

Helen. Your gods are but demons; and had they been mortals, they would have been, by your own account of them, a disgrace to humanity. Your temples are dens of the vilest wickedness; your emperor is a base tyrant, and deserves himself to be torn by the beasts of the circus. I defy him and you, together with all the tortures you can inflict, and desire to be led to martyrdom.

Agnes [aside]. Oh, how good Helen is! how noble she looks! I should never be able to say all that.

Oswald to Helen. So thou pratest, dost thou? By the emperor's command, thus will I silence thee. [*He gives her a blow with the rod.*]

Helen [angrily]. Don't, Oswald! You hurt me.

Oswald. Hurt you? that is impossible. I hit Agnes much harder, and she only smiled. I did not hurt you, I am sure.

Helen. You did, Oswald; and I will not play with you if you do it again.

Oswald. And I will not play with you if you call me Oswald; you are breaking the rules of the game, to call me Oswald instead of lictor.

They seem about to quarrel violently.

Angel to Agnes. Make peace between them; that will be a flower for the altar.

Agnes. Dear Oswald, I think you must have hurt Helen a little more than you intended; for see, there is a blue mark on her arm. Had we not better leave off this part of the game? Suppose the lictor should suddenly be converted; and then we can all be Christians going together to martyrdom, carrying our palms and singing our hymns.

Helen. With all my heart.

Oswald. Very well, I am ready; and for a beginning I will kick down the altar of Jupiter, and throw away my fasces.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.

The children are walking in procession, bearing their mock palms. HELEN and AGNES have their hands bound. They sing "Ave maris Stella." A group of little villagers stand in the road, looking through the gate of the garden to listen and to watch them as they pass.