

"Thy charge exactly is performed ;
Thou shalt be free...."

Victim of dark treason and bitterest ingratitude, Prospero sees a favorable occasion to take Christian revenge. Sebastian and Antonio have planned the murder of Alonso. Informed of this execrable plot, Prospero, on the eve of its execution, despatches his messenger to Gonzalo and warns him of the danger that threatens the king. Ambition is incapable of such an action, and less so vengeance. What in fact can Prospero hope for his action? He does not seek reward, since he conceals his name by sending Ariel. Nor can he have in view the bettering of his condition, when those whom he saves, are the very men who are the cause of his misery and affliction.

This action, nevertheless, is but the prelude of what Prospero has planned in his mercy towards his foes—reconciliation and remorse for sins yet to be effaced by the tears of repentance. The marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda, while uniting two pure affections, will, he hopes, open the way to the realization of his admirable plan. But with what prudence and wise moderation he proceeds in an action of such importance! Ferdinand's love will be put to the trial of a long and arduous slavery. Nor is his conduct, so severe and brutal in appearance, to be attributed to any grudge, since it served to cement by degrees an affection and an attachment henceforth inviolable :

"All thy vexations
Were but my trials of thy love ; and thou
Hast strangely stood the test ; Here, afore Heaven,
I ratify this my rich gift."

Prospero's project is pointing to a head. The achieved union of Ferdinand and Miranda has renewed and rendered more intimate the relations which cold ambition had broken. What now remains to be done, but to throw off all magic and disguise, and to reveal himself to those who are already his friends, although still irreconciled? The story of their sufferings and desolation, reported by Ariel, put an end to all further hesitation and delay, and provoked these words, impressed with compassion and mercy:

"Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling
Of their afflictions, and shall not myself