

They walked as friends together, well content
One with the other, and the seasons passed.
But one day when the skies were clear there came
A trouble in the air, the name of Eric
Whispered about, with hints and rumors dark:
Then clearer warnings of a shameful deed.
The gossips buzzed, breathless and wide of eye,
And Malcolm laughed aloud, incredulous.
But Eric made no sign, and Malcolm knew
His soul grow sick within him when, forthwith,
The law stretched out a rough relentless hand
And held young Eric, on the grievous plea
That he had robbed his masters, the great firm
Known in a hundred markets.

Oh the shame,
The sorrow of it! for the word was true.
Before the seat of judgment he was brought
A wan white ghost: there serpentlike his sin
Uncoiled itself to do his name to death.
The game of stocks, with its forced ebb and flow
And lust of gain unsanctified by toil,
Had lured the lad. He had not meant to keep
The lost securities: they had been pledged
To bear his ventures through: a fond excuse
And pitiful, that could not stay his doom.
They led him forth a felon, and the world
Was different to Malcolm from that day.
Thenceforth he chose no heart to share his own
But walked alone, and all his thoughts were sad.