, that spread their boughs like tents
For shade and shelter, how I hail ye now!
Ye are His works, who made such fair abodes
For happy innocence, yet, in the wreck
Of foul perversion, has not cast us off.
(*Stooping to look at the flowers.*)

Ye little painted things, whose varied hues
Charm, ev'n to wonderment; that mighty hand
Which dyes the mountain's peak with rosy tints
Sent from the rising sun, and to the barbed
Destructive lightning gives its ruddy gleam,
Grand and terrific, thus adorns even you!
There is a father's full unstinted love
Display'd o'er all, and thus on all I gaze
With the keen thrill of new-waked ecstasy.
What voice is that so near me and so sweet?

PORTIA *without, singing some notes of prelude, and then a Song.*

SONG.

The lady in her early bower
Is blest as bee in morning flower;
The lady's eye is flashing bright,
Like water in the morning light;
The lady's song is sweet and loud,
Like skylark o'er the morning cloud;
The lady's smiles are smiles that pass
Like morning's breath o'er wavy grass.

She thinks of one, whose harness'd car
In triumph comes from distant war;
She thinks of one, whose martial state
Will darken Rome's imperial gate;
She thinks of one, with laurel crown'd,
Who shall with sweeter wreaths be bound.
Voice, eye, and smiles, in mingled play,
The lady's happy thoughts betray.

CORDENIUS.

Her voice indeed, and this my fav'rite song!
It is that gentle creature, my sweet Portia.
I call her mine, because she is the image
Which hath possess'd my fancy. Such vain thoughts
Must now give place. I will not linger here.
This is the garden of Sulpicius;
How have I miss'd my path? She sings again.
[*Sings without, as before.*
She wanders fitfully from lay to lay,
But all of them some air that I have prais'd
In happy hours gone by.

SONG.

The kind heart speaks with words so kindly sweet,
That kindred hearts the catching tones repeat;
And love, therewith, his soft sigh gently blending,
Makes pleasing harmony. Thus softly sending
Its passing cheer across the stilly main,
Whilst in the sounding water dips the oar
And glad response bursts from the nearing shore,
Comes to our ears the home-bound seamen's strain,
Who from the lofty deck hail their own land again.

CORDENIUS.

O gentle, sweet, and cheerful! form'd to be
Whate'er my heart could prize of treasured love!
Dear as thou art, I will not linger here.

Re-enter SULPICIUS *and* ORCERES, *breaking out upon him, and* ORCERES *catching hold of his robe as he is going off.*

ORGERES.

Ha! noble Maro, to a coward turn'd,
Shunning a spot of danger!

SULPICIUS.

Stay, Cordenius.
The fellest foe thou shalt contend with here,
Is her thou call'st so gentle. As for me,
I do not offer thee this hand more freely
Than I will grant all that may make thee happy,
If Portia has that power.

CORDENIUS.

And dost thou mean, in very earnest mean,
That thou wilt give me Portia—thy dear Portia?
My fancy catches wildly at thy words.

SULPICIUS.

And truly too, Cordenius. She is thine,
If thou wilt promise me to love her truly.

CORDENIUS (*eagerly clasping the knees, and then kissing the hands, of* SULPICIUS).

Thanks, thanks!—thanks from my swoln, o'er-flowing heart,

Which has no words.—Friend, father, Portia's
father!
The thought creates in me such sudden joy,
I am bewilder'd with it.

SULPICIUS.

Calm thy spirits.—
Thou should'st in meeter form have known it
sooner,
Had not the execution of those Christians—
(Pests of the earth, whom on one burning pile,
With all their kind, I would most gladly punish,)
Till now prevented me. Thy friend, Orceres—
Thou owest him thanks—pled for thee power-
fully,
And had my leave. But dost thou listen to
me?
Thy face wears many colours, and big drops
Burst from thy brow, whilst thy contracted lips
Quiver, like one in pain.

ORCERES.

What sudden illness racks thee?

CORDENIUS.

I may not tell you now: let me depart.

SULPICIUS (*holding him*).

Thou art my promised son; I have a right
To know whate'er concerns thee,—pain or plea-
sure.

CORDENIUS.

And so thou hast, and I may not deceive thee.
Take, take, Sulpicius.—O such with'ring words!
The sinking, sick'ning heart and parched mouth!
I cannot utter them.

SULPICIUS.

Why in this agony of perturbation?
Nay, strive not now to speak.

CORDENIUS.

I must, I must!—
Take back thy proffer'd gift; all earth could give;—
That which it cannot give I must retain.

SULPICIUS.

What words were these? If it were possible,
I could believe thee touch'd with sorcery,
The cursed art of those vile Nazarenes.
Where hast thou past the night? their haunts are near.

ORCERES.

Nay, nay; repress thine anger; noble Maro
May not be questioned thus.

SULPICIUS.

He may, and shall. And yet I will not urge him,
If he, with hand press'd on his breast, will say,
That he detests those hateful Nazarenes.

CORDENIUS.

No; though my life, and what is dearer far,
My Portia's love, depended on the words,
I would not, and I durst not utter them.

SULPICIUS.

I see it well: thou art ensnared and blinded
By their enchantments. Demoniac power
Will drag thee to thy ruin. Cast it off;
Defy it. Say thou wilt forbear all intercourse
With this detested sect. Art thou a madman?

CORDENIUS.

If I am mad, that which possesses me
Outvalues all philosophers e'er taught,
Or poets e'er imagined.—Listen to me.
Call ye these Christians vile, because they
suffer
All nature shrinks from, rather than deny
What seems to them the truth? Call ye them
sorcerers,
Because their words impart such high conceptions
Of power creative and parental love,
In one great Being join'd, as makes the heart
Bound with ennobling thoughts? Call ye them
curst
Who daily live in steady strong assurance
Of endless blessedness? O, listen to me!

Re-enter PORTIA, *bursting from a Thicket close to them.*

PORTIA.

O, listen to him, father!

SULPICIUS.

Let go my robe, fond creature! Listen to him!
The song of syrens were less fatal. Charms
Of dire delusion, luring on to ruin,
Are mingled with the words that speak their faith;
They, who once hear them, flutter round
destruction
With giddy fascination, like the moth,
Which, shorn of half its form, all scorch'd and
shrivell'd,
Still to the torch returns. I will not listen;
No, Portia, nor shalt thou.

PORTIA.

O, say not so
For if you listen to him, you may save him,
And win him from his errors.

SULPICIUS.

Vain hope! vain hope! What is man's natural
reason
Opposed to demon subtlety? Cordenius!
Cordenius Maro! I adjure thee, go!
Leave me; why would'st thou pull destruction
on me?
On one who loved thee so, that tho' possess'd

Of but one precious pearl, most dearly prized,
Prized more than life, yet would have given it to
thee.
I needs must weep: ev'n for thyself I weep.

CORDENIUS.

Weep not, my kind Sulpicius! I will leave thee,
Albeit the pearl thou would'st bestow upon me
Is, in my estimation, dearer far
Than life, or power, or fame, or earthly thing.
When these fierce times are past, thou wilt,
perhaps,
Think of me with regard, but not with pity,
How fell soe'er my earthly end hath been,
For I shall then be blest. And thou, dear Portia,
Wilt thou remember me? That thought, alas!
Dissolves my soul in weakness.—
O, to be spared, if it were possible,
This stroke of agony! Is it not possible,
That I might yet—— Almighty God forgive me!
Weak thoughts will lurk in the devoted heart,
But not be cherish'd there. I may not offer
Aught short of all to thee. ——
Farewell, farewell! sweet Portia, fare thee well!

[ORCERES *catches hold of him to prevent his going.*

Retain me not: I am a Parthian now.
My strength is in retreat.

[*Exit.*

PORTIA.

That noble mind! and must it then be ruin'd?
O save him, save him, father! Brave Orceres,
Wilt thou not save thy friend, the noble Maro?

ORCERES.

We will, sweet maid, if it be possible.
We'll keep his faith a secret in our breasts;
And he may yet, if not by circumstances
Provok'd to speak, conceal it from the world.

PORTIA.

And you, my father?

SULPICIUS.

I will not betray him.

PORTIA.

Then all may yet be well; for our great gods,
Whom Cæsar and his subject-nations worship,
Will not abandon Rome's best, bravest soldier
To power demoniac. That can never be,
If they indeed regard us.

ORCERES.

Were he in Parthia, our great god, the sun,
Or rather he who in that star resides,
Would not permit his power to be so thwarted,
For all the demonry that e'er exerted
Its baleful influence on wretched men.
Beshrew me! for a thought gleams thro' my brain
It is this God, perhaps, with some new name,
Which these bewilder'd Nazarenes adore.

SULPICIUS.

With impious rites, most strange and horrible.

ORCERES.

If he, my friend, in impious rites hath join'd,
Demons, indeed, have o'er the soul of man
A power to change its nature. Ay, Sulpicius;
And thou and I may, ere a day shall pass,
Be very Nazarenes. We are in ignorance;
We shoot our arrow in the dark, and cry,
"It is to wound a foe." Come, gentle Portia;
Be not so sad; the man thou lovest is virtuous,
And brave, and loves thee well; why then despair?

PORTIA.

Alas! I know he is brave and virtuous,
Therefore, I do despair.

ORCERES.

In Nero's court, indeed,
Such men are ever on the brink of danger,
But would'st thou have him other than he is?

PORTIA.

O, no! I would not; that were base and sordid;
Yet shed I tears, even like a wayward child
Who weeps for that which cannot be attain'd,—
Virtue, and constancy, and safety join'd.
I pray thee pardon me, for I am wretched,
And that doth make me foolish and perverse.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Before the Gate of Nero's Palace: Guards, with their Officers, discovered on Duty.*

Enter to them another Officer, *speaking, as he enters, to the Soldiers.*

FIRST OFFICER.

Strike up some sacred strain of Roman triumph;
The Pontiff comes to meet the summon'd council.
Omit not this respect, else he will deem
We are of those who love the Nazarenes.
Sing loud and clearly.

Enter PONTIFF, *attended.*

SACRED HYMN *by the Soldiers.*

That chief, who bends to Jove the suppliant knee,
Shall firm in power and high in honour be;
And who to Mars a soldier's homage yields,
Shall laurell'd glory reap in bloody fields;
Who vine-crown'd Bacchus, bounteous Lord, adores,
Shall gather still, unscath'd, his vintage stores;

Who to fair Venus lib'ral off'ring gives,
Enrich'd with love and sweet affection lives.
Then, be your praises still our sacred theme,
O Venus, Bacchus, Mars, and Jove supreme!

PONTIFF.

I thank ye, soldiers! Rome, indeed, hath triumph'd,
Bless'd in the high protection of her gods,
The sov'reign warrior-nation of the world;
And, favour'd by great Jove and mighty Mars,
So may she triumph still, nor meanly stoop
To worship strange and meaner deities,
Adverse to warlike glory.

[*Exit, with his train.*

FIRST OFFICER.

The Pontiff seems disturb'd, his brow is lowering.

SECOND OFFICER.

Reproof and caution, mingled with his thanks,
Tho' utter'd graciously.

FIRST OFFICER.

He is offended,
Because of late so many valiant soldiers
Have proselytes become to this new worship;
A worship too, as he insinuates,
Unsuited to the brave.

THIRD OFFICER.

Ay, ay! the sacred chickens are in danger.

SECOND OFFICER.

Sylvius is suspected, as I hear.

FIRST OFFICER.

Hush! let us to our duty; it is time
To change the inner guard.

[*Exeunt, with music, into the gate of the palace.*

SCENE II.

A Council Chamber in the Palace: NERO *with his Counsellors discovered;* NERO *in the act of speaking.*

NERO.

Yes, Servius; formerly we have admitted,
As minor powers, amongst the ancient gods
Of high imperial Rome, the foreign deities
Of friendly nations; but these Nazarenes
Scorn such association, proudly claiming
For that which is the object of their faith,
Sole, undivided homage: and our altars,
Our stately temples, the majestic forms
Of Mars, Apollo, thund'ring Jove himself,
By sculptor's art divine so nobly wrought,
Are held by these mad zealots in contempt.
Examine, sayest thou! shall imperial Cæsar
Deign to examine what withstands his power?
I marvel at thy folly, Servius Sillus.

Enter an Officer.

OFFICER.

The Pontiff, mighty Cæsar, waits without,
And craves admittance.

NERO.

Let him be admitted.

Enter PONTIFF.

Pontiff, thy visage, if I read it well,
Says that some weighty matter brings thee here:
Thou hast our leave to speak.

PONTIFF.

Imperial Nero, did'st thou not condemn
That eloquent, but pestilential Nazarene,
The Grecian Ethocles, whose specious words
Wrap in delusion all who listen to him,
Spreading his baleful errors o'er the world?

NERO.

Did I condemn him! Ev'n this very day,
He in the Amphitheatre meets his doom;
Having, I trust, no power of words to charm
The enchafed lion, or the famish'd wolf.

PONTIFF.

I am inform'd, and I believe it true,
That this bold malefactor is enlarged.

NERO.

It is impossible! Cordenius Maro
Is sworn to guard the prisoner; or, failing,
(How could he fail?) to pay with his own life
The forfeit. But behold his fav'rite friend,
The Parthian Prince, who will inform us truly.

Enter ORCERES, *followed by* SULPICIUS.

Orceres, is thy friend Cordenius coming?
I have commanded him, and at this hour,
To bring his guarded prisoner to the palace,
Here to remain till the appointed time.

ORCERES.

I know not; nor have I beheld Cordenius
Since yesterday; when, at an early hour,
Sulpicius and myself met him by chance:
But for the prisoner, he is at hand,
Ev'n at the palace gate; for as we enter'd
We saw him there, well circled round with guards,
Tho' in the martial throng we saw not Maro.

NERO.

(*To the* Pontiff.) Said I not so?
(*To an* Officer.) Command them instantly
To bring this wordy Grecian to our presence.

[*Exit* Officer.

Sulpicius, thou hast known this Ethocles;
Is he a madman, or ambitious knave,

Who sought on human folly to erect
A kind of fancied greatness for himself?

SULPICIUS.

I know not which, great Nero.

NERO.

And did'st thou not advise me earnestly
To rid the state of such a pestilence?

SULPICIUS.

And so I still advise thee; for this Greek
Is dang'rous above all, who, with their lives,
Have yet paid forfeit for their strange belief.
They come: the prisoner in foreign garb
So closely wrapp'd, I scarcely see his face.

Enter Prisoner, *attended.*

PONTIFF.

If it in truth be he.

NERO.

(*To the* Pontiff.) Dost thou still doubt?
(*To the* Prisoner.) Stand forth, audacious rebel to my will!
Dost thou still brave it, false and subtle spirit?

CORDENIUS (*throwing off his Grecian cloak, and advancing to* NERO).

I am not false, Augustus; but if subtle,
Add to my punishment what shall be deem'd
Meet retribution. I have truly sworn,

Or to produce thy thrall, or, therein failing,
To give my life for his; and here I stand.
Ethocles, by a higher power than thine,
Is yet reserved for great and blessed ends.
Take thou the forfeit; I have kept my oath.

NERO.

I am amazed beyond the power of utt'rance!
Grows it to such a pitch that Rome's brave captains
Are by this wizard sorcery so charm'd?
Then it is time, good sooth! that sweeping vengeance
Should rid the earth of every tainted thing
Which that curst sect hath touch'd. Cordenius Maro,
Thou who hast fought our battles, graced our state,
And borne a noble Roman's honour'd name,
What, O what power could tempt thee to this shame?

CORDENIUS.

I have been tempted by that mighty Power,
Who gave to Rome her greatness, to the earth
Form and existence; yea, and to the soul
Of living, active man, sense and perception:
But not to shame, O Cæsar! not to shame!

NERO.

What, hast thou not become a Nazarene,
As now I apprehended? Say, thou hast not;

And though thy present act is most audacious,
Yet will I spare thy life.

CORDENIUS.

If thou would'st spare my life, and to that grace
Add all the wealth of Rome, and all the power
Of Rome's great Lord, I would not for the bribe
Be other than I am, or what I am
Basely deny.

NERO.

Thou art a Christian, then? Thou art a maniac!

CORDENIUS.

I am a man, who, seeing in the flames
Those dauntless Christians suffer, long'd to know
What power could make them brave the fear of
death,
Disgrace, and infamy.—And I have learnt
That they adore a God, — one God, supreme,
Who, over all men, his created sons,
Rules as a father; and beholding sin,
Growth of corruption, mar this earthly race,
Sent down to earth his sinless heavenly Son,
Who left, with generous devoted love,
His state of exaltation and of glory,
To win them back to virtue, yea, to virtue
Which shall be crown'd with never-ending bliss.
I've learnt that they with deep adoring gratitude
Pay homage to that Son, the sent of God,
Who here became a willing sacrifice

To save mankind from sin and punishment,
And earn for them a better life hereafter,
When mortal life is closed. The heart's deep homage
Becoming well such creatures, so redeem'd.

NERO.

Out on that dreaming madness!

CORDENIUS.

Is it madness
To be the humble follower of Him,
Who left the bliss of heaven to be for us
A man on earth, in spotless virtue living
As man ne'er lived: such words of comfort speaking,
To rouse, and elevate, and cheer the heart,
As man ne'er spoke; and suff'ring poverty,
Contempt, and wrong, and pain, and death itself,
As man ne'er suffer'd? O, if this be madness,
Which makes each generous impulse of my nature
Warm into ecstasy, each towering hope
Rise to the noblest height of bold conception;
that which is reason call'd, and yet has taught you
To worship different gods in every clime,
As dull and wicked as their worshippers,
Compared to it, is poor, confined, and mean,
As is the Scythian's curtain'd tent, compared
With the wide range of fair, expanded nature.

NERO.

Away, away! with all those lofty words!
They but bewilder thee.

CORDENIUS.

Yet hear them, Nero! O resist them not!
Perhaps they are appointed for thy good,
And for the good of thousands. When these hands
Which have so oft done Rome a soldier's service,
This tongue which speaks to thee, are turu'd to ashes,
What now appears so wild and fanciful,
May be remember'd with far other feelings.
It is not life that I request of Nero,
Altho' I said these hands have fought for Rome.
No; in the presence of these senators,
First bind thyself by every sacred oath
To give this body to the flames, then hear me;
O could I speak what might convince Rome's chief;
Her senators, her tribes, her meanest slaves,
Of Christ's most blessed truth, the fatal pile
Would be to me a car of joyful triumph,
Mounted more gladly than the laurell'd hero
Vaults to his envied seat, while Rome's thronged streets
Resound his shouted name. Within me stirs
The spirit of truth and power which spoke to me,
And will upon thy mind ——

NERO.

I charge thee cease!

ORCERES.

Nay, Emperor! might I entreat for him?

CORDENIUS (*catching hold of* ORCERES *eagerly*).

Not for my life.

ORCERES.

No; not for that, brave Maro!
(*To* NERO.) Let me entreat that he may freely speak.
Fear'st thou he should convince thee by his words?
That were a foul affront to thine own reason,
Or to the high divinities of Rome.

NERO.

Cease, Prince of Parthia! nor too far presume
Upon a noble stranger's privilege.

PONTIFF.

Shall words so bold be to thine ear august
So freely utter'd with impunity?

ORCERES.

Pontiff; I much revere thy sacred office,
But scorn thy paltry words. Not freely speak!
Not with impunity! Is this a threat?
Let Rome's great master, or his angry slaves,
Shed one drop of my blood, and on our plains,

Where heretofore full many a Roman corse,
With Parthian arrows pierced, have vultures fed,
Twice thirty thousand archers in array,
Each with his bow strain'd for the distant mark,
Shall quickly stand, impatient for revenge.
Not with impunity!

SULPICIUS.

Nay, nay, Orceres! with such haughty words
Thou'lt injure him thou plead'st for. Noble Cæsar!
Permit an aged man, a faithful servant,
To speak his thoughts. This brave deluded youth
Is now, as I sincerely do believe,
Beneath the power of strong and dire enchantment.
Hear not his raving words, but spare his life;
And when its power (for all delusion holds
Its power but for a season) shall be spent,
He will himself entreat your clemency,
And be again the soldier of the state,
Brave and obedient. Do not hear him now:
Command him to retire.

CORDENIUS.

I thank thee, good Sulpicius, but my life,
For which thou plead'st, take no account of that;
I yield it freely up to any death,
Cruel or merciful, which the decree
Of Cæsar shall inflict, for leave to speak

Ev'n but a few short moments. Princely Nero!
The strong enchantment which deludes my soul
Is, that I do believe myself the creature,
Subject and soldier, if I so may speak,
Of an Almighty Father, King, and Lord,
Before whose presence, when my soul shall be
Of flesh and blood disrobed, I shall appear,
There to remain with all the great and good
That e'er have lived on earth, yea, and with spirits,
Higher than earth e'er own'd, in such pure bliss
As human heart conceives not,—if my life,
With its imperfect virtue, find acceptance
From pard'ning love and mercy; but, if otherwise,
That I shall pass into a state of misery
With souls of wicked men and wrathful demons.
That I believe this earth on which we stand
Is but the vestibule to glorious mansions,
Thro' which a moving crowd for ever press;
And do regard the greatest Prince, who now
Inflicts short torment on this flesh, as one
Who but in passing rudely rends my robe.
And thinkest thou that I, believing this,
Will shrink to do His will whom I adore?
Or thinkest thou this is a senseless charm,
That soon will pass away?

NERO.

High words, indeed, if resting on good proof!
A maniac's fancies may be grand and noble.

CORDENIUS.

Ay, now thou list'nest, as a man should listen,
With an inquiring mind. Let me produce
The proofs which have constrain'd me to believe,
From written lore and well attested facts; —
Let me produce my proofs, and it may be
The Spirit of Truth may touch thy yielding heart,
And save thee from destruction.

NERO.

Ha! dost thou think to make of me a convert?
Away, weak fool! and most audacious rebel!
Give proofs of thy obedience, not thy faith,
If thou wouldst earn thy pardon.

CORDENIUS.

If thou condemn me in the flames to die,
I will and must obey thee; if to live,
Disgraced by pardon won thro' treachery
To God, my King supreme, and his bless'd Christ,
I am, indeed, thy disobedient rebel.

NERO.

And shall as such most dearly pay the forfeit.
Out! — take him from my presence till the time
Of public execution.
Cordenius Maro, thou shalt fall this day
By no ignoble foe; — a noble lion
Famish'd and fierce shall be thy adversary.
And dost thou smile and raise thy head at this,
In stately confidence?

CORDENIUS.

God will deliver me from every adversary.
And thou too smilest. — Yes; he will deliver
That which I call *myself*. For this poor form
Which vests me round, I give it to destruction
As gladly as the storm-beat traveller,
Who, having reached his destined place of shelter,
Drops at the door his mantle's cumbrous weight.

NERO (*going*).

Then to thy visionary hopes I leave thee,
Incorrigible man! Here, in this chamber
Keep him secure till the appointed hour.
(*To the* Officers, *&c.*)
Off, good Sulpicius! hang not on me thus!

SULPICIUS.

O, mighty Cæsar! countermand your orders:
Delay it but a month, a week, a day.

[*Exeunt* NERO, SULPICIUS, *Senators, &c.* SULPICIUS *still keeping close to* NERO *in the act of supplication.* — ORCERES, CORDENIUS, *and Guards remain, the Guards standing respectfully at a distance in the back-ground.*

ORCERES.

Noble Cordenius! can thy martial spirit
Thus brook to be a public spectacle,
Fighting with savage beasts, the sport of fools,
Till thou shalt fall, deformed and horrible,
Mangled and piece-meal torn? It must not be.

CORDENIUS.

Be not so moved, Orceres; I can bear it:
The God I worship, who hath made me humble,
Hath made me dauntless too. And for the shame
Which, as I guess, disturbs thee most, my Master,
The Lord and Leader I have sworn to follow,
Did as a malefactor end his days,
To save a lost, perverted race: shall I
Feel degradation, then, in following him?

ORCERES.

In this, alas! thou'lt follow him too surely;
But whither, noble Maro?

CORDENIUS.

Ev'n to my destined home, my Father's house.

ORCERES.

And where is that? O, canst thou tell me where?
Beyond the ocean, or beneath the earth?
Be there more worlds than this, beyond our ken
In regions vast, above the lofty stars?
Could we thro' the far stretch of space descry
Ev'n but the distant verge, tho' dimly mark'd,
Of any other world, I would believe
That virtuous men deceased have in good truth
A destined place of rest.

CORDENIUS.

Believe it — O, believe it, brave Orceres!

ORCERES.

I'll try to do it. I'll become a Christian,
Were it but only to defy this tyrant.

CORDENIUS.

Thou must receive with a far different spirit
The faith of Jesus Christ. Perhaps thou wilt.
My heart leaps at the thought. When I am dead,
Remain in Rome no longer. In the East
Search thou for Ethocles, whom I have rescued;
And if he shall convert thee, O, how richly
He will repay all I have done for him!
— But, I would now withdraw a little space,
To pour my thoughts in prayer and thankfulness
To Him, the great, the good, the wise, the just,
Who holds man's spirit in his own high keeping,
And now supports my soul, and will support it,
Till my appointed task is done. In secret
The hearts by Jesus taught were bid to pray,
And, if it be permitted, so will I.
(*To the* Guards, *who advance as he speaks to them.*)
My guards, and, some time past, my fellow-soldiers,
Let me remain alone a little while,
And fear not my escape. If ye distrust me,
Watch well the door, and bind my hands with chains.

FIRST OFFICER.

Yes, brave Cordenius, to another chamber
Thou may'st retire, and we will watch without.
But be thy person free: we will not bind,
With felon cord or chain, those valiant hands,
Which have so often for thy country fought,
Until we are commanded.

CORDENIUS.

I thank ye all, my friends, and I believe
That I shall meet and thank ye too hereafter;
For there is something in you God must love,
(*To* First Officer.) And, loving, will not give to
reprobation.
Codrus, thou once didst put thy life in hazard,
And suffer much to save a helpless Greek
Who sought protection of thee.
(*Turning to the* Second Officer.) Ay, and thou,
Young Lelius, once a rich and tempting ransom
Didst freely to a captive wretch remit.
Ye are of those whom Jesus came to save:
Yes; we shall meet hereafter.
(*To* Third Officer.) And thou, my former enemy,
weepest thou?
We're enemies no more; thou art my brother.
I will retire; my little term of life
Runs fleetly on; I must not spend it thus.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

A crowded Amphitheatre: NERO *and the Senators discovered in the back-ground sitting in state;* PORTIA, *by the side of* NERO, *in the act of supplication.*

Enter SULPICIUS *on the front, meeting with another noble Roman.*

SULPICIUS (*eagerly*).
Is he advancing?

NOBLE ROMAN.

Yes, and close at hand,
Surrounded by a group of martial friends.
Oft have I seen him on a day of battle
March to the charge with noble portly gait;
But now he treads the ground with buoyant steps
Which from its surface spring, as tho' he press'd
Substance of renovating power. His form
Seems stately and enlarged beyond its wont;
And in his countenance, oft turn'd to heaven,
There is a look as if some god dwelt in him.

SULPICIUS.

How do the people greet him?

NOBLE ROMAN.

Every face
Gazing upon him, turns, with transit quick,
Pity to admiration. Warlike veterans
Are shedding tears like infants. As he passed
The Legion he commanded in Armenia,
They raised a shout as if a victor came,
Saluting him with long and loud applause,
None daring to reprove them.

[*Noise without of shouting.*

Hark! he comes.

Enter CORDENIUS, *followed by* ORCERES *and* SYLVIUS, *and attended by other friends, with Guards, &c.*

SULPICIUS (*advancing eagerly to meet him*).

Cordenius, O Cordenius! hear a friend,

A faithful ancient friend; thy Portia's father!
At Nero's footstool she is pleading for thee,
And will not plead in vain, if thou wilt testify
A yielding mind, a willingness to live.

CORDENIUS.

I am so pleased to die, and am so honour'd
In dying for the pure and holy truth,
That nature's instinct seems in me extinguish'd.
But if the Emperor freely pardon me,
I shall believe it is the will of God
That I should yet on earth promote his service,
And, so believing, am content to live;
Living or dying to his will resign'd.

Enter PORTIA *on the front, and catching hold of* CORDENIUS *with eagerness and great agitation.*

PORTIA.

Cordenius, thou art pardoned. Nero spares thee,
If thou wilt only say thou art a Roman,
In heart and faith, as all thy fathers were,
Or but forbear to say thou art a Christian.

CORDENIUS.

Thanks, gentle Portia! life preserved by thee,
Even to be spent in want and contumely,
Rather than grieve thy kind and tender heart,
My dearest, gentlest friend! I had accepted:
But to deny my God, and put dishonour
Upon the noblest, most exalted faith
That ever was to human thoughts reveal'd,
Is what I will not — yea, and though a Roman,

A noble Roman, and a soldier too,
I dare not do. Let Nero have this answer.

PORTIA.

No, not this answer, Maro; not this answer!
Cast not life from thee, dear, most dear Cordenius!
Life, too, which I should spend my life in cheering,
Cast it not from thee like a worthless thing.

CORDENIUS.

Because it is not worthless but most precious,
And now, when dear to thee, more precious far
Than I have e'er esteem'd it, 't is an offering
More meet for God's acceptance;
Withheld from him, not even thyself, sweet maid,
Couldst cheer its course, nor yet couldst thou be happy.

PORTIA.

Nay, but I could!—to see thee still alive,
And by my side, mine own redeemed friend,
Should I not then be happy?

CORDENIUS.

I should be by thy side, dear love! but thou,
With all thy excellence, couldst have no happiness,
Mated with one, whose living form alone
Could move upon the earth, while far adrift
His mind would dwell by ceaseless meditation,
In other worlds of blessedness or woe;

Lost to the one, and to the other link'd
By horrid sympathy, till his wrench'd nature
Should to a demon's fell and restless spirit
At last be changed.

PORTIA.

Alas, alas! and dost thou then believe
That nought remains for thee but death or misery?

CORDENIUS.

No, gentle Portia! firmly I believe
That I shall live in endless happiness,
And with the blest hereafter shall behold
Thy blessed self with ecstasy of love,
Exceeding every thought of earth-born passion,
As the fair morning star in lovely brightness
Excels a night-fly, twinkling through the gloom.
Live in this hope, dear Portia! hold it fast;
And may His blessing rest upon thy head,
Who loves the loving and the innocent!
Farewell, in love and hope! farewell, in peace!
Farewell, in quick'ning faith,—in holy joy!

PORTIA (*clasping his knees*).

Nay, let me yet conjure thee!
Make me not wretched, I who once was happy,
And happiest of all in loving thee.

CORDENIUS.

This is mine anguish and my suffering!
O, good Sulpicius! bear her to her home.

SULPICIUS (*leading her gently away, while she still clings to him*).

Forbear, my child, thy tears are all in vain.

Enter a LICTOR.

LICTOR.

Cæsar forbids all further interruption
To his imperial sentence. Let Cordenius
Forthwith prepare him for the fatal fight.
This is mine office, and I must perform it.

(*Begins to disrobe* CORDENIUS, *while* PORTIA *shrieks aloud, and is carried off in the arms of her Father.*)

Disrobe thee, Maro, of those martial weeds.

CORDENIUS.

Gladly; for Him I serve,—my glorious Master,
Hath braced me with an armour that defies
All hostile things; in which I 'll strive more proudly
Than I have ever fought in field or breach
With Rome's or Nero's foes.

LICTOR.

Cæsar desires thee also to remember,
That no ignoble audience, e'en thy Emperor,
And all the states of Rome, behold thy deeds.

CORDENIUS.

Tell him my deeds shall witness'd be by those
Compared to whom the Emperor of Rome,

With all her high estates, are but as insects
Hov'ring at mid-day o'er some tainted marsh.
I know full well that no ignoble audience
Are present, though from mortal eyes conceal'd.
Farewell, my friends! kind, noble friends, farewell!

(*Apart to* SYLVIUS, *while* ORCERES *goes off, re-appearing in another part of the theatre.*)

Sylvius farewell! If thou should'st e'er be call'd
To die a holy Martyr for the truth,
God give thee then the joy which now I feel.
But keep thy faith conceal'd, till useful service
Shall call thee to maintain it. God be with thee!
(*Looking round.*) Where is Orceres gone? I thought him near me.

SYLVIUS.

'T is but a moment since he left thy side
With eager haste.

CORDENIUS.

He would not see my death. I'm glad he 's gone.
Say I inquired for him, and say I bless'd him.
—Now I am ready. Earthly friends are gone.
Angels and blessed spirits! to your fellowship
A few short pangs will bring me.
— O, Thou, who didst upon the Cross for us
A willing suff'rer die! receive my soul!
Almighty God and Sire, supreme o'er all!
Pardon my sins and take me to Thyself!

Accept the last words of my earthly lips:
High hallelujah to thy holy name!

[*A Lion now appears, issuing from a low door at the end of the Stage, and* CORDENIUS, *advancing to meet it, enters the Arena, when* ORCERES *from a lofty stand amongst the spectators, sends an arrow from his bow, which pierces* CORDENIUS *through the heart. He then disappears, and re-entering below, catches hold of his hand as* SYLVIUS *supports him from falling to the ground.*

ORCERES (*to* CORDENIUS).

Have I done well, my friend?—this is a death
More worthy of a Roman.
I made a vow in secret to my heart,
That thou shouldst ne'er be made a mangled sight
For gazing crowds and Nero's ruthless eye.

SYLVIUS.

That dying look, which almost smiles upon thee,
Says that thou hast done well; though words no more
May pass from these closed lips, whose last, bless'd utterance
Was the soul's purest and sublimest impulse.

[*The Curtain drops.*

NOTE TO THE DRAMA.

For the better understanding of different allusions in the foregoing drama, I beg to transcribe a few passages from Fox's History of Martyrs, taken from Book I., which contains an account of the ten persecutions of the primitive church.

He says, on the authority of Justin Martyr, — "And whether earthquake, pestilence, or whatever public calamity befell, it was attributed to the Christians;" (then is added) "over and beside all these, a great occasion that stirred up the emperors against the Christians came by one Publius Tarquinius, the chief prelate of the idolatrous sacrifices, and Mamertinus, the chief governor of the city, in the time of Trajanus, who, partly with money, partly with sinister, pestilent counsaile, partly with infamous accusations, (as witnesseth Nauclerus,) incensed the mind of the emperor so much against God's people."

In the account of the third persecution (AN. 100), Eustasius, a great and victorious captain, is mentioned as suffering martyrdom, by order of the Emperor Adrian, who went to meet him on his return from conquest over the barbarians, but, upon Eustasius's refusing on the way to do sacrifice to Apollo for his victory, brought him to Rome and had him put to death.

In the fourth persecution (AN. 162), it is mentioned that many Christian soldiers were found in the army of Marcus Aurelius:—

"As these aforesaid were going to their execution, there was a certain souldiour who in their defence took part against

those who rayled upon them, for the which cause the people crying out against him, he was apprehended, and being constant in his profession, was forthwith beheaded."

In the persecutions of Decius, several soldiers are mentioned as martyrs, some of whom had before concealed their faith; and in the tenth persecution, Mauritius, the captain of the Theban band, with his soldiers, to the number of 6666 (a number probably greatly exaggerated), are recorded as having been slain as martyrs by the order of Maximinian.

Tertullian, in his Apology for the Christians, mentions the slanderous accusations against them, of putting to death children and worshipping an ass's head. And when we consider how fond the ignorant are of excitement arising from cruel, absurd, and wonderful stories, and how easily a misapprehended and detached expression may be shaped by conjecture into a detailed transaction, such accusations were very probable and might be naturally expected; particularly when the unoffending meekness of their behaviour made supposed hidden atrocities more necessary for the justification of their persecutors.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

(BEING THE FOURTH VOLUME OF THE SERIES OF PLAYS ON THE PASSIONS,—THE FIRST OF THE PRESENT PUBLICATION.)

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