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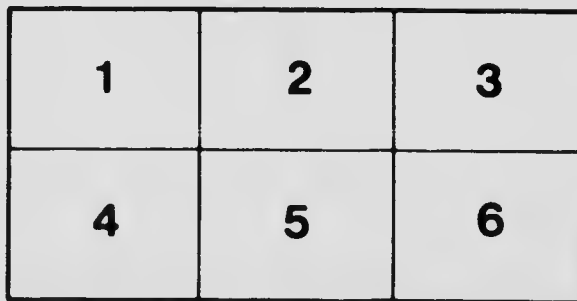
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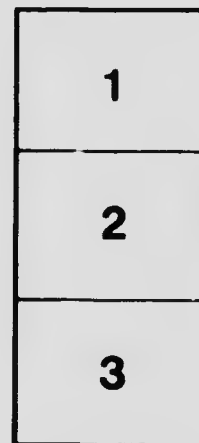
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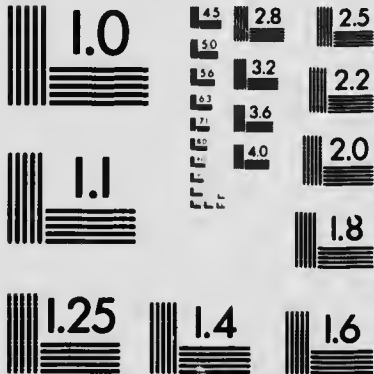
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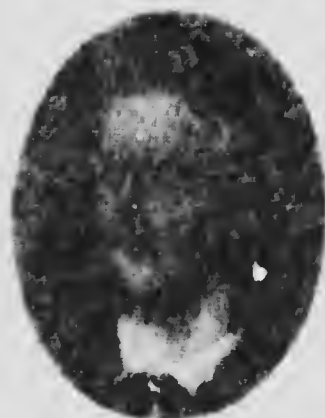
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PUBLISHERS' PREFACE

THE issuing of this edition of Swinburne in two volumes, one "Poems" and the other "Tragedies," we feel is really needed. To get the author's works before this time meant either buying the American edition in eleven volumes or collecting the English edition, in more numerous volumes, at even greater expense. The works of all the other standard poets may be had in some compact form for library use, and Swinburne surely should not be neglected. This edition, with the exception of "Rosamund," "Balen," and a few minor poems, is complete.

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S

THE QUEEN-MOTHER.

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AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

TO

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

CHARLES IX.
HENRY, King of Navarre,
GASPARD DE SAULX, Marshal of
Tavannes, } Catholic Nobles.
HENRY, Duke of Guise,
PIERRE DE BOURDEILLES, Abbé
de Brantôme,
The Admiral COLIGNY,
M. DE LA NOUE,
M. DE TELIGNY,
M. DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD, } Huguenot Nobles.
M. DE MARSILLAC,
M. DE SOUBISE,
M. DE PARDAILLAN,
CINO GALLI, Jester to the Queen-Mother.
Two Captains.

CATHERINE DE' MEDICI, Queen-Mother.
MARGARET, Queen of Navarre.
CLAUDE, Duchess of Lorraine.
Duchess of Guise.
DENISE DE MAULEVRIER,
YOLANDE DE MONTLITARD, } Maids of Honor.
ANNE DE SAULX,
RENEE DE BARBEZIEUX,
Soldiers, People, Attendants, &c. Scene, Paris,
Time, Aug. 22-24, 1572.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Environs of the Louvre.*

*Enter MARSILLAC, PARDAILLAN, SOUBISE
and others, masked; the Duchess of Guise,
and other Ladies.*

Marsillac.

NO, not the king, sir, but my lord of
Guise;

I know him by the setting of his neck.
The mask is wried there.

PAR. Are not you the queen?
By the head's turn you should be; your hair
too

Has just the gold stamp of a crown on it.

DUCH.—You do despise her by your
scorn of me.

PAR.—Not the queen; then that hair's
real gold of yours

And no white under?

SOU. Speak low, sirs; the king—
See him there, down between the two big
stems,

Wearing a rose, some damozel with him
In the queen's colors.

MAR. Ill colors those to wear!
I doubt some loose half of a Florentine,
Clipt n.etal too.

PAR. Lower: they are close by this;
Make space, I pray you; Christ, how thick
they get!

[*The Courtiers fall back.*]

*Enter the King and DENISE DE MAULE-
VRIER.*

CH.—Why do you pluck your hands
away from me?

Have I said evil? does it hurt you so
To let one love you?

DEN. Yea, hurts much, my lord.

CH.—Such soft small hands to hide in
mine like birds—

Poor child, she pulls so hard—hush now,
Denise,

The wrist will show a bruise, I doubt.

DEN. My wrist?
This is a knight, a man gilt head and feet,
And does such villanous things as that!

CH. Yea now,
Will you not weep too? will you cry for it?
So, there, keep quiet; let one loose the
mask;

Show me the rivet.

DEN. No, no, not the mask;
I pray you, sir—good love let be the clasp,
I will not show you—ah!

CH. So, so, I said
This was my lady, this one? let the rest
Go chatter like sick flies, the rest of them,
I have my gold-headed sweet bird by the
foot

To teach it words and feed it with my
mouth.

I would one had some silk to tie you with
Softer than a man's fingers be.

DEN. I too;
Your finger pinches like a trap that shuts.

CH.—Come, then, what penance do you
think to get

Now I have trapped you? No, my sweet
Denise,

No crying, no dear tears for it; no, love,
I am not angry. Why did you break from
me?

DEN.—Because I would not have a touch
of you

Upon me somewhere; or a word of yours
To make all music stupid in my ear,
The least kiss ever put upon your lips
Would throw me this side heaven, to live
there. What,

Am I to lose my better place i' the world,
Be stripped out of my girdled maiden's
gown

And clad loose for the winter's tooth to
hurt,

Because the man's a king, and I—see now,
There's no good in me, I have no wit at all;
I pray you by your mother's eyes, my lord,
Forbear me, let the foolish maiden go
That will not love you; masterdom of us

Gets no man praise: we are so more than
poor,

The dear'st of all our spoil would profit you
Less than mere losing; so most more than
weak

It were but shame for one to smite us, who
Could but weep louder.

CH. But Denise, poor sweet,
I mean you hurt, I smite you? by God's
head

I'd give you half my blood to wash your
feet. [They pass.

DUCH.—To speak truth, I'm a German
offset, sir,

And no high woman; I was born in Cleves,
Where half the blood runs thick.

PAR.—Ay, with your tongue and head,
Tell me of German! your silk hair, madam,
Was spun in Paris, and your eyes that fill
The velvet slit i' the mask like two fair
lamps,
Set to shake spare gold loose about the
dark—

Tell me of German!

DUCH. See then in my hands;
You have good skill at palm-reading, my
lord?

PAR.—The glove smells sweet inside;
that's good to touch.

DUCH.—Give me my glove back.

PAR. By your hand, I will not.

DUCH.—There is no potency of oath in
that;

My hands are weak, sir.

PAR. By your eyes then, no.

DUCH.—I pray you, for your courtesies,
sweet lord,
Leave me the glove yet.

PAR. Bid me tear it first.
I'll wear this whether iron gird or silk,
Let snatch at it who will; and whoso doth,
I've a keen tongue ensheathed to answer
with.

DUCH. I do beseech you, not my glove,
fair sir,
For your dear honor,—could you have such
heart?

PAR.—Yea, truly; do but see me fasten it;
Nay, it drops; help me to set in the wrist.
The queen comes; I shall cross her sight
with this:

If you be woman, as you said, of hers,
It will make shape the inward of her soul
To see it.

Enter the Queen-Mother, GUISE, and attendants; CINO GALLI, and Ladies, masked.

CA. So, Denise is caught by this;
Alack, the wolf's paw for the cat's, fair son!
That tall knight with a glove wrought
curiously,

Whose friend, think you?

GUI. Some lady's here, no doubt;
Not mine, as surely.

PAR. Not yours, my lord of Guise.

CA.—Your wife's glove, is it? sewn with
silk throughout,
And some gold work, too; her glove, cer-
tainly.

GUI.—Take no note of him, madam; let
us go. *[They pass.]*

PAR.—You Catholics, her glove inside
my cap,
Look here, I tread it in the dirt: you,
Guise,

I tread a token under foot of mine
You would be glad to wear about the heart.
Here, madam, have it back; soiled in the
seam

Perhaps a little, but good enough to wear
For any Guise I see yet.

DUCH. I keep it for him.
Exit Duchess.

CINO.—If he be wise I am no fool. One
of you

Bid him come sup with me.

PAR. What fare, good fool?

CINO.—A sacrament of eye-water and
rye-bread
Changed to mere foolish flesh and blood to
sup, sir.

YOL.—Ware stakes, my Cino; is
this a head to roast?

Think, my poor fool's tongue with a nail
through it,

Were it no pity?

CINO. Fire goes out with rain, child.
I do but think, too, if I were burnt to-
morrow,

What a waste of salt would there be! what
a ruin of silk stuff!

What sweet things would one have to hear
of me,

Being once got penitent! Suppose you my
soul's father,

Here I come weeping, lame in the feet,
mine eyes big—

"Yea, my sin merely! be it not writ
against me

How the very Devil in the shape of a cloth-
of-gold skirt

Lost me my soul with a mask, a most un-
gracious one,

A velvet riddle; and how he set a mark on
me,

A red mark, father, here where the halter
throttles,

See there, *Yolande* writ broad;" yet, for
all that,

The queen might have worn worse paint, if
it please you note me,

If her physic-seller had kept hands cleaner,
verily.

YOL.—Kind Cino! dost not look to be
kissed for this now?

CINO.—Be something modest, prithee: it
was never good time

Since the red ran out of the cheeks into the
lips.

You are not patient; to see how a good
man's beard

May be worn out among you!

ANNE. Virtuous Cino!

CINO.—Tell me the right way from a
fool to a woman,

I'll tell thee why I eat spiced meat on
Fridays.

YOL.—As many feet as take the world
twice round, sweet,
Ere the fool come to the woman.

CINO. I am mocked, verily;
None of these slippers but have lightened
heels.

I'll sit in a hole of the ground, and eat rank
berries.

YOL. Why, Cino?

CINO.—Because I would not have a
swine's mouth

And eat sweetmeats as ye do. It is a
wonder in heaven

How women so nice-lipped, discreet of
palate,

Should be as easy for a thief to kiss
As for a king's son; like the common grass

That lets in any sun or rain, and wears
All favors the same way; it is a perfect
wonder.

YOL.—A stole for Cino; pray for me, Fra
Cino.

CINO.—Vex me not, woman; I renounce
the works of thee.

I'll give the serpent no meat, not my heel,

To sweeten his tooth on. I marvel how
your mother
Died of her apple, seeing her own sense
was
So more pernicious; the man got but lean
parings,
And yet they hang too thick for him to
swallow.
Well, for some three or four poor sakes of
yours,
I'll eat no honey.

ANNE.—Wherefore no honey, Cino?
One saint ate honey before your head had
eyes in it.

CINO.—I would not think of kissing,
and it remembers me.
Here are two scraps of Venus' nibbled
meat;
Keep out of the dish, as ye respect me,
children,
Let not love broil you on a gold spit for
Sundays.

[*They retire.*]

Re-enter the King and DENISE.

CH.—Nay, as you will then.

DEN. Not for love indeed,
Not for love only, but your own fair name,
The costliness and very price of it,
I am bold to talk thus with you. The
queen, suspicious
And tempered full of seasonable fears,
Does partly work me into this; truth is it,
There's no such holy secret but she knows
As deep therein as any; all changes, hopes,
Wherewith the seed-time of this year goes
heavy,
She holds and governs; I me, as all my
fellows,
Has she fed up with shreds and relics
thrown
From the full service and the board of time
Where she sits guest, and sees the feast
borne through;
I have heard her say, with a sigh shaking
her,
There's none more bound to pray for you
than she,
And her you love not; and how sore it
seems
To see the poisons mingle in your mouth,
And not to stay them.

CH.—Will she say that indeed?
Denise, I think if she be wise and kindly,

And mixed of mother's very milk and love,
She would not say so.

DEN. I have a fear in me
She doubts your timely speed and spur of
blood;

She thinks, being young, you shall but tax
her care

And liberal grace with practice and weak
tricks;

As thus say, you conceive of me, fair lord,
As one set on and haled by golden will
(Such lust of hire as many souls hath burnt
Who wear no heat outside) to do you
wrong,

To scourge and sting your lesser times with
speech,

Trailing you over by some tender lies
On the queen's party; which God doth well
believe

To lie as far from me as snow from sun,
Or hence to the round sea.

CH. There's no trick meant me?

DEN.—I pray, sir, think if I, so poor in
wit

The times rebuke me, and myself could
chide

With mine own heaviness of head, be fit
To carry such a plot and spill none over
To show the water's color I bear with me?
All I lay care to is but talk of love,
And put love from me I am emptier
Than vessels broken in the use; I am sorry
That where I would fain show some good,
work somehow

To suit with reason, I am thrown out
merely

And prove no help; all other women's
praise

Makes part up of my blame, and things of
least account

In them are all my praises. God help
some!

If women so much loving were kept wise,
It were a world to live in.

CH. Poor Denise,
She loves not then so wisely? yea, sweet
thing?

DEN.—Did I say that? nay, by God's
light, my lord,

It was ill jested—was not—verily,
I see not whether I spake truth or no.

CH.—Ay, you play both sides on me?

DEN. It may prove so.

I am an ill player, for truly between times
It turns my heart sick.

CIT.—Fear when one plays false, then.

DEN.—As good play false when I make play so hardly.

My hand is hurt, sir; I'll no more with you.

CIT.—Will you so cheat me?

DEN.—Even so; God quit you, sir!

But pardon me; and yet no pardon, for I'll have no stay to find it; were pardon at my feet,

I would not bow to gather it. Farewell.

[Exit DENISE.]

CIT.—Even so? but I'll have reason; eh, sweet mouth?

But I'll have reason of her, my Denise; How such can love one! all that pains to talk!

What way ran out that rhyme I spun for her?

To do just good to me, that talk! sweet pains.

Yea, thus it fell: *Dieu dit*—yea, so it fell.

Dieu dit; Choisis; tu dois mourir;

Le monde vaut bien une femme.

L'amour passe et fait bien souffrir.

C'est ce que Dieu me dit, madame.

Moi, je dis à Dieu; Je ne veux,

Mon Dieu, que l'avoir dans ma couche,

La baiser dans ses beaux cheveux,

La baiser dans sa belle bouche.

[Exit the King.]

YOL.—Now, Cino?

CINO.—I am considering of that apple still;

It hangs in the mouth yet sorely; I would fain know too

Why nettles are not good to eat raw. Come children,

Come, my sweet scraps; come, painted pieces; come.

ANNE.—On after him; he is lean of speech and moody;

Cunning for ill words at such winter-seasons

That come i' the snow like bitter berries.

On.

[Exunt.]

SCENE II. *In the Louvre.*

Enter King i HENRY and MARGARET

MAR.—Yea, let him say his will.

HEN. I will not bear him.

His temperance grows half shame.

MAR. I doubt God hath Fashioned our brother of like earth and fire

As moulds you up; be patient; bear with him

Some inches past your humor's mark.

HEN. Bear what?

By God I will have reason: tell me not;

I love you with the soundest nerve i' the heart,

The cleanest part of blood in it; but him Even to the sharpest edge and tooth of hate

That blood doth war upon.

MAR. Keep in this chafe; Put me in counsel with you.

HEN. It is no matter.

MAR.—I never saw yet how you love and hate.

Are you turned bitter to me? all old words Buried past reach for grief to feed upon

As on dead friends? nay, but if this be, too,

Stand you my friend; there is no crown i' the world

So good as patience; neither is any peace That God puts in our lips to drink as wine,

More honey-pure, more worthy love's own praise,

Than that sweet-souled endurance which makes clean

The iron hands of anger. A man being smitten

That washes his abused cheek with blood Purges it nothing, gets no good at all,

But is twice punished, and his insult wears A double color; for where but one red was

Another blots it over. Such mere heat I' the brain and hand, even for a little stain,

A summer insolence and waspish wound, Hurts honor to the heart, and makes that rent

That none so gracious medicine made of earth Can heal and shut like patience. The gentle God

That made us out of pain endurable And childbirth comforts, willed but marked therein

How life, being perfect, should keep even hand

Between a suffering and a flattered sense, Not fail for either.

HEN.—You do think sweetly of him; But on this matter I could preach you out.

For see, God made us weak and marred with shame

Our mixed conception, to this end that we

Should wear remembrance each alike, and
 carry
 Strait equal raiment of humility;
 Not bare base cheeks for wrongs to spit
 across,
 Nor vex his print in us with such foul
 colors
 As would make bondsmen blush.

MAR. Let him slip wrong.
 So you do reason; if such a half-king'd
 man
 Turn gross or wag lewd lips at you, for
 that
 Must anger strike as fool? 'Tis not the
 stamp,

The purity and record of true blood,
 That makes Christ fair, but piteous humble-
 ness,

Wherein God witnesses for him, no prince
 Except a peasant and so poor a man
 God gives him painful bread, and for all
 wine

Doth, feed him on sharp salt of simple
 tears

And bitter fast of blood.

HEN. Yea, well; yea, well;
 And I am patient with you Catholics;
 But this was God's sweet son, nothing like
 me,
 Who have to get my right and wear it
 through

Unhelped of justice; all do me wrong but I,
 And right I'll make me.

MAR. But all this wording 'time
 I am not perfect where this wrong began;
 Last night it had no formal face to show,
 That's now full-featured.

HEN. Ah! no matter, sweet;
 Nothing, pure naught.

MAR.—Have you no shame then current
 To pay this anger? Nay, as you are my
 lord,

I'll pluck it out by the lips.

HEN. A breath, a threat,
 A gesture, garment pulled this way; nothing.

MAR.—You do me wrong, sir, wrong.

HEN.—Well, thus then it fell out;
 By God, though, when I turn to think
 on it,

Shame takes me by the throat again; well,
 thus.

King Charles, being red up to the eyes with
 wine,

In the queen's garden, meeting me—as
 chance

Took me to walk six paces with some girl,
 Some damozel the queen's choice dwells
 upon,
 Strayed somehow from the broader pres-
 ence—

MAR. Well—

HEN.—I swear to you by faith and
 faith's pure lip

That I know—that I did not hear her
 name

Save of his mouth.

MAR. I did not ask her name.

HEN.—Nor do I well remember it; for-
 give,

I think it was not—

MAR. Pass.

HEN. Alys de Saulx—

MAR.—Marshal Tavannes has no such
 name akin.

HEN.—There's Anne de Saulx wears
 longest hair of all;

A maid with gray grave eyes,—a right fair
 thing;

Not she, I doubt me.

MAR. Worse for you, my lord.

HEN.—Ay, worse. Diane de Villequier
 is tall—

MAR.—Are we at riddles?—Agnes de
 Bacqueville?

HEN.—Some such name, surely; either
 Chateauroux—

MAR.—Her name? as I am wedded
 woman, sir,

I know you have it hidden in your mouth
 Like sugar; tell me; take it on the lip.

HEN.—There was a D in it that kissed
 an M.

MAR.—Denise? a white long woman
 with thick hair,

Gold, where the sun comes?

HEN. Ay, to the ends clean gold.

MAR.—Yea, not the lightest thing she
 has, that hair.

HEN.—You hold for true—

MAR. We have time to come for her.
 Keep in your story.

HEN. Naught, mere naught to tell;
 This just; the king comes, pulls her hand
 from mine—

MAR.—Ah! no more shame?

HEN. No more in him than that;
 Plucked her as hard—

MAR. As she was glad to go

HEN.—Not so; she trembled to the feet,
 went white,

Spoke hardly—

MAR.—Kept one hand of them your way.

HEN.—Charles caught her wrist up,
muttered next her ear,

Bade me leave care—

MAR. Nay, here's more fool than we.

Enter CINO.

CINO.—The world was a wise man when
he lived by bread only;

There be sweet tricks now. How does my
worthy sister?

MAR.—Not so much ill as to cease
thanks for it.

How does thy cap, fool?

CINO. Warm, I thank it, warm;
I need not wear it patched as much as faith.
I am fallen sick of heavy head; sad, sad;
I am as sick as Lent.

MAR. Dull, dull as dust;
Thou hadst some nerve i' the tongue.

CINO. Why, I am old.
This white fool three days older in my beard
Than is your wedding. But be not you cast
down;

For the mere sting is honorable in wedlock,
And the gall salve: therefore I say, praise
God.

HEN.—We do not catch thy sense.

CINO. Let my sense be;
I say I could weep off mine eye-cases,
But for pity of some ladies who would run
mad then.

Do not you meddle.

MAR.—What wisdom mak'st thou here?

CINO.—Why, a fool's wisdom, to change
wit with blocks.
You were late railing; were she that you
did gibe

Clean as her mother made, I tell you verily
The whitest point on you were grime and
soil

To her fair footsole.

MAR. Ay, but she's none such.

CINO.—I care not what she be; do you
not gibe,
I care no whit. Let her take twelve or six,
And waste the wicked'st part of time on
them,

She doth outstand you by ten elbow-
lengths.

HEN.—Hath love not played the knave
with this fool's eyes?

CINO.—Let that lie shut, and put you
thumb to lip;

For kings are bone and blood; put flesh
to that,

You have the rind and raiment of a man.
If you be wise, stay wise, even for my sake;
Learn to lie smooth, be piteous and
abashed,

And though dirt fall upon your faith and
you

Keep your ear sober, chide not with i'
news,

And use endurance well; so shall he thrive,
That being a king doth crouch, and free
doth wive.

Farewell, fair king. [*Exit CINO.*]

HEN. This fool is wried with wine.

MAR.—French air hath nipped his
brains; what ailed my mother

To have him north?

HEN. You bring her in my mind.
Have you no service on the queen to-day?

MAR.—I think she would lie privately;
she said

She was not well.

HEN. I pray you then with me.

MAR.—I will not with my lord of Par-
daillan;

You shall not break me with the king.

HEN. Men say
Guise hath some angry matter made with
him

That I would learn.

MAR. I am with you by the way,
I have some tricks to tell you of Denise.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III. *A Cabinet.*

*The Queen-Mother; DENISE dressing her
hair; TAVANNES.*

DEN.—Disait amour, voyant rire madame,
Qui me baisait dessous mes yeux un jour;
La rose est plus que fleur et moins que
femme,

Disait amour.

Disait amour; m'est peine eclose en âme;
Dieu veuille, hélas! qu'elle me baise un
jour.

Ayez merci, car j'en souffre, madame,
Disait amour.

CA.—Set the gold higher. So my lord
Tavannes,

You have no answer of the king?

TAV. Not I

The Devil would give over such hard work,
I doubt, as you put me to.

CA. Ah well, well,
I thank you for it. Tie the next more
loose,
You prick my forehead through the hair,
Denise.

Strange, my lord marshal, I show less gray
spots

Than gold thread in it, surely. Five years
hence,

These girls will put a speckled silver on,
Because the queen's hair turns to dust-
color.

Eh, will not you, Denise?

DEN. If I wear white,
Gold must be out of purchase; I'll get gold
Or wear my head shorn flat, and vex no
combs.

CA.—You put sweet powders in your
own too much;

There, stoop down—you may kiss me if you
will—

I smell the spice and orris-root in it.

Fie, this will cheat your face, my poor
Denise;

This will bleach out the colors of your
blood,

And leave the hair half old. See you, lord
marshal,

This girl's was never soft and thick like
mine:

Mine was so good to feel once, I know well
Kings would have spent their lips in kiss-
ing it.

TAV.—I have poor judgment of girls'
hair and cheeks;

Most women doubtless have some gold and
red

Somewhere to handle, and for less or more
I care not greatly.

CA. Yea, I do well think once
I had such eyes as time did sleep in them,
And age forbear the purple at their lids;
And my mouth's curve has been a gracious
thing

For kisses to fall near none will say now
That this was once. I may remember me
That Scotswoman did flee at my gray face;
I marvel now what sort of hair she has.

DEN.—The Queen of Scots lived gently
in repute;

She has much wrong.

CA.—Put not your judgment to 't;
The peril that enrings her place about
Is her own whetting. I do something
praise,

Yet hardly from the outside of my heart,
Our sister England; were I set like her,
I might look so.

TAV. Yea so? mere heretic?
CA.—Beseech you, pardon me; I am all
shame

That I so far misuse your holiness.

I know as you are sharp in continence
So are you hard in faith. Mark this, Denise,
These swording-men are holier things than
we;

These would put no kiss on, these would
not praise

A girl's hair—

TAV. Madam, do you jape at me?

CA.—Scarce let the wine turn in their
veins to blood;

Strangle the knowledge and the note of
sense,

Deny that worth; these eat no grosser meat
Than the cleanest water we dip fingers in;
Endure beyond the very touch of man,
Have none so soft use of the lip as makes it
Affect the natural way. Sir, is this true?

TAV.—Why, if men said you had more
teeth than hairs

They would just lie; and if they call me
that

They lie a something harder.

CA. Fie, my lord!

Your good wit to a woman's? will you say
The dog licks where it bit you, if I say
Forgive, Sir Gaspard, and be friends with
me?

Come, if I make you sit by me, fair knight,
And say the king had never half the wit
To choose you for his marshal? Ten years
back,

And may be clap some other tens on that,
I mind me well, sir, how you came up here
To serve at Paris: we had a right king
then,

King Francis, with his close black beard
and eyes

Near half as royal as your own, I think.

A fair page were you, and had yellow hair
That was all burnt since into brown; your
cheek

Had felt no weather pinch it or sun bite,
It was so red then: but you fought well, sir,
Always fought well; it was good game to
see

Your hand that swung round, getting weight
to throw,

Feeling for room to strike; Gaspard, by
God

I would have paid gold coin to turn a man
And get me bone to handle the good steel
And nerves to fight with; but I doubt me,
soon

I should have had the dust to roll into,
Though I were made six men to fight with
you,

Yet my arm ached for want of spears to
smite—

Eh? when you ran down that Mont-
gommery

That slew my lord with his side-prick i'
the eye?

Yea, surely; you were my best knight De
Saulx.

TAV. Madam—

CA.—Nay, Gaspard, when I lie of you
Then let your bit rasp at the mouth of me;
I speak poor truth; why, this Denise of
mine

Would give time up and turn her gold hair
gray

To have seen out the season we two saw.

DEN.—I would not; (*aside to Cath.*) my
lord marshal is too lean
To be a fair man.

CA. So, your glove for his?
We shall have larger passages of war
Except I look to it. Pray you, Denise,
Fetch me my glove,—my spice box,—any-
thing;

I will not trust you with my lord; make
in. [*Exit DENISE.*]

How like you her?

TAV. A costly piece of white;
Such perfumed heads can bear no weight
inside

I think, with all that waste of gold to bear
Plaited each way; their roots do choke
the brain.

CA.—There your sense errs; though she
be tender-made,

Yet is there so much heart in her as could
Wear danger out of patience. It is my
son I fear

Much more than I doubt her: the king my
son

Flutters not overmuch his female times
With love enough to hurt but turns and
takes,

Wears and lets go; yet if she spring him
once,

2

Click, quoth the gin; and there we trap
him. See,

This medicine I make out for him is sweet,
More soft to handle than a poppy's bud,
And pleasant as a scented mouth to kiss.

TAV.—Yea, I do see.

CA. Now at this turn of time
He is not perfect; and I have a mean
To bring him to our use. My lord of
Guise—

TAV.—Doth he make part of it?

CA. Fear you not him;
He is the blazen patched upon our cloth
To keep the pattern's gold. For the king's
self,

I have half possessed him of the deeds to be,
And he hath nothing blenched.

TAV. But, to this girl—
What way serves her in this?

CA. Being ignorant,
She does the better work; for her own
sake

Trails him my way, assures herself the
king

Would pluck the reddest secret from his
heart

To shew her, as you take the reddest rose
To smell at, if the color go by scent;
That's all her certainty. What foot is there?

TAV.—The king, and hastily.

CA. Keep you by me;
I know his cause. Let him come in.

Enter the King.

CH. Fair mother,
Good morrow come upon your majesty.

CA.—The morrow grows upon good
night, fair son;

That will salute me soon with sleep; you see
I keep not well.

CH. Ah, pale by God though, pale!
I'm sorry—sir, good morrow—hurt at heart.
Hear you my news? The admiral is hurt,
Touched in the side—I lie now, not the
side,

But his arm hurt—I know not verily,
But he is some way wounded.

CA. I am sorry
No goodness walks more clear. Sir, think
you not

That for a color—say a color, now—

CH.—I doubt you do not mean to visit
him?

CA. But I do mean; and if your leave
hold out

We'll bid the Guise with us.

CH. Have your best way:
Write me content thereof.

CA. I thank you, sir.
Lord marshal, you shall pray the Guise for us.

TAV.—Madam, I shall; God keep your grace's health.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV. *The Admiral's House.*

Enter COLIGNY and LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.

LA R.—How do you yet, sir?

CO. Ill, yea, very ill:
This snake has pricked me to the heart, to the quick,

To the keenest of it; I believe heartily
I shall not live to foil them. God mend some!

For live or die, and wounded flesh or whole,

There will be hard things done; we shall not see

Much more fair time.

LA R. Take better thoughts to you;
The king is steady; and the Guise wears eyes

Of such green anger and suspicious light
As crows his followers; even the queen-mother

Walks slower than her wont, with mouth drawn up,

And pinches whiter her thin face; Tavannes
Goes chewing either lip's hair with his teeth,

Churning his bearded spite, and wears the red

Set on his cheek more steady; the whole court

Flutters like birds before the rain begin,
Salcède, who hates no place in hell so much
As he loathes Guise, lets out his spleen at him

And wags his head more than its use was; yea,

The main set draws our way now the steel bit

Keeps hard inside their mouths: yea, they pull straight.

CO. You lay too much upon them.

LA R. Not a whit over:
They are good men our side; no dog laps i' the trough

So deep as we do; the best men we have

That France has for us, the best mouths for a hunt,

To wind the quarry furthest; then to these
A clean cause, friends with iron on the hand,

The king to head, no less.

CO. The king, no less?
Yea, there's a dog gives tongue, and tongue enough,

Too hot I doubt, too hot; strikes by the scent.

LA R.—Will you think so? why there be dog-leashes;

Pluck hard, you hold him. Come, I note you though;

None sticks in your throat but Venus the old brach.

CO.—True, there she sticks, sir; for your burden saith—

"Brach's feet and witch's nose
Breathe which way the quarry blows."

LA R.—She's old, sir, old; the teeth drop, the smell wears;

No breath in her by this.

CO. Enough to breath
The best of you that snuff about and yelp.
Who stops there in the street? look out.

LA R. The king!
So get you ready; Catherine here and all,
God save my wits a taking! here you have them.

Enter the King, Queen-Mother, GUISE, and Attendants.

CH.—Do not rise up, sir; pray you keep your place;

Nay, now, by God's face, look, the cloak slips off;

Nay, be more patient.

CO. Dear and gracious lord,
If you be pleased to look on my disease
As not my will, but a constraint to me
Less native than my garments, I have hope
You may forgive it.

CH. Yea, we do, we do.

CA.—It was not, sir, your sickness we took pains

To come and visit; what's no friend of yours

Is even as our own felt infirmity,
And should be held so.

CH.—True sir, by God it should.

CA.—We therefore pray you have no care of that.

But as we do, respect it.

CH.—Do not, sir.
Co.—Madam, a sick man has not breath
or tongue

To answer salutation of such worth;
But even the very blood that pain makes
war on
Is healed and sound by this. From stronger
heart

Than ere I saw you was in me, now touched
And comforted by favor, I pay thanks
The best I have; and none so poor man
pays

A rent of words more costly.

CA. My fair lord,

This compliment has relish of more health
Than was believed in you; I am most glad
That footless rumor which makes wing
to go

Reports you something lesser than you
seem;

So making keener with new spice to it.
Our very edge of pleasure, the fine taste
That waits on sudden sweetness. Sir,
nathless,

No compliment it was we came to beg,
No alms of language and frayed garb o'
the court

That makes no wear for men; but to do
grace indeed

Rather to us than you, whose worth no
friend

Can top with favor.

Co.—It shows the more love in you.

CA.—Also, my lord, for such poor part
as mine,

I pray you be not jealous to receive
Assurance of me with how sore a hurt
Ill news of you made passage most unkind
Into my knowledge; and with how dear a
price

I would have bought a chance to succor
you

Whose wound was sickness to me. So God
love my son,

As I have put my prayer for your good hap
Between two tears before him; yea, never
shall he

Get worship of me but I'll speak of you
As the leader of my loves, the captain
friend

Among my nearest. Sir, the king knows
well

How I speak of you; see now, let him say
Whether I lie or no in loving you.

CH.—Ay, sir, there's no such day or
night-season

But she holds to you, none but the admiral,
That good lord, that best counsellor, strong
ward

For any king to hang by; time has been,
sir,

I have turned sick of hearing your grave
name

So paddled over, handled so; my lord,
There's no man, none in the world, my
mother mates with you

Save two, that's I and God.

GUI. And that's a courtesy.

Co.—My lord of Guise, I saw you not;
this day,

As men do shut the edges of a wound,
Shuts the loud lips of our contention; sir,
This grace you do me shall keep fast my
thanks

To your name always.

GUI. It is the king's good will
I should be made the servant to his act.

And what grace pleases him to bring me to
I take as title to me; this not least,

To call my poor name a friend's name of
yours.

Co.—That makes mine honor.

CH. • It was this we came
To see made well up from the Guise to you
My thought was ever there, yea, nailed to
it,

Fastened upon it; it was my meat and
sleep,

Prayer at feast-season and my fast at noon,
To get this over.

Co. It is well set now.

This hand is hurt I lay into your hand,
But the love whole and the good will as
sound

As shall the peace be for us.

GUI. I take it so;
Maimed be that hand which first shall
loosen it.

Even beyond healing.

Co. Pardon, my fair lord,
I am but old, you strain my wrist too
much.

CH.—Nay, you are worse hurt than they
told us, then;

I pray you show me but the coat, I would,
Fain see the coat where blood must stick
of yours.

Co.—Sir, there it is.

CH. Ay, no more red than this?

I thank you; was it this way the slit came?
 Yes, so, I see; yea, sideways in the sleeve.
 Is that the admiral's blood indeed? Methinks,
 Being issued from so famous veins as yours,
 This should be redder. See, well above
 the wrist;
 See, madam; yea, meseems I smell the
 stain.

CA.—It is an ill sight.

Co. I would give better, sir,
 Spill the red residue some worthier way,
 If you would heed me. Trust not each in
 all,

Nor sew your faith too thinly to men's
 sleeves,

There is a poisonous faith that eats right
 out

The sober and sweet heart of clean alle-
 giance,

Leaving for witness of all royalty
 Merely the baser flesh; beware of that.

CH.—I will.—Is not this like men's
 blood?—I will.

Most like a common fool's; see you, lord
 Guise,

Here's a great soldier has no blood more
 worth

Than yours or mine. By God, how strange
 is that,

It makes me marvel. Is your wound near
 well?

Tush! no more hurt than shall a month
 see out.

CA.—You have poor sense of sickness;
 I fear much

Our friend shall hardly feel on the larger
 air,

This two months hence. You must keep
 close, dear lord,

Hide from the insolent and eager time
 And we not wrong you by the overstay

Of foolish friendship, thankworthy in this,
 That it knows when to cease, what limit
 made

To measure its observance by. Farewell;
 Think not worse of us that we trouble you,

But know we love you even too well to
 buy

Our further speech with danger of your
 hurt,

And had we sounder witness of our love
 Would better prove it. Sir, God keep you
 well

And give us joy to see you.

CH. Farewell, dear father;
 Doubt not but we will lay a present hand
 On one that hath so stricken us in you,
 And he shall find us sharp. In trust of
 that

Keep some thought of this poorest friend
 you have,

As we of you shall. Trouble not yourself.
 Nay, have your cloak on; so; God give you
 help.

Come with me, my lord Guise; fair sir,
 good night.

Yea, night it is now; God send you good
 time of it.

[*Exeunt King, Queen-Mother, GUISE, &c.*]

Co.—Good thanks, sir, and farewell.—
 So: gone, I think?

LA R.—Fair words go with them! you
 have good time indeed;

What holidays of honey have they kept,
 What a gold season of sentences to warm
 by,

Even past all summer! a sweet oil-season,
 Kept ripe with periods of late wine to
 finish it!

Co.—Ay, the taste of them makes a
 bitter lip, sir.

LA R.—Nay, mere feast-honey; did you
 mark the Guise once,

How his chin twisted and got rough with
 smiles,

Like a new cloth rained on? How the
 nose was wried of him,

What widow's cheeks he had, never well
 dried yet?

The sweet speech clung in his throat like
 a kernel swallowed

In sucking cherries.

Co.—You are too loud yet, too splene-
 tive.

LA R.—Tush! they are well gone, no
 fear of them; but verily

I doubt you saw not how like a dog's his
 face was,

A dog's you catch with meat in his teeth;
 by Christ,

I thought he would have cried or cursed
 outright,

His mouth so wrought.

Co. Yea, either had done well.

LA R.—A dog that snarls and shivers
 with back down,

With fearful slaver about his mouth; "weh,
 weh,

For God's sake, do not beat me, sirs I" eh,
Guise?—

With timid foam between his teeth; poor
beast, too,

I could be sorry for him.

Co. Be wise in time, sir.
And save your tears: this Guise has scope
to inend,

Get past these matters; I not doubt the
queen

Touches them with a finger-point of hers.

LA R.—The queen gets kind; she lessens
and goes out;

No woman holds a snake at breast so long,
But it must push its head between the plaits
And show across her throat's gold work.

Fair sir,
Cure but your doubt, your blood is whole
again

And pain washed out at once; it is the fret
of that

Which fevers you so far.

Co. This is not so.
I pray you mark; their fires are lit next
room,

The smoke bites in our eyelids, air turns
weak

And body trembles and breath sickens here.
Sir, I do know this danger to the heart,
To the shape and bone of it, the mouth and
eyes,

The place and time, season and conse-
quence;

By God's head, sir, now, this mere now,
this day,

The peril ripens like a wound o' the flesh
That gathers poison; and we sleepy things
Let crawl up to our feet the heats that will
Turn fire to burn.

LA R. Your wisdom is too loud:
Doth it fear truly some court-card, some
trick

That throws out honor?

Co. Yea; for note me this,
These men so wholly hate us and so well
It would be honey to their lips, I think,
To have our death for the familiar word
They chatter between mass-time and the
bed

Wet with wine, scented with a harlot's
hair,

They lie so smooth in. When one hates
like that,

So many of them, each a hand and mouth
To stab and lie and pray and poison with,

The bloodsmell quickens in the head, the
scent

Feels gross upon the trail, and the steam
turns

Thicker i' the noses of the crew; right soon
Shall their feet smoke in the red pasturing-
place

And tongues lap hot; such cannot eat mere
grass

Nor will drink water.

LA R. Arc we stalled for them?
Arc we their sheep? have we no steel?
dumb sheep?

Co.—No steel; the most of us have
watered blood,

Their nerves are threads of silk, their talk
such cries

As babies babble through the suckling
milk,

Put them by these.

LA R. I have a way to help;
A damsel of the queen-mother's loves me
More than her mistress; she has eyes to
kiss

That can see well; I'll get us help of her.

Co.—Tell her no word.

LA R. Yea, many words, I think.

Co.—No word, sir, none.

LA R. This riddle sticks, my lord.

Co.—To say, we stand in fear is perilous
prate;

To kneel for help would maim us in the
feet,

So could we neither stand in time nor fly,
Being caught both ways. Do not you
speak with her.

LA R.—I'll make help somehow yet;
Yolande is good

And would not hurt us; a fair mouth too
small

To let lies in and learn broad tricks of
speech;

I'll get help, surely. Does not your wound
hurt?

Co.—Not much; I pray you draw my
cloak across;

So; the air chafes.

LA R. Go in and rest some while;
Your blood is hot even to the fingers.

Co. True;
I shall sleep ill. Come in with me, fair lord.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT II.

SCENE I. *The Louvre.**Enter King and DENISE.**Denise.*

NAY, I shall know it.

CH. Tush! you trouble me.

DEN.—O ay, I trouble you, my love's a thorn

To prick the patience of your flesh away
And maim your silenced periods of whole sleep.

I will unlearn that love: yea, presently.

CH.—What need I tell you?

DEN. Trouble not your lip;
I have no ear to carry the large news

That you shut up inside. Nay, go; nay, go;

It is mere pain, not love, that makes me dull;

Count not on love; be not assured of me;
Trust not a corner of the dangerous air

With some lean alms of speech; I may deceive you,

I may wear wicked color in the soul
When the cheek keeps up red. Perchance I lie.

CH.—Thou art the prettiest wonder of God's craft;

I think thy mother made thee out of milk,
Thy talk is such a maiden yet. Stay there,
Are hands too costly for my fingering? ha?

DEN.—Now I could kill you here between the eyes,

Plant the steel's bare chill where I set my mouth,

Or prick you somewhere under the left side;

Why, thou man's face of cunning, thou live doubt,

Thou mere suspicion walking with man's feet!

Yea, I could search thy veins about with steel

Till in no corner of thy crannied blood
Were left to run red witness of a man,

No breath to test thee kinglier than dead flesh,

Sooner than lose this face to touch, this hair

To twist new curls in, yea, prove me verily,
Sift passion pure to the blind edge of pain.

And see if I will—yet what need, what need?

Kiss me! there now, am I no queen for you?

Here, take my fingers to mould flat in yours
That would mould iron flat,—ch, would not they?

CH.—Ay, true, Denise, by God they can turn steel,

That's truth now,—turn it like a bit of paste

Paddled each way,—that's just short truth.

DEN. Well, now,
That I do pray you put some trust on meFor love's fair merit and faith's noble sake,
What holds your lips so fast? I shouldlook proud,
Grave in the mouth, with wise accompliceeyes,
A piece of your great craft. Make placefor me;
I pray you, place.CH. This counsel is more grave
Than death's lean face; best your ear touch

it not.

DEN.—Nay then I will not; for I would not pluck

So rough a knowledge on. I am a child,
A show, a bauble kissed and laughedacross:
You lay your face over my head and laugh,

Your slow laugh underbreath runs in my hair.

Talk me of love, now; there I understand,
Catch comprehension at the skirt of love,Steal alms of it. Yet I would put love off
And rather make the time hard cover tome
Than miss trust utterly. But let that lie;Therein walks danger with both eyes
awake,

Therefore no more. Tell me not anything.

CH.—Thou shalt have all.
DEN. Must I put violenceTo war upon my words? Have they said
wrong?

I was resolved not to distemper you.

CH.—Nay, I shall try your trust. Sit
by me, so;Lay your hands thus. By God how fair
you are,It does amaze me; surely God felt glad
The day he finished making you. Eh,

sweet,

You have the eyes men choose to paint,
you know:

And just that soft turn in the little throat
And bluish color in the lower lid
They make saints with.

DEN.—True. A grave thing to hear.

CH.—See yet, this matter you do fret
me with
Seems no whit necessary, nor hath such
weight,

Nor half the cost and value of a hair,
Poised with some perfect little wrath of
yours

In fret of brows or lifting of the lip.
Indeed you are too precious for man's use,
Being past so far his extreme point of
price,

His flawed and curious estimation,
As throws out all repute of words.

DEN.— I would
My face were writhen like a witch! Make
forth.

CH.—Why, many a business feeds on
blood i' the world,
And there goes many a knave to make a
saint—

DEN.—I shall be angry. Sir, I am no
fool,
But you do treat me as a dog might fare
Coming too near the fire.

CH.— Nay, keep dry lids;
I would not lose you for three days, to
have

My place assured next God's. But see you
now,

This gracious town with its smooth ways
and walls

And men all mine in all of theirs—

DEN.— I see.

CH.—This France I have in fee as sure
as God,

Hath me and you,—if this should fall to
loss,

Were it no pity?

DEN.— Yea, sir, it were much.

CH.—Or now, this gold that makes me
up a king,

This apprehensive note and mark of time,
This token'd kingdom, this well-tested
worth,

Wherein my brows exult and are begirt
With the brave sum and sense of kingliness,
To have this melted from a narrow head
Or broken on the bare disfeatured brows,
And marred i' the very figure and fair place

Where it looked nobly,—were this no
shame to us?

DEN.—Yea, this were piteous likewise.

CH.— Think on it.

For I would have you pitiful as tears,
Would have you fill with pity as the moon
With perfect round of seasonable gold
Fills her starved sides at point of the yellow
month;

For if you leave some foolish part, some
break,

Some idle piece or angle of yourself,
Not filled with wise and fearful pity up,
Then shame to hear the means of mine
effect

Shall change you stone for good.

DEN.— I apprehend.

CH.—For I, by God, when I turn
thought on it,

Do feel a heavy trembling in my sense,
An alteration and a full disease
As perilous things did jar in me and make
Contention in my blood.

DEN.— Nay, but speak more;
Speak forth. Good love, if I should flatter
you—

CH.—You see how hard and to what
sharp revolt

The labor of the barren times is grown
Not in France merely, but in either land
That feels the sea's salt insolence on it;
The womb is split and shaken everywhere
That earth gets life of; and the taint therein
Doth like a venomous drug incite and sting
The sore unhealed rebellion in its house
To extreme working. Now to supplant
this evil

Doth ask more evil; men kiss not snakes
to death,

Nor have we heard of bodies plagued to
ache

Made whole with eating honey. It is most
good

That we should see how God doth physic
time

Even to the quick and the afflictive blood
With stripes as keen as iron in the flesh.

Therefore,—That is, you have to appre-
hend

I mean no evil, but a righteous help;

I hate blood, too; indeed I love it not

More than a girl does. Therefore it is hard.

Take note of me, I tell you it is hard.

DEN.—I see. Make on.

CH.— It was to bring all right,—

And these men break God's smooth endurance up,
And he must hate them; and I love him so,
I and all my friends, my mother here and all,
It hurts us, doth us wrong, puts pain on us,
When God forbears his cause to quit himself,
And gives no sign aside.

DEN.— I may well think
These are your Huguenots that you do loathe;

You will do right upon them, will you not?
CH.—Ay, right, I will do right. nothing but right.

You are my absolute mistress and my choice,

The top and pearl of all mine ornament,
The golden and refined election
Of all the treasures I set hands to; well,
I do believe were you so mixed herein
As many are, many that I keep dear,
Dear and right precious in my just account,
And I had such a promise in God's ear
As I have now to see an end of these,
I might renounce you too and give him leave

To make you parcel of the execution
That shall be done on these.

DEN.— I fear you much;
For I can smell the mother in your speech,
This argument hath color of her eyes;
Where learnt you it?

CH.— My brains do beat upon
The month's full time. Which day it is I know not;

It should look red upon the calendar,
And outblush its fierce use. The twenty-fourth of August,—

We stumble near it unawares by this;
Give me the book.

DEN.— What are you strayed upon?

CH.—It is the time, the time,—you come too late

To tear its thread across.

DEN.— Pray you, what time?

CH.—But this Bartholomew shall be inscribed

Beyond the first; the latter speech of time
Shall quench and make oblivious war upon
The former and defeated memories,
New histories teaching it. For there will be

Blood on the moist untimely lip of death,
And in the dusty hunger of his bones

A sudden marrow shall refresh itself
And spread to perfect sinew. There will stir

Even in the red and hollow heat of hell
A motion of sharp spirit, a quickened sense

Such as wine makes in us; yea, such a day
God hath not seen as I shall make for him.

DEN.—You put fear in me; I can feel my blood

Go white with hearing you.

CH.— We trap them all
In a great gin where the soul sticks as well,

Nay, there's no hair of any Huguenot
But makes up parcel of my work in blood,
Nor face that is not painted with our swords.

(I told you this should hurt.) Oh, I could be

Most glad that I am taken to do this
And show the eyes of this lean world and time

The mould and the strong model of a king,

Not in the halting likeness of an ape
That fingers precious ware and knows it not,

From the teeth outward fool. Look you, I'll do't;

Nay, as God stands beyond us twain, I will.

First Paris,—note you, Paris helps in it,
I stand not singly nerved, but in mine arm
Have multiplied the sinew of all these;
France helps in it: the Guise has word to go

And take our admiral's patience by the throat

And finish the half issue of his blood;
See, this side goes Tavannes; here ride our men,

And here; no falcon starved to bones and beak

Is tempered keener than our citizen.

DEN.—You will not murder them?

CH.— Ay, will I not?

I pray you tell me, was this well devised?

DEN.—You are changed foul with it:

nay, stand more off;

Was it your meaning?

CH.— Ay, mine, very mine;

I will not lose it.

DEN.— Doth my sense hold fast?

It is not possible you should do this

And scape the smell of blood. Nay, I but dream;
 For if I wake, the substance of my flesh,
 This form and fast impression of the air,
 Yea, the most holy sun, are counterfeit;
 We stick yards deeper than the foot of hell.
 You see not well how foul a face you have,—
 I will cry out on you.
 CH.— Are you fallen mad?
 DEN.—I will put proclamation in the wind
 That where but any shape of breath shall blow
 It shall sound harsh as murder. To you think
 God shall sit fast and blink at you?
 CH.— What more?
 Get on; I do not chide you; nay, get breath;
 Spare me no whit.
 DEN.— I hate you beyond death;
 Somewhat I had to say; give ear to me.
 —It is all lost now, spilt in water, runs
 Into sick tears. Forgive me my loud words,
 I have much erred against your gracious game,
 Mistaking all of you; I do confess
 This jest so said has proved me dull and thick;
 Now say it was well played and let me go.
 You have played well indeed, and such hard parts—
 Now I shall slip into mad speech again
 And fail myself.
 CH.—What is it you will do?
 DEN.—Alack, I see not that. Indeed I think
 'Tis God's will to kill me first i' the brain
 And after in the flesh. I am half mad.
 But I can speak; yea surely, I can speak;
 And I will cry in all the streets and make
 Twinned correspondence 'twixt the tongued
 Seine banks
 With sound and breath, clamor and noise
 of tears,
 And windy witness of your enterprise.
 O, you are moved now; keep on that better face
 And I will find some weeping way to you,
 Persuading sin to peace; you shall not do it;
 Lest all the recollection of men's lips
 And noise of all just times and everyplace
 That hath but any shape of good on it
 Be sharp on you forever.

Enter the Queen-Mother and GUISE.

CA.— So, you are loud,
 I come betimes. Sir, if you spare me room,
 I have two words to say.
 CH.— I am bound to you;
 You have care of me indeed. Bid her go in.
 CA.—I would not be untimely.
 CH.— No, you are not,
 You are a gracious mother, a good help.
 (To Denise.) I'll see you soon at night.
 DEN.— My lord, my lord—
 CA.—Give my son breath at least; you are impatient;
 It suits you not.
 GUI.—(To the King.) I wait upon your highness.
 CH.—We are bounden to you too. Madam, go in.
 [Exit DENISE.]
 CA.—My son, you put too large a face on this.
 CH.—Mother, I put no face on it at all.
 Come, pray you now, what do you look to get
 By such a use of me?
 CA.— You take strange ways
 To chide me with; I did expect your good.
 Always it is the plague of love to be
 Thus mated by some check. I will go play;
 Farewell.
 CH.—Nay, now you shall not go. My lord,
 Tell her I meant no shame, no red i' the cheek;
 Say now I did not.
 CA.— I am content enough.
 You may well see why we are come to you.
 CH.—Yea, that I see.
 GUI.— The men are at full point;
 Also the marshal helps us at all need
 And some things over.
 CA.— You turn jealous of him.
 GUI.—Madam, I wear no envy on my words.
 CA.—Sir, you are safe.—Truly I am so glad
 Now this thing clears i' the working and comes straight,
 I could well jest and laugh.
 CH.— So could I not;
 All's not squared yet; you are too hot on it.

CA.—Too hot am I? Sir, you much
wrong your honor
Taxing such heat in me; I have proof of you,
So hath the Guise, that you have wrought
herein
As hard as any.

GUL.— I take your part as mine
For witness of my lord's free grace and will
Towards this matter.

CH.— *This matter*,—call it so;
Have you such honey in the mouth, my
lord

To make a milky matter of the name?
Why, if men are to call us murderers,
Let's take the word up and not tell such
lies,

Skulking with beaten cheeks behind the
word.

GUL.—(*Aside to Cath.*) He is touched
the wrong side yet.

CA.—(*Aside to Guise.*) I have stung my-
self;

This girl I set on him has thrown us out,
Played her own way. That we should pay
such apes

To pinch us in the wrist!

CH.— What are you saying?

CA.—Take your best means: here's none
shall cross you, sir.

We do but say if you will give them leave
To slit your throat with whispering, or abed
Take medicine of them,—or wear gloves
of theirs,—

Or please your mouth with drinking after
them,—

It is no matter.

CH.— Would you have me mad?
I have not heard of such a tax on them,
No, not since Florence taught us to use
drugs

Has it been noised of these.

CA.— I think indeed
That poison hath no Florence in the drug
Which puts the peril of so hard a speech
In my son's lips. Do not unsay it; no:
I do not bid you take the blur from me.
I am content to stay and take shame up
So I may suit you. O sweet son,—my
lord,

Forgive me that my tongue so slips on you,
Catching the old name first,—I pray you
note

That I can be as patient as your ear
Hath been of me too long. This is the last
That I shall ever take of words to push

Your just forbearance beyond use. I said
"Farewell" as idly as one says "good
thanks"

To him that hath not earned it; but I see
Here is made room for a farewell indeed.
Now could I take it silently and go,
Turning my very passion to content
And no whit using it: I am not abashed,
Albeit I speak as one whom shame has
marred;

That I am not I pray take no offence,
For should I show a penitent herein
I must do penance for much care of you,
And this I will not. Be not offended with
me;

For God doth know, sweet son, that in my
life

I have used many days in loving you.
Consider of it: I do not boast myself,
Seeing I but fall within the range and
scope

The limit and fair marge of a good law;
Yet if I have not been there excessive (as
I say not that I have one whit exceeded),
Surely I have not shortened its just room
Or narrowed in the sweet law's offices.

That I am so put off I say is well;

You are wise herein; for women at best
count

Are the mere spoil of a male reason, lie
In his loosest thoughts outside. We are
the chaff,

The gross unwinnowed husks of your
fanned wheat;

I say that you do well to turn me off.

But this too for my witness I should say;

That if you do me there a word of wrong,

Yea the thin grain of one particular word,

The same is worse than ill. I pardon it.

That I did love you, God shall do me right

To bring the credit will approve it me:

That I have sought your health yourself
believe;

That I did love the state and would get
ease

For its wried body, shall make smooth my
name

In patient reputation of good men.

The end of that is come. Sir, this much
yet;

Since you have thus delivered up your
place,

Your worth and body to the love of these

That hate me deadly—v'erein you do
well,

For yet I will not say but you do well—
I will entreat such almsgiving of you
As for my son of Anjou and myself
May serve to make us a safe place away,
Where we may keep behind the perilous
time
And house with simple peace. For I do
know
That howsoe'er these fare as friends with
you,
With us they will but fare as murderers do
That live between the sharpening of a
knife
And the knife's edge imbrued. This being
made sure,
I take my leave of a most royal care
That has been precious pain to me, and is
No costlier than a pin. The end is here
That I have gladly answered.

CH.— You say well;
I would not have you think so thinly of
me

As that girl's mercy and the feeble flesh
Prevail upon advice. I love you much.
But me she heeds not; tell her you, my
lord,

I love no meddled policy of man's
Before her honor.

CA.— I am perfect in your way.
Best let me part more quickly.

CH.— You shall not go.
GUI.—Madam, your son is tempered
graciously;

You see his will keeps good.

CH.— Ay, so it doth;
I thank you, sir; you see my will is good.

CA.—I had rather be a thing of laboring
days

Than a so childed mother.

GUI.— You must give her way.

CA.—It is not fit that I should wear your
time.

CH.—That year of mine is lame wherein
you lack.

CA.—Nay, there's no speech of silk will
serve your turn,

You must be whole with me or break; I'll
have

No patched alliance, lank allegiances,
Starved out of use.

CH.— I do not like the business.

CA.—Nay, but speak large; what is it
you mislike?

CH.—Keep you that way.

CA.— Why this is what I said.

CIT.—I have thought of it, and have in-
formed my heart

How pale dis'emp'ring evil makes the
blood

That ran full way before. I will not do it;
Lest all that regiment of muffled years
Now huddled in the rear and skirts of time
I must walk through, take whips into their
hands

To bruise my shame withal.

CA.— I heed you not.
It is the sick and infirm spite of fear
Makes your will insolent. But as it please
you;

It is not I that shall wear death for it.

GUI.—You do both stray: give me some
leave to speak,

And keep your patience whole. Right
noble sir,

For my poor worth and special reverence
here

I would not waste the price of half an hour;
Though I might say, and no man cross the
lie,

That in the personal state of mine esteem
I have kept endurance on against a wrong
That might put blood i' the dead. My
royal father,

Whose cost did earn the sum of such a
name,

Yea; even to full repute; whose motive
hand

Did the most inward ties of war unloose,
And pluck its joint away; this man so built,
So staid and clean of any weak revolt
That faith herself did set her tongue by his
And use his lesson for her proper text;
This bulk and nerve of all your services
Fashioned in one man's work; how he came
dead

You twain are no whit less assured than I,
Who have thrown beyond conjecture. It
is poor truth

To say we think that he fared treacherously;
If knowledge be no weaker than report,
And proof no looser than a popular mouth,
Then we do know it. O, such a want we
have,

So dear and so entire a loss in him,
As should make France the book of all
men's griefs,

The mould wherein a very face of sorrow
Were cast indeed. That I have not avenged
him,

Both you dare swear: that is not my shame,

But my sore pain and burden of this time,
Both you do likewise see. How say you,
sir!

Will you find sufferance smoother-faced
than mine?

Have I borne much? or is there fault in
me,

Who am the limit of endurances?

Now in this very point of patience here,

Even here, you take me; and considering
this,

Commend the calm and heaviness in me
That lackeys your own purpose, runs before
Your proper care, pages your policy.

Now, sir,

Were I a poor man's dog the same were
well;

Were I a sick man's fool the same were
well;

Being thus, I doubt it is not well at all.

A father slain is more than so much bones
That worms and flies dishallow, being thin
dust

And out of value; and personally to me
It is much more. I will not have this way;

Lest my most loving honor born to you

Leave me ashamed, or service done distark

All graces from me. You were strongly
sworn,

Yea, with the assurance that all faith
makes up,

To help us mend the ravelled rents of time;
But though you had more iron in your hand

Than you have yet, you cannot grasp therein

Two faiths, two sides, two justices at once.
Choose you, and put good will to choice;

for me,

I am not thrall'd in your election.

CH.—Madam, his talk flies far.

CA.— True, he speaks right.

CH.—Should I not answer with a lip more
tame,

This friendship might turn slack.

GUIL.— I keep still loyal.

CH.—Yea, sir, we doubt you nothing,
nothing at all:

You are our lawful friend; you speak all
well;

You have had wrong, men use you griev-
ously;

And I do love you for your bearing it.

CA.—The man that slew Duke Francis
has his breath.

CH.—Ah, and his blood, some scantlings
too of that:

We saw what tittle of it was spilled in him.
Still it is quaint that such a shaken scalp,
So gray as that, should over so much red;
'T is very strange and quaint; ha, think
you not?

CA.—(To Guise.) All's clear again; he
smells about the blood

That shall incense his madness to high
strain;

Look, now he peers and fingers on his
sleeve.

GUIL.—Pish! it looks ugly.

CA.— I must push him yet,
Make his sense warm. You see, blood is
but blood;

Shed from the most renowned veins o' the
the world,

It is no redder; and the death that strikes
A blind broad way among the foolish heaps
That make a people up, takes no more
pains

To finish the large work of highest men;
Take heart and patience to you; do but
think

This thing shall be no heavier then, being
done,

Than is our forward thought of it.

CH.— Ay true,
But if men prate of blood—I'll none on me.
And yet I care not much. You are wise,
mother;

You know me through, ay, and know God
as well,

Whom I know not. This is a grave thing.
CA.— Yea,

And graver should be if I gave you way.

What are you made God's friend for but to
have

His hand over your head to keep it well
And warm the rainy weather through,
when snow

Spoils half the world's work? shall I let
you go

And slip your boy's neck from God's hold
on it

To graze and get more pasture like a
beast?

Nay, child, there's nothing better for a
man

Than to trust God; why, must I tell you
that?

Is there more beard than blood in cheeks
like this

Till some one sinite them? Now, I think,
I think

An I praise God for it, the next Huguenot
Who plucks you by the ear or smites on
the face

Shall do no much work after,

CH.— True, madam,
I need be king now; you speak true in
that.

CA.—I'll call you king then always,
king and son,
Dear son and lord of mine. Hold fast on
this

And you are man indeed, and man enough
To teach command to the world and make
its back

Stoop for allegiance. See you, my fair
son,

This sweet face of authority is a mask
For slaves to rivet or undo the joint,
Except one wear it in the eyes of them;
A witness to outbear shame and revolt
And main resistance in the hands; you
were

Never yet king never had will to wear
That circle that completes the head with
gold

And shuts up strength inside the hold of it;
You are now made man.

CH.—And you made mother twice,
Not by gross generation of the womb,
But issue of more princely consequence;
Set this day gold upon your writ of life,
The last of child-bearing for you; so God
Give you good time of it!

CA.— Ay, grace to thank
That grace that gives not mere deliver-
ance

From unrespective burdens of the flesh,
But the keen spirit refines and recreates
To gracious labor. That God that made
high things,

He wrought by purpose and secure design
The length of his contrivance; he set not
tigers

In the mean seat of apes, nor the wild
swine

I' the stabled post of horses; birds and
dogs

Find portion of him, and he sets the fish
In washing waters; rain and the sweet sun
He shuts and opens with his hand; and us
Hath he set upright and made larger eyes
To read some broken letters of this book
Which has the world at lesson; and for
what,

If we not do the royalest good work,

If we not wear the worth of sovereignty
As attribute and raiment? At our feet
Lies reason like a hound, and faith is
chained;

Lame expectation halts behind our ways,
The soundless secret of dead things is
made

As naked shallows to us. It is for that
We owe strong service of the complete soul
To the most cunning fashioner that made
So good work of us; and except we serve,
We are mere beasts and lesser than a snake,
Not worth his pain at all; so might we
shift

The soul as doth that worm his colored
back,

And turn to herd with footless things that
are

The spoil of dust and rain. To close up
all,

Death takes the flesh in his abhorred hands
Of clean alike and unclean; but to die

Is sometimes gracious, as to slip the chain
From wrist and ankle; only this is sad,

To be given up to change and the mere
shame

Of its abominable and obscure work
With no good done, no clean thing in the
soul

To sweeten against resurrection-time
This mire that made a body, lest we keep
No royalties at all, or in the flesh
The worm's toothed ravin touch the soul
indeed.

CH.—Madam, I hold your sentence good
to hear;

I'll do as you would have me. Pray you
now,

Make no more record of my foolishness.

I have used idle words. Make count of me

As of your servant; for from this day forth

I'll hold no Huguenot's throat one whit
more worth

Than is the cord upon it. Sir, good day.

[Exit King.]

CA.—I told you this before; sit down
and laugh

I told you this should be.

GUL.— We have worked well.

CA.—Is this no better now than violent
ways

To threaten the poor passage of his life
With the mean loss of some sick days and
hours?

You would not let him fill his season up
And feed on all his portions cut i' the
world;

You have non in your policies, and hate
The unbound brows of composition;
But I whose cheek is patient of all wrongs,
Who have endurance to my garment, worn
In face o' the smiters, I know through by
heart

Each turn i' the crannies of the boy's spoilt
mind

And corner used in it. Years gone, my
lord,

Before the tender husk of time grew hard,
He would make pastime to tear birds to
death

And pinch out life by nips in some sick
beast;

And being a man, blood turns him white to
see?

Believe me that, I'll praise you more for
faith

Than I praise God for making him a fool.
What shall get done though hell stand up
up to hear;

And in God's heaven God's self become
ashamed,

The rule of use rebel against its way,
The sense of things upon itself revolt,
To the undoing of man,—this shall not fail
For the meek sake of his most female
mouth

That would keep honey in.

GUL.— Have your way so:
I do not cross you; keep that fashion.

CA.— Yea,
I think to have it certainly, fair sir;
Keen man he were that should cheat me
of it.

GUL.— This screw of yours has wrenched
him round our way;

Yet these may pinch the wax, new-mould
his face,

Carve him a mouth, make here an eye or
there;

Will you wring loose their fingers till he
drop

Like a fruit caught, so in one's hollowed
hand?

You'll have some necks to break across ere
that.

Why, Châtillon's gray chin keeps wagging
down

Close at his ear; that demi-dog Soublise
Is made his formal mirth; fool Pardailan

Struts with his throat up like a cock's, and
brags

The king is kind,—has secrets,—he might
say

Some grace was done him,—would not
miss his luck,—

As for the merit—

CA.— So far it goes by rote;
Were there no larger peril than hangs there,
I'd strangle it with but a hair of mine.

GUL.— Madam, I would be fain to under-
stand.

CA.— Sir, this it is; the woman I set on
To shape and stoop him perfectly my way,
Is very falsely made my thorn, and wears
Such fashions as a new-enfranchised slave
To beat his master for delivering him.
She is turned milk, would slit her web
mis-made

Now it shows blood at edge.

GUL.— What ailed your judgment then
To light on her? had you some plague i'
the eye

To choose so sickly?

CA.— The king did lean to her,
And out of his good will I made this cord
To lead him by the ear. Do not you doubt
me;

She has not slit the web so near across
But her own edge may turn upon her skin:
I have a plot to rid the time of her
For some slight days.

GUL.— Some trick to bite her life?

CA.— Nay, I'll not lose her; no more
weight shall be

Than a new time may lift from her again.
I shall but get a clog upon my count
Slyly removed; a double good shall bud
Upon a most small evil. Go with me
And bring me to my women. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. *The Admiral's House.*

Enter COLIGNY and Attendant.

CO.— Carry these letters to my son, and
bid him

Attend me with La Noue. If you shall see
That noble man who spoke with me to-day,
Pray him be with me too. This is a care
That I would have you diligent in; so shall
you

Gather fresh good of me.

ATT.— I will, my lord.

CO.— I shall be bound to you; the time
that makes

Such ruin of us doth yet bequeath me
this,
That where I find good service without
break,
I hold it dearer than a prosperous man.
See you be speedy.
ATT.—I am already hence. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III. *The Louvre.*

*Enter LA ROCHE-SOULAIN and YOLANDE
de MONTMARTRE.*

LA R.—You do not love me smoothly.
YOL.—Did I sue
That you would love me? I owe you
nothing.
LA R.—No?
But if I leave with you so much of me,
Do I not keep some petty part of you?
YOL.—O, not a whit; what would you
do with it?
LA R.—In faith, I know not.
YOL.—You have the holy way
Of cutting clean an oath; as you do coin it
A girl might use the like; your protestation
Is made out of the ravel of spoilt silk;
I trust no such tagged speech.
LA R.—To do you pleasure
I would unsweat the seated saints from
heaven
And put shame out of use with violent
breath.
But to my point.
YOL.—Shall I not say one thing?
LA R.—So I would have you.
YOL.—Then, I think, this breath
So spent on my vexation is not used
For love of me—nay, pray you keep
that in—
But the keen service of your admiral
To whom I must be evidenced.
LA R.—What then?
Are you too far in hate to do me good?
YOL.—Too far in faith to swell you with
such help;
Put down i' the writing that a woman's
trust
Is much belied with you; there's no such
flaw
As male repute doth work to blot us with;
I swear I will not show you anything.
LA R.—I do not beg such alms of you;
come back;
Do words make all the sweet on so sweet
lips?

YOL.—I did not bid you shift your note
to this.
Sir, that ring's edge of yours has cut my
glove. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT III.

SCENE I. *Environs of the Louvre.*

Enter DENISE.

Denise.

BID me keep silence? though I lose all,
I'll wear
Silence no further on my wrong-doings
That holds no weather out. I'll speak
then: God,
Keep me in heart to speak! because my
sense,
Even to the holiest inward of its work
This unclean life has marred; I am stained
with it
Like a stained cloth, it catches on my
face,
Spoils my talk midways, breaks my breath
between,
Paints me ill colors; plucks me upon the
sleeve
As who would say, "I forget me, will you,
then?"
Bid me keep silence? yea, but in losing
that
Lies are so grown like dirt upon my lip
No kisses will wipe dry nor tears wash
bare
The mouth so covered and made foul.
Dear God,
I meant not so much wrong-doing that
prayer
Should choke or stab me in the throat to
say;
For see, the very place I pray withal
I use for lying; and put in light words
To soil it over: the thoughts I make prayer
with
Fasten on ill things and set work on
them,
Letting love go. If one could see the
king
And escape writing—

Enter CINO.

CINO.—Yea, cousin, at prayer so late?
Teach me the trick, I would be fain to
pray,

THE QUEEN-MOTHER.

I grow so sick now with the smell of time.
Ah, the king hurts you? touch a spring i'
the work

And it cries—eh? and a joint creaks in it?

DEN.—This fool wears out.

CINO.—At wrists?

DEN.—At head; but fool,

Hast thou not heard of the king?

CINO.—Yea, news, brave news;

But I'll not spoil them on you.

DEN.—My good Cino—

Nay, sweet thing, fair sir, any precious
word,

Tell me.

CINO.—The king—what will you give
me then?

Half a gold fringe worn off your cloak for
alms?

DEN.—Nay, anything it wills, my Cino.
Quick.

CINO.—A ring? yea, more; what's better
than a ring?

A kiss I doubt of yours; but I'll have best,
Nothing of good or better.

DEN.—Come, sir; well?

CINO.—Tell me what's better than a
kiss; but hear you;

Pull not away, paint me no red: the
king—

DEN.—What is the king?

CINO.—Twice half his years, I think;
God keep him safe between the grays and
blacks.

DEN.—My head is full of tears and
fever; hence,

Get from me, fool, thou ragged skirt of man,
Thou compromise twixt nothing and a bat!
Blind half a beast! I'd see thee hanged
and laugh.

What fool am I to scold at thy brain's
shell?

What sort of underthing shall I call thee,
Who am thy railer?

CINO.—What would you have me? ha?
Must I poison my poor bread or choke my-
self

To make French Chicot room? Being
simply fool,

I eat fool's alms: I may talk wise men
down,

Who gives me sober bread to live by? see:
You'll let me prate now?

DEN.—Yea, prate anything;

Find me the queen, and I'll with you.
Cino—

CINO. Well?

DEN.—Use me better as we go, poor
fool. *[Exeunt.]*

*Enter King, TAVANNES, PARDAILLAN,
SOUBISE, BRANTÔME, and others.*

CH.—Brown hair or gold, my lord Sou-
bise, you say?

SOU.—Pure black wears best.

PAR.—He will not say so, sir.

CIT.—Ay, will not? are you wise, my
Pardaillan?

BRA.—Yolande—you know this damozel
I mean,

One that has black hair hard on blue—

SOU.—Hear that!

Blue hair, eyes black!

BRA.—But note me what she says:
Soubise is a fair name, and that fair lord
That wears it sewn across his arm is good
To give her tame bird seeds to eat.

SOU.—Her bird!

BRA.—She has a sister of your height,
this girl,
Skilled to work patterns with gold thread
and paint.

SOU.—Well, what of her then?

CH.—Yea, sir, hold by that.

BRA.—She said this to me, choosing
seeds of corn

To put between her peacock's bill, it
chanced,

One summer time; and biting with her
teeth

Some husk away to make the grain more
soft,

She put her mouth to the bird's mouth: but
I—

"Give me food rather, I have need to eat"
Whereat her teeth showed fuller and she
said

--The seed still in her lip--she laughed
and said

Her two tame birds, this peacock and Sou-
bise,

Were all she had to feed.

SOU.—I thank her.

CH.—Well,

What followed? that you kissed away the
seed?

BRA.—Hush now, she comes, fair lord.

*Enter Queen-Mother, DENISE, YOLANDE,
and other Ladies, with CINO.*

CA.—Take heart, Denise;

I'll chide him home.—Fair son, I hear hard news;
My lord of Guise in his ill hours of blood
Will hardly trust your courtesy to use
His lady's glove: here was one wept right out
At hearing of it.
CH.— I does belie my patience;
It was this lord thou had her glove away.
CA.—The Guise is sick of it, touched
hard and home;
It bites him like a hurt; you are his keen
plague,
Sharp sauce to hunger, medicine to his
meat,
A sufferance no pained flesh could hold
upon
And not turn bitter.
CH.— Well, God heal his head!
CA.—I did not see my lord Soubise—
make room,
So thick a yellow crowd of ladies' heads
Makes the air taste of powdered scent and
spice
One cannot see a friend; my lord Soubise,
We love you well, what holds you back,
my lord?
SOU.—Madam—
CA.—They trouble us with tales of you;
Here's a maid carries face of Montlitar
Whose heart seems altered to a fresher
name
The blood paints broader on her cheek,
sweet fool;
Answer me this, nay, I shall make you
clear;
Denise has told me how her middle sleep
Was torn and broken by lamentings up,
By sudden speeches, shreds and rags of
talk,
And running over of light tears between;
And ever the poor tender word "Soubise"
Sighed and turned over—ah, such pain she
had!
Poor love of mine, why need you spoil me
her?
SOU.—She will not say so.
YOL.— But she will not say
She loves not, though it sting her soul to
speak,
Being still, woe's me, so sharp and sore a
truth
And hard to hide.
CH.—Well said of her; strike hands.

3

CINO.—Take comfort, daughter; he shall
be made fast to thee
And the Devil climbs not in by way of
marriage.
Conclude temptation, and God increase
your joy
In the second generation of good fools.
Gripe fingers each; I will be bridesman; so.
SOU.—Fool—I am hurt with wonder,
madam—fool—
CINO.—Nay, sir, keep hands.
CH.— This is most gross in you.
CINO.—Yea, so; this is the time of horn-
blowing.
Did your grace never eat stolen eggs? the
meat of them
Is something like the mouth of a fair woman.
Beseech you now let your priest drink no
wine
And you shall have him better for yourself;
Sir, look to that; I would not have you
marred.
CH.—No, you shall stay.
SOU.— I pray you, bid him peace.
CH.—Let the fool talk.
CINO.—There's freedom for your kind
now.
I have not seen a groom so blench and
start;
I wonder what shoe pinched his mother?
SOU.—Beast! [*Strikes him, and exit.*]
CA.—You are sad, sir.
CH.—I am not well at heart.
CA.—It is the summer heat; I have not
seen
So hard a sun upon the grape-season
These twelve years back.—Fellow, look
up, take heart;
He cannot hurt thee.
CINO.— Why not? I am no woman.
I am sure he has made my head swell; get
him married.
I'll do as much for him. Eh? will I not?
(*To Yolande.*)
YOL.—I will not wed him; so the shame
shall stick
Where it began, on him alone.
CA.—(*Aside.*)— Whispers?
(*Observing Denise and the King.*)
I do suspect you sorely. Oh! so close;
Thrusting your lip even against his ear?
Yea, hold the sleeve now, pinch it up;
(*aloud*) there may be
No ill in this; and I have hope it wears

No face of purpose, but I like it not.

VOL.—What is it you mislike?

CA.— Eh? nothing, I;

My care's not half the worth of a fool's head

Nor carries so much weight. My lord Bourdeilles,

Have you no tale for us?

BRA.— Yea, madam, a rare jest.

VOL.—We'll pluck it forth.

RENÉE.— Ay, pinch it out of him; We would be merry.

PAR.— Umph! I know the tale.

BRA.—I would not have a gospeller hear you, sir.

CINO.—I see a tale now hang at the king's sleeve.

CA.—A very light one.

BRA.—But if you hear me, madam,—
There's matter for a leap-year's laugh therein.

The noble damsel of Maulévrier—

CA.—Is she your tale?

BRA.— Speak low; she told it me.

VOL.—Where should he hear it?

CA.—Peace now; sir, make on.

BRA.—She being about my lady of Navarre

Last night,—I mean some foolish nights ago,

For there last night she was not, I believe,
Made out this jest: this is the jest she made.

CINO.—'Tis a sweet jest, but something over ripe.

BRA.—You have not heard it.

CINO.—I hear it with my nose, and it smells rank.

BRA.—You all do know his highness of Navarre

Is loving to his lady; and, God's death,
She is worth no less a price; nor doth affection,

Being set on her, outweigh the measured reason

Nor sense of limit she doth well deserve;
Yea, she outgoes the elected best, outswells
What is called good.

CINO.— A very merry tale.

BRA.—Prithee, fool, peace.—Now at that time I speak of

He was at point to come; but being delayed
(The how I say not—this I do not say;
Indeed I would not—mark you not the how)
He could not come. She, grown hereon to heat,

Chid at her ladies, wrangled with her hair,
Drew it all wried, then wept, then laughed again;

Till one saying, "Madam, I did see my lord

About the middle matter of the dusk
Slip forth to speak with"—here she stayed;
the queen

Doth passionately catch her by that word,
Crying with whom? and might this be a man?

And should men use her so? and shame of men,

And not the grace of temperance in them
Which is the cover and the weeds of sin;
And such wet circumstance of waterish words

As ladies use; whereto the damsel—
"Madam,

I may swear truly no man had him forth,
But to swear otherwise—"

CA.— I do perceive you:
There was a conference of the gospellers,
And there was he.

BRA.—But he that brought him forth—

CA.—Enough, the jest runs out; I know your matter.

Fair son, you would be private?

CH.— Like enough;
I do not say you trouble me to stay,

But you shall please me going.

CA.— Good time to you!
Come with me, sirs. Take you the fool along.

[*Exeunt all but King and DENISE.*]

CH.—I am assured you love me not a whit.

DEN.—You will not set your faith upon that thought;

I love you dearly.

CH.— I do not bid you swear it.

DEN.—I pray you, if you know what I would say,

That you endure this feebleness which sits
Upon my lips i' the saying.

CH.— What do you think of me?

DEN.—I know you are my master and a king

That I have called thrice nobler than his name;

I know my lip hath got the print of you,
And that the girdle of your fastened arms
Keeps warm upon me yet; and I have thought,

Yea, I have sworn it past the reach of
 faith,
 Even till the temperate heaven did, stung
 at me,
 Begin a chiding,—that you loved me back
 To the large aim and perfect scope o' the
 heart;
 That I was as a thing within your blood,
 There moved, and made such passage up
 and down
 As doth the breath and motion of your air;
 Being rather as a pain caught unawares,
 A doubtful fever or sick heat of yours
 That now the purging time hath rid you of
 And made smooth ease.
 CH.— You did know better then.
 DEN.— Nay, then I think I knew not
 anything;
 My wits were broken in the use of love.
 What do you think of me? I would know
 that.
 CH.— As of a thing I love—I know not
 what;
 Only that any slight small thing of yours,
 A foolish word, a knot upon your head,
 Some plait worn wrong or garment braced
 awry,
 Any girl's thing—doth grow so and possess
 With such a strength of thought, so waxen
 full,
 The complete sum and secret of my
 will
 I cannot get it out.
 DEN.— If that be love,
 Then I love you, which you did swear a
 lie.
 For I do feed upon you in my meat
 And sleep upon you in my tired bed
 And wake upon you in my praying times,
 As you were used and natural unto me,
 My soul's strong habit and nativity.
 CH.— I think you do; I never taxed you
 else.
 But he that will not swear I love you
 back
 Doth sin outside the heavy name of lie
 And compass of a villain.
 DEN.— I doubt you not.
 You know that I did urge you for the
 queen?
 CH.— Yea: you made up a peace between
 our jars.
 DEN.— Ay, like a damnd peacemaker,
 a truce
 More sharp than is the naked side of war.

CH.— What now? you slip on that fool's
 text again?
 DEN.— That I did pluck you over to her
 side
 I would repent even in the cost and price
 Of my most inward blood, yea of my
 heart.
 CH.— You did a good work then: now
 you turn sharp.
 DEN.— I do well think that had I never
 been
 You had not fallen in her purposes.
 CH.— I may perceive my patience is
 your fool:
 You make slight use of me. Take note of
 this,
 Henceforth I will not undergo the words
 That it shall please you cast upon my
 place
 In such loose way. What makes you chide
 at me?
 Have you no sort of fool but me to wear
 The impatient work of your mistempered
 blood
 With a soft spirit?
 DEN.— You have sworn me love;
 If you did love me with more worth and
 weight
 Than slackly binds a two hours' liking up,
 You would not pluck displeasure from my
 words,
 I am too weak to make fit wrath for you.
 CH.— Ay, that I think.
 DEN.— You do me right; but mark,
 Being this I am, not big enough to hurt,
 I do repent me past all penitence,
 Outweep the bounded sorrow of all words,
 That I did bring you to such peace again
 As hath its feet in blood.
 CH.— You did then swear
 Nothing one half so blessed and so clean
 As to make peace between her lips and
 mine;
 You bade me think how good it was to
 have
 The grace of such a gentle fellowship
 To lean my love upon; how past the law
 And natural sweetness of sweet mother-
 hood
 Her passion did delight itself on me;
 With all the cost of rare observances
 Followed the foot of my least enterprise;
 Esteem'd me even to the disvaluing
 Of her own worthy life; would not, in brief,
 Partake the pain of common offices

And due regard that custom hath of time
But for my love. Was this no talk of
yours?

DEN.—Indeed I said so.

CH.— Did I not give you faith?

DEN.—You did believe me; I would
you had not so,
Or that some poisonous pain had killed my
lips

Before they learnt the temper of such
words.

CH.—What then, you knew not this red
work indeed?

No savor of this killing flecked your
speech?

DEN.—I know of it? but to have lied
and known

I had been plagued past all the gins of
hell.

I know of it? but if I knew of it
There is no whip that God could hunt me
with

That would not seem less heavy than thin
snow

Weighed with the scars and shames of my
desert.

CH.—But how if such a thing be neces-
sary?

DEN.—There's no such need that bids
men damn themselves.

CH.—Nay, but if God take hell to work
withal

That is more bitter than all waste of men.
And yet God makes the honey of his law
Out of its sharp and fire-mouthed bitterness,
Why may not I take this? yea, why not I?

DEN.—If you shall think on murder,
how it is,

How mere a poison in all mouths of men
That only at the casual use of it
Sicken and lose the rule of their discourse,
Being wounded with it; how poorest men
alive

That in dull drink have chanced upon a life
Are slain for it, and the red word of sin
Doth elbow them at side and dig their
grave

And makes all tongues bitter on them, all
eyes

Fills out with chiding—how very knaves
do loathe

The tax and blot of such a damned breath
As goes to call hard murder by his name;
Yea, how blood slain shall not be healed
again,

Never get place within the ruined veins,
Never make heat in the forsaken flesh;
O, you shall think thereon.

CH.— Have I not thought?

DEN.—Not this I bid you, this you have
not thought;

How to each foot and atom of that flesh
That makes the body of the worst man
up

There went the very pain and the same
love

That out of love and pain compounded you,
A piece of such man's earth; that all of
these

Feel, breathe, and taste, move and salute
and sleep,

No less than you, and in each little use
Divide the customs that yourself endure;
And are so costly that the worst of these
Was worth God's time to finish; O, thus
you shall not,

Even for the worth of your own well-doing,
Set iron murder to feed full on them.

CH.—Fret me no more; I shall turn
sharp with you.

DEN.—O, sir, in such dear matter as I
have

I fear not you at all. You shall not go.

CH.—I may forget your body's tender
make

And hurt you. Do not put me from myself;
I am dangerous then; being sobered, I do
know

How rash and sharp a blood I have, and
weep

For my fierce use of it: push not so far.

DEN.—Yea now, put all the bruise of
them on me

And I will thank you. You did hurt me
once,

Look here, my wrist shows where you
plucked it hard;

I never spoke you ill for it; you shall
Do me worse hurt and I not cry at all.

CH.—This is fool's talk.

DEN.— And once in kissing me
You bit me here above the shoulder, yet
The mark looks red from it; you were too
rough,

I swore to punish you and starve your lip
To a more smooth respect. I have loved
you, sir;

Sir, this is harsh that you regard me not.

CH.—Nay, peace! I will not have you
loud.

DEN.— My lord—
 CH.—Say "Charles" now; be more tender of your mouth.
 DEN.—Sir, the shame that burns through my cheek and throat
 Cannot get words as hot as blood to speak,
 Or you would hear such; keep your eyes on me,
 Ay, look so; have you sense or heart, my lord?
 Are you not sorry if one come to wrong?
 CH.—This is some trap. What makes you turn so quick?
 DEN.—Yea, king, are you? yea, is this not the king?
 And I so pray, speak words so hard to speak,
 Kneel down, weep hard,—but you shall hear this out,—
 To be put like a garment oil? not so.
 The queen-mother throws nets about, spins well,
 Contrives some thread to strike the whole web through,
 To catch you like a plague,—there's worse and worse,—
 What hurt is it, what pain to men outside,
 Although she ruin us, make spoil of us,
 Melt the gold crown into a ring of hers,
 What harm?
 CH.—What harm by God! I think much harm.
 DEN.—But this is worse—to catch France in her trap,
 People and all, body and soul; cheat God,
 Ruin us all, as ruined we shall be,
 I know not how too well, but something thus,
 And now God puts this hour of time to be
 A steel sword in your hand, and says withal
 "Now give me token if there be a king
 Inside you, do me right who made you way,
 Drew you so high"; I pray you for God's love
 Let none put thievish fingers on the time,
 Loosen your sword God girt so next your side.
 What, men steal money and you hang for that,
 What, one puts just his little knife in you
 As I put just a bodkin in this hair,
 And he gets choked with cord and spat upon—
 But when some treason stabs belief in the back,

Thrusts its tongue out and wags its head at God,
 Turns bitter his sweet mouth with vinegar,
 Bruises him worse than any Pilate's Jews.
 These men go free? It were too hard to think.
 Yea, sir, I will not have you lift your lip,
 Yea, you may smite me with your foot, fair lord,
 Whom yesterday you kissed here in the mouth;
 I lay no care on life or on this breath
 Or on this love that hath so dead an end;
 More ill is done than good will ever be,
 And I now pluck the finished fruit of it
 Planted by bitter touches of the lip,
 False breath, hot vows, the broken speech of lust
 By finger-pinches and keen mouths that bite
 Their hard kiss through: nay, but I pray you well
 Let there be no more ill than grows hereon,
 No such kiss now that stings and makes a stain,
 No cups drunk out that leave dead lees of blood.
 Be sorry for me; yea, be good, my king,
 Tender with me: let not the queen-mother
 Touch me to hurt: sir, know you certainly
 None loves you better: also men would say
 It may be some joy you have had of me;
 Even for that sake, for that most evil sake,
 Have some good mercy.
 CH.— Mad, but really mad!
 Here, child, put up your hands in mine,
 Denise:
 By God's blood, the girl-shakes and shakes and burns—
 What, have you fever?
 DEN.— None, no pain; but, sir,
 Be pitiful a little; my sweet lord,
 Have you not had me wholly in one hand
 To do your will with? would I lie to you?
 CH.—Eh, would you lie? well, God knows best, I doubt.
 DEN.—I pray God bring me quick to bitter hell
 If I lie to you: have you eyes at least?
 That woman with thin reddish-blood-like lips,
 That queen-mother that would use blood for paint,
 Can you not see her joint the trap for you,
 Not see the knife between her fingers, s'r,

Where the glove opens?

CH.— This is right your way;
A sweet way, this; what will you bid me
do?

DEN.—Not this, not this she pulls you on
to do;

Not set a treason where a promise was,
Not fill the innocent time with murder up,
Not—

CH.—Tush! some preacher's plague has
caught the child.

Are you mad truly? some strange drink in
you?

DEN.— Sir—

CH.—Do you take me for no king at
all,

That you talk this? I never heard such
talk.

No hands on me; nay, go, and have good
day, [Exit DENISE.]

Re-enter the Queen-Mother and YOLANDE.

Do you note this, our mother?

CA.— Yea, and well.

CH.—This is the very mercy of a maid;
To cut a hand off lest a finger ache
And paint the face of resolution white
Lest the red startle one.

CA.— It is most true;
I pray you be not movable of wit
Or waxen to her handling.

CH.— I will not;
There's nothing shall have time to startle
me,

Being in this work so deep; no delicate
sense

That gathers honey at her lip shall fool
The resolution and large gravity
That holds my purpose up. I am no
fool;

I will go through with it; I am no boy
To be kissed out of mind; I will not fail.

[Exit.]

CA.—Yolande, this way; come nearer, my
fair child;

I love you well; there's no such mouth at
court

For music and fair color; sit by me;
How pleasant is it to find eyes to love
That will not cheat or flatter one! Dear
maid,

I think you find a time between two loves
To put some poor dwarfed liking by for
me?

Indeed you may; see if I love you not?

Get me to proof.

YOL.—You are my gracious mistress;
I would be always glad of service done
And found worth taking.

CA.— Do you love Denise?
Meseems the girl grows whiter and less
straight,

Dull, too, I think; eh, you think other-
wise?

YOL.—She seems to me grown duller
than spoilt wine.

CA.—I am right glad you do not think
her wise.

I have a plan to pleasure mine own self,
And do you good. Are you content
thereto?

YOL.— Madam, content.

CA.— You will not blench away?
Not lightly start from me?

YOL.—I will not so.

CA.—I trust you perfectly.—Fetch hither
to me

That box of mine wherein I keep rare
seents;

You know, the one carved of sweet foreign
wood

I use to dress my hair and face withal.

YOL.—Madam, I shall. [Exit.]

CA.— Ay, it shall do you good.
Will this one hold in wearing? I think,
yes;

For I have seen her tread upon sick flies
Where the other swerved, and would not
do them hurt.

This Yolande is half cold, and wears her
pleasure

No deeper than the skin; thereto she is
hard,

Cunning and bold; I have heard tales of
her;

She hath the brain and patience of hoar
beards

In her most supple body. I do not think
That she shall wry her mouth on tasting
blood.

Re-enter YOLANDE.

So, did you miss it?

YOL.— Madam, it is here.

CA.—Thanks: have good care of the lid,
you see it has

Fair foreign work of cunning little heads
And side-mouthed puppets quaintly cut on
it:

See how I pinch it open with a trick;

I would not have all fingers mix in it.

For there are spices which are venomous;
So are best things puddled with ill in them,
We cannot sift them through; nothing so
clean

But you may tread it foul, nor so foul any-
thing

That one may never warp its use to good;
As this which puts out men, and is most
rare

To sweeten gloves with.

YOL.— What am I to do?

CA.—I know not. Set a cushion to my
feet;

So.—One has told me each of you to-day
Lay some girl's gift upon that fool of mine:
Is this not true?

YOL.— Madam, it was our game.

CA.—When you shall see him give him
this for me;

(Gives her a glove.)

And yet not me, he loves not me, poor
fool;

Say that Denise had wrought him such a
glove,

And being incensed at his late insolence
Which he hath put upon the king and her
Was purposed to withhold it; I will con-
firm you.

Suppose a shift of mine to vex the fool;
Say what you will, but thrust her name
therein;

Look that you take him where she may not
see.

Clasp the silk well across my shoulder;
thanks;

I am clad too thinly for a queen-mother,
But all this month is overhot. Be sure
Nothing shall stick to us. Keep close to
me. [Exeunt.

SCENE II. *The Admiral's House.*

Enter LANOUE, TELIGNY, and LA ROCH-
FOUCAULD.

LA N.—I fear me he can scantily bear
this out.

TEL.—Nay, fear him not; there goes
more nerve to him

Than to some lesser scores. His compe-
tence

Is like that virtue in his mind which fills
The shallowness of thin occasions up,
And makes him better than the season is
That serves his worth to work in. He shall
outlive

And bear himself beyond the fear of time,
Where other men made firm in goodness
drop

And are the food of peril.

LA R.—Doubtless he is most wise;
But I misdoubt he doth too much regard
Each trick and shift of bastard circum-
stance;

It is the custom and gray note of age
To turn consideration wrong way out
Until it show like fear.

TEL.— I pray, sir, tell me
In what keen matter hath he so blenched
aside

Since time began on him? or in what
fashion

Hath he worn fear? The man is absolute,
Perfectly tempered; that I a little speak
him,

Your less observance of him shall excuse
And so my praise allow itself. He hath
been

In all hard points of war the best that ever
Did take success by the hand; the first that
wore

Peace as the double coronet of time,
The costly stone set in red gold of war,
So wise to mix reverse with sufferance,
Use fortune with a liberal gravity
And discipline calamitous things with
grace.

That failure more approved him, being so
shaped

And worn to purpose in his wisdom's
worth,

Than men are praised for hazard, though it
leaves

Their heads embraced with wealth. His
nobleness of speech

Hath made true grace and temperate re-
serve

But usual names for his; he is too pure,
Too perfect in all means of exercise
That are best men's best pearl, to be
esteemed

At single value of some separate man
That the thin season can oppose to him.

LA R.—I say not else.

TEL.— So would I have you say.

LA R.—Had I dispraised the admiral, it
had shown

My love to him that I did prick your
speech

To such fair estimate of his fair worth.
The man is come.

Enter COLIGNY.

Co.— Good morrow, noble friends.
Fair son, it is a loving bound that doth
Limit your custom thus.

TEL.— I am best pleased
When I may use you thus familiarly.

Co.—*(To La R.)* My lord, you told me
of a way you had
To bring the matter clear we spoke upon.

LA R.—Yea, by a woman's means.

Co.— I think it was.

LA R.—I saw her yesternight.

LA N.— You did not say
Where our hopes went? I would not
trust you far.

LA R.—Nay, I did strain discretion out
of wear;

I told her nothing.

Co.— What did you get of her?
I think you called the woman—umph—
Yolande.

LA R.—That's your demand, what I did
get of her?

Why, such fair time as women keep for us;
What better should I get?

TEL.—*(To La N.)* I fear him greatly;
It is the unwound and ravelled sort of man
That the proof uses worst; so large of lip
I never yet secure in spirit.

— Sir,

We have looked for more of you.

LA R.— This is pure truth;
I had such usage as made room for talk,
And in the vantage of occasion put
Inquiry on her, how the queen her mistress
Was moved in temper towards us; did she
say thus,

Or thus: you see I spoke not as of purpose
To get this out, but just in some loose way;
As did she put new color in her hair,
Or what sweet kind of water did she take
To smoothe her neck, what powder blanch
it with;

And twenty such blown matters out of
joint;

Then at the last felt underhand on this,
What were her state-words, her talk's
policy;

Which way she bowed; or should the Pol-
ish king

Weigh dearer than the duke of Alencon
Or either than this Charles; and thus, and
thus:

Being so, you see, bosomed and gathered
up

Towards the close and dearest time of all
She could keep nothing safer than her
mouth

Would let it out for me; and I as quick
To catch her talk for food as 'twere a
kiss

The last I thought to find about her lips.

Co.— But to the point she told you of,
if thus

You got one clear.

TEL.— Ay, that, sir, show us that.

LA R.—Give me the breath to come to
it, my lords;

Thus was it; I must hide her foolishness
Deep as trust lies in man; whereon I swore
Ten such sweet oaths as love doth take to
wind

His windy weaving up; then she begins
The matter of her fear, thus quakes thereon—

TEL.— This will outlive all patience.

LA N.— Bear with it.

LA R.—The queen she said was kind,
not given to put

Her care of things, outside her talk, but
kind

And would say somewhat—something one
might know—

As this; the queen was graciously disposed
And all sick humor of old policies

By this blown out; she would not do men
wrong;

We should have music in the month would
play

All harsher-throated measures out, and
make

Even in the noisy and sick pulse of war
Continual quiet.

Co.— Did she take such words?

LA R.—Even these I tell you.

Co.— I thank you for their use;
This trouble hath borne fruit to us of yours.

LA R.—To please a lesser friend than
you are, sir,

I'll undergo worse labor, stretch myself
To a much keener service. Sirs, farewell:

I have a business waits upon the king

That narrows half my leisure seasons in.

[Exit.]

Co.— What do you say of this?

TEL.— May we believe
The Florentine with so light a key

Lock such deep matter? I do not trust
the man.

Co.— Sir, what say you?

LA N.—I rule not by such levels.

Co.—I hold with both of you; and I am glad
The time hath rid him hence.
TEL.— True, it is fit.
Co.—He weighs much lighter than our counsel may.
By this I doubt if his whore spake truth
(As commonly such have repute to trip
At unawares on it, and escape lies
By disesteem of truth)—I say I doubt not
The queen doth something cover in her speech
That has more danger in its likelihood
Than a snake poison.
LA N.— Will you take it so?
Co.—Nay, so I know it. Therefore as we prefer
Before the deadly-colored face of war
The cold assurance of a sober peace,
And esteem life beyond death's violence
For all dear friends who hang their weight on us,
It so imports us to make use of time
As never was more need.
TEL.— What must we do for you?
Co.—I would send letters to the province towns
For witness how impaired a state we have
In this loose Paris; how like beleaguered men
That are at edge of hunger and begin
To slacken their more temperate advice
And heat the blood of counsel, we are bound
To the service of this danger; informing further
Of this my hurt, caught unawares at hand
(As proof doth drive beyond the guess) of one
Who wears the gold of Guise at his point's edge
And hath allowance for the use of him
Rightly received. This being set down, with more
That is but half as hazardous as it
And yet hath face enough, shall sting them through;
So shall their keener service overcome
The providence of these.
LA N.— They shall have news;
Myself am charged to be from hence this week;
The office that I have must be my meat;
To steal upon our friends that lie abroad

And work them to our way.
TEL.— Have you no more?
Co.—This only, that you warn our Paris men
To keep waked eyes this month; for as I think
(And partly this is gathered of report
Which our late evidence hath put sinew to)
There moves between the Guisards and the queen
Some certain question whose performance will
Bruise us past use. Nay, I am sure of it;
If proof may give security large heart
And things endured be held believable,
Then I am sure. Therefore be wise as swift;
Put iron on your lips, fire in your feet,
And turn trust out of service. I have no more;
For me, this maimed and barren piece I am
May bear the time out, and sufficient roof
Is in the patient cover of a grave
To keep hard weathers off; but for the cause
And for my friends therein I take this care
To counsel you. Farewell.
TEL., LA N.—Farewell, great lord.
[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE III. *The Louvre.*

Enter the Queen-Mother, MARGARET, DENISE, YOLANDE, and other Ladies.

CA.—Call in my fool. You have all made proof of love
Except Denise; nay, she shall gift him too.
I prithee call him to us. (*Exit DENISE.*)
And yet I think
The fellow turns half sour about the lip,
Being almost wholly dull.
MAR.—Nay, I keep friends with him.
CA.—That's like enough, for he doth love your husband.
But the lewd words he put upon my son
And on Denise, did all but quite condemn
Our meek account of them. It is no matter,
If she can pardon him.
Re-enter DENISE with CINO.
O, sir, come hither.
CINO.—I shall run at your bidding.
shall I not?

- CA.—What should you do?
 MAR.—Ay, there, what would you be?
 CINO.—Not fool enough to be a dog of yours.
 MAR.—This is no fault he can do naught but rail.
 YOL.—The fool has strayed among the gospellers.
 CINO.—I begin to see I am virtuous; the wicked abuse me.
 CA.—Come hither, sirrah. Look well upon this fellow;
 Would you not say a fool so round of flesh Should be as courteous as a spaniel, ha?
 Make answer, sir; we are told news of you, What licensed things inhabit in your lip That should be whipt ere heard, corrected first
 And after to offend: what say you to't?
 CINO.—Now shall I slip for want of a good tongue
 And have my patience beaten. Prithee lend me
 A tongue of yours.
 CA.—Have I more tongues than one?
 CINO.—A score or so.
 CA.—Show us a little first
 What sort of speech thy mother taught thee
 mar.
 MAR.—Ay, there it lies; try that.
 CINO.—What will you have me say?
 YOL.—His jests are waste.
 ANNE.—Pure scandal screams in them.
 CINO.—You call me gospeller, ha?
 YOL.—Nay, that did I.
 CINO.—Shall I turn preacher for your sake and make
 A parable of your mouths?
 MAR.—That, that; come on.
 YOL.—Put your worst wrath on us.
 RENÉE.—We'll hear the fool.
 ANNE.—Speak large and open; spare us not; speak wide.
 YOL.—Now the mill grinds; now mark.
 CINO.—But I shall rail indeed.
 Now I have holy leave.
 MAR.—No matter; prithee now.
 CINO.—It is your preacher's parable and not mine
 Who am your poor fool and a simple thing.
 CA.—Come, sir, dig out your spleen.
 CINO.—Thus then. You are all goats—
 MAR.—Ha?
 CA.—Herein through; we must have better stuff.
 CINO.—And that which should make humbled blood in you
 And clothe your broader times with modesty
 Runs all to spoil and plagues your veins with heat.
 YOL.—We must have more.
 ANNE.—This is blunt matter, fool.
 CINO.—Hunger abides in you as in a dog
 That has been scanted of flesh-meat three days;
 Sin doth make house with you. Are you pleased yet?
 You have smooth Sodom in your shameful cheeks;
 Respect, obedience, the shut lips of fear, Worship and grace and observation,
 You have not heard of more than spring-sworn kine
 Have heard of temperance. Are you yet satisfied?
 CA.—This is dead ware.
 MAR.—Mere chaff that chokes the bin.
 YOL.—The dust of a fool's bones.
 ANNE.—Dull as a preacher's beard.
 CINO.—But are you not? resolve me; are not you?
 You are made up of stolen scraps of man
 That were filched unawares; you can make no children
 Because you are grown half male with wicked use.
 CA.—I'll have thee whipt; thou art a hollow fool,
 And hast no core but pith. Why, any beast
 That hath the spring of speech in his tongue's joint
 Or any talking nerve, could breed to 'his.
 Thou wert to make us mirth.
 CINO.—Well, do I not? do I not?
 MAR.—Who angles in thee save for weeds, shall trip
 Over his ears in mire: shut thy lewd mouth.
 CA.—Will you take gifts to be dumb? we are wearied with you.
 CINO.—Ay, and worse favors at your prayer I will.
 CA.—You look near white with laughing much, Yoland;
 Nay, there's no need to catch so sharp at red.
 Give me that glove you keep for him.
 YOL.—Here, madam.
 CA.—Here, wear this Cino, and be friends with us.

CINO.—A fair gold thing, a finch's color
i' the hack;
Too small for me though; God change one
of us.
CA.—Denise gave me the glove.
DEN.— I, gracious madam?
CA.—You, gracious maiden; it would
span your wrist.
So, fool; beware you do not rend it.
VOL.— Ah!
CA.—What now? did a gnat sting you?
VOL.— A mere fly;
A mere gold fly; I took it for a wasp.
MAR.—What does this mean? Come
hither, fool; sit here.
CA.—I will not have him there.—
Stand farther off.—
The knave's report doth poison miles about;
Come half so close, he'll kill you in your
ear.
CINO.—Have back your glove; here,
madam, have it back;
I will not wear it.
MAR.—What stings him now i' the brain?
CINO.—I am not well.
CA.— This is some sideways.
DEN.—(Aside).—God make this hus-
ness better than my thought,
For I lo fear it.
MAR.— Do you note his lips?
VOL.—Yea, his eyes too?
ANNE.— He is not well indeed.
Was all his railing prologue to this play
That reads as dull as death?
CINO.— Now I could prophesy
Like who turns heaven to riddles; my
brain beats.
A man were as good ask mercy of dead
bones
As of the best lip here; nay, I shall be
Quite marred amongst you.
CA.— Convey the fool from us;
This does not look like wine.
CINO.—God be with you; be wise now,
for the fool is gone. [Exit.
CA.—I do not like the face of this.—
Where had you
The glove you gave me?
DEN.—I gave you nothing, madam.
CA.— Does that wind hold? I must
have more of you.
MAR.—Madam, you do not think—
CA.— Give me leave, sweet.
We have had too much peril in report
To let this lie so light. Where had you it?

DEN.—Why do you bait me out of season
thus?
You know I never had it.
CA.— Oh! had you not?
Then I have dreamed awry of you.
DEN.— Madam—
Enter Attendant.
ATT.—Where is the queen?
CA.— What puts such haste in you?
Am I not worth a knee?
ATT.— Pardon me, madam;
I have such tidings; your poor fool is dead.
CA.—Bring me to him. So suddenly to
cease
Is to cry out on his death's manner; bring
me
To see his body; I have a little craft
In such a matter's healing. Some of you
Look to that girl; she swoons to have the
deed
So entered in her ears.
MAR.— It is too foul.
CA.—God pardon her! Could she not
see that sharpness
Was hut the gall and flaw of his bowed
brain?
It did not hurt her more, being most pro-
claimed,
Than she has pitied him. Bring her with
us. [Exit.

ACT IV.

SCENE I. *The Louvre.*

*Enter LA NOUE, SOUBISE and PAR-
DAILLAN.*

Par daillan.

I HAVE not heard such news.
LA N.—Faith, they sound ill;
If women of so choice and costly names
Turn worse than popular murder-ers, we
have all
Much need to help ourselves.
SOU.— This is their fashion;
Their blood is apt to heats so mutable
As in their softer hodies overgrow
The temper of sweet reason, and confound
All order but their blood.
PAR.— You read them well;
Good reason have you to put reason to 't
And measure them by the just line of it.

LA N.—But that such sins should plague
the feverish time
I do not wonder far; all things are grow
Into a rankness.

PAR.— Still I say, a wom
To do such bitter deeds—

SOU.— That's where it sticks.

PAR.— Put on such iron means—

SOU.— Aye, that, sir, that.

PAR.—So rip the garments of their
temperance

And keep no modest thing about their
face

To hide the sin thereon; pluck off the
shows

That did o'erblanch a little—

SOU.— Ay, keep there

LA N.—But, gentlemen, what upshot
hear you of?

PAR.—The queen hath sent her under
heavy guard

To bide some subtler edge of evidence

Here in her chamber.

SOU.— Why not in prison?

Look you, they'll let her slip; I say they
will.

PAR.—But hear you, sir; I did not blame
the queen—

SOU.—It doth outgrow the height and
top of shame

That she should pass untaxed.

PAR.— She will not pass.

SOU.—Take note, sir, there is com-
position in 't;

They would not put imprisonment on her;

Why this is rank: I tell you this is rank.

PAR.—God's pity! what a perfect wasp
are you!

Why, say she scapes—as by my faith I see
No such keen reason why she should not
scape,

The matter being so bare and thin in
proof

As it appears by this—

LA N.— Yea, so I say;

If she be manifest a murderess—

SOU.— If!

What "if" will serve? show me the room
for "if";

I read no reason on the face of "if."

If she be not, what leans our faith upon?

If she be pure or only possible

For judgment to wash clear,—if she be
not

Evident in guilt beyond all evidence,—

The perfect map where such red lines are
drawn

As set down murder,—if she be less one
whit

I'll take her sin upon myself and turn
Her warrant.

PAR.— Take a woman's sin on you?
O, while you live, lay no such weight on
faith,

'T will break her back. Sir, as you love
me, do not;

I would not have you take such charge
upon you.

SOU.—I say I will not; for I can approve
Her very guiltiness.

PAR.— Nay, that clears all.
But it is strange that one so well reputed,
So perfect in all gentle ways of time

That take men's eyes—in whom the slips
she had

Were her more grace and did increase
report

To do her good—who might excuse all
blame

That the tongued story of this time could lay
On her most sweet account,—that such a
lady

Should wreak herself so bloodily for words
Upon a shallow and sick-witted fool.

Why, what is she the better, he removed?
Or how doth he impair her, being alive?

There's matter in 't we know not of.

SOU.— Yea, why?

For that you speak of her repute, my lord,
I am not perfect in a girl's repute:

It may be other than I think of it;

But in this poor conjectural mind of mine
I cannot see how to live large and loose

Doth put a sounder nerve into repute

Than honest women have. What we did
know of her,

You, I, and all men—

PAR.— Nay, you tax her far.

SOU.—I mean we know her commerce
with the ki—

Ha? did we not?

PAR.— Yea, that was broad enough.

SOU.—Why, well then, how doth she
make up repute,

Being patched so palpably? Here comes
the queen.

*Enter the King, the Queen-Mother, and
LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.*

CIT.—It may be so

- CA.— I would it had less face.
If likelihood could better speak of her,
I should be glad to help it.
- SOU.— Marked you this?
- CA.—But shame can hide no shame so
manifest;
It must all out.
- CH.— I do not say it must.
- CA.—Why, it was open, proof doth
handle it;
The poor brain-bitten railer chid at her,
Scoffed in lewd words, made speech in-
sufferable
Of any temper; ear; no colder cheek
But would have burnt at him; myself was
angered,
Could not wear patience through; and she
being quick,
Tendering her state as women do, too
slight
To push her reason past her anger's bound.
- SOU.—Did you note that? she speaks
my proper way.
- CA.—She being such doth with my hands
resolve
To whip him out of life; and in this humor—
- CH.—Soft now; I must get proof; what
makes your highness
- In such a matter?
- CA.— I gave her glove to him.
- CH.—O, this is well; and yet she murder-
ed him?
- PAR.—What says your judgment to't?
have you no quirk? (*Aside.*)
- CA.—She gave it me; I had the glove of
her.
- PAR.—Does the wind blow that side?
- SOU.— Notice the king; he chafes.
- [*Exeunt PARDAILLAN, SOUBISE,
and LA NOË.*]
- CH.—Our sister says she did outswear
you all
She never saw the glove.
- CA.— Put her to proof;
Let her outbrag by evidence evidence,
And proof unseat by proof.
- CH.— Call her to me.
- CA.—That were unfit; you shall not see
her.
- CH.— Shall not!
- Who puts the "shall not" on me? is it
you?
- CA.—Not I. but absolute need and
present law;
- She is not well; and till she be made whole
There shall no trial pass upon her proof;
She shall have justice; it may be she is
clear,
And this large outward likelihood may lie;
Then she were sharply wronged; and in
that fear
And also for dear love I bear to her
I have removed her with no care but mine
To a more quiet room; where till more
surely
She doth abide in an unwounded peace,
Having most tender guard.
- CH.— I'll write her comfort;
For I do know she has much wrong in
this.
- CA.—I will commend you verbally to
her;
The other were some scandal.
- CH.— Pray you, do;
Look you speak gently; I would not have
you loud,
For she will weep all pity into you
To see her cheek so marred. Look you
say well;
Say I do nothing fear but she is wronged,
And will do right; yea, though I loved her
not
(As truly I am not so hard in love
But I can see her fault, which is much
pity,—
A very talking error in weak tongues)
I would not have her wronged. Look you
say that.
- CA.—I will say anything.
- CH.— Now, my fair lord,
Have I done well?
- LA R.—Most justly and most well.
- CH.—You would not else, were you a
king of mine?
- LA R.—I would do this, even merely as
you do.
- CH.—What say you to this evidence?
- LA R.— That it doth
Amaze my sense of what is proven; for,
If there be witness in the touch and grasp
Of things so palpable, and naked likeli-
hood
Outpoises all thin guess and accident,
I must believe what makes belief rebel
And turn a proclaimed liar. For I am
sure
That she whose mouth this proof doth
dwell upon,
I mean the virtuous damozel Yoianae,

Is past the tax of lying; she is as pure
As truth desires a man.

CH.— It is most strange;
Let's find some smother talk. Have you
not seen
My book of deer, what seasons and what
ways

To take them in? I finished it last night.

LA R.—I have not seen it.

CH.— Only this throws me out;
(The verses, Peter Ronsard made them
rhyme)

I'll show you where; come, you shall get
me through;

You are perfect at such points.

LA R.— Your praise outruns me.

CH.—No, not a whit; you are perfect in
them; come.

[*Exeunt King and LA ROUCHEFOUCAULD.*]

CA.—This is the proper cooling of hot
blood;

Now is she lost in him. Say, she doth
live; to put

Earth in her lips and dusty obstacle

May not be worth my pains. She cannot
thwart me either;

For say I did enfranchise her to-night,
Give air and breath to her loud'st speech,
she could not

Wrench one man's faith awry. Yet since I
know

Security doth overlean itself

And bruise its proper side, I will not do't.

Or say I win her back; and being so won,
I may find serviceable times for her

To spy upon king fool; this coolness
thawed

Would make a heat indeed. There's use
for her

And room withal; if she leave tenderness
And this girl's habit of a changin' blood,

I can as well unload her of this weight

As I did lay it on; which being put up

May make her life bend under it, and crack
The sensible springs of motion. I will put

proof to it;

Favor of love, promise and sweet regard,

Large habit, and the royal use of time,

May her slight fear as potent'ly outpoise

As wisdom doth, weighed in a steadier
brain. [Exit.]

SCENE II. *Denise's Apartment in the
same.*

Enter DENISE and Attendant.

ATT.—How do you now?

DEN.— Well; I do ever well;

It comes not new to me, this well-doing.

I sleep as women do that feed well, I feed

As those who wear the gold of doing well.

What pricks you so to ask? Why, this is
quaint,

I cannot brace my body like a maid's,

Cannot plait up my hair, gather a pin,

But you must catch me with "How do
you it?"

ATT.—I made but question of that mood
you had

Some three hours back, when you fell pale
and wept,

Saying fever clenched you fast and you
would die;

That mood forgets you.

DEN.— Not a whit; you slip

Strangely between conjectures of two
sides,

The white and black side. I am very well.

They say "do well" if one does virtuously;
May I not say so?

ATT.— Doubtless you may well.

DEN.—Yea, the word "well" is tied
upon your tongue.

Try now some new word, prithee some fair
phrase,

Rounder i' the mouth than "well": I hate
this "well";

I pray you learn some lesson of a jay

To use new words. I will provide me one

That shall say nothing all day through but
"ill."

And "ill" again. I'll have a clock tick
"well"

And hang it by your bed to wake you mad
Because you chatter me half sick with
"well."

ATT.—I will say nothing lest you carp
at me,

Planting offence in most pure sentences;
Mistake falls easy.

DEN. Truly it doth fall.

All matters fall out somehow in God's
work,

And round the squared edges of them flat.

But I fall wrong, slip someway short of
heaven,

And earth fails too, and leaves me dismal
hell,

Naked as brown feet of unburied men.

Think you they hold mere talk like ours
in hell?

Go up and down with wretched shoulders
 stooped
 And wried backs under the strong burdens
 bruised
 And thwarted bodies without pleasant
 breath?
 ATT.—I do conceive it as clean fire that
 burns
 And makes a gray speck of the gracious
 corn;
 God keep us that we burn not in such
 wise.
 DEN.—That is a prayer, and prayers are
 sweet. But then
 We'll have no praying; only such as this,—
 I prithee set a finger to my load,
 Help me from fainting; take my knife and
 smite
 And put the blood to cool upon my mouth.
 Such dull work too as carls get sickened
 with
 And turn to die into the black rank straw,
 We shall set hands to; all fair lords and
 knights,
 Great kings with gold work wrought into
 their hair,
 Strong men of price and such as play or
 sing,
 Delicate ladies with well-shodden feet,
 Tall queens in silk wear and all royal
 things,
 Yea, priests of noble scarlet and chaste
 mark,
 All shall God set a work. Peradventure
 too
 When our arms loosen in the elbow-joints
 With the strong rage and violent use of
 toil,
 He may send patient breath to ease our
 lips
 And heal us for a little weeping-space,
 But then in talking each with each will
 grow
 Worse shame and wholly fashioned wretch-
 edness,
 And either will go back to mere short
 moans
 And the hard pulse of his outlabored hour
 Rather than talk. We shall lie down and
 curse
 Stupidly under breath, like herdsmen; turn
 And hide and cover from all witness up,
 Each his own loathing and particular sore;
 Sit with chins fallen and lank feet asquat,
 Letting the dismal head work its own way,

Till the new stripe shall pluck us up to
 task,
 Crossing with cruelties our own bad will,
 Crowning our worst with some completed
 bad
 Too ill to face. Ay, this should be their
 way;
 For fire and all tormented things of earth
 Are parcels of good life, have use and will,
 Learn worthiest office and supply brave
 wants;
 And not the things that burn up clean
 make hell,
 Not pain, hate, evil, actual shame or sense,
 But just the lewd obedience, the dead
 work,
 The beaten service of a barren wage
 That gets no reaping.
 ATT.—I cannot taste the purpose of
 your speech.
 Pray you lie down.
 DEN.— I will not. Well it were
 To set our upper lives on some such guise
 And have a perfect record when one dies
 How things shall be thereafter. A know-
 ledge armed
 Of the most sharp and outermost event
 Is half a comfort. I do think for one
 That God will set me into certain hell,
 Pick me to burn forth of his yellow spears
 Like any tare as rank. Also I doubt
 There shall be some I had to do withal
 Packed in the same red sheaf. How will
 each look,
 Tavannes, no leaner than the hound he
 was,
 Or Guise beard-singed to the roots? the
 queen-mother
 Tied by the hair to—I get idle now.
 A grave thing is it to feel sure of hell,
 But who should fear it if I slip the chance
 And make some holy blunder in my end,
 Translating sin by penitence? For none
 Sinned ever yet my way; treason and lust
 Sick apes, red murder a familiar fool,
 To this new trick set by them, will be
 shamed
 In me forever; yea, contempt of men
 Shall put them out of office. He that lusts,
 Envy, or stabs, shall merely virtuous be,
 And the lank liar fingering at your throat
 A friend right honest. That roadway
 villain's knife
 That feels for gold i' the womb, shall be
 not hated;

And the cold thief who spills a popular
breath
Find grace o' the gallows; why do men
hang poor knaves,
Cut throats while mine goes smooth? Now
I think on't,
I will put condemnation to their act.
By mine own will and work. I pray you
kill me,
I will not hurt you.
ATT.— Alas, she is mad, dear lady—
DEN.—Yes, dear; I shall be dear some
three days hence,
And paid full price. Dost thou not think
I am mad,
I am not; they would fain have lied me mad,
Burnt up my brain and strung my sense
awry,
In so vile space imprisoning my wants
I can help nothing. Here sit I now, beast-
like,
Loathsomely silenced: who, if I had the
tongue
Wherewith hard winter warns the unblanch-
ed sea,
Would even outspoke the winds with large
report,
Proclaiming peril. But being this I am
I get no help at all. One maimed and
dumb
That sees his house burn, such am I. My
God!
Were it not sweeter to be finished well
Than still hold play with hangman anger?

Enter the Queen-Mother.

CA.—Leave us, girl. (Exit *Attendant*.)
Nay, sit; this reverence hath no seed in
you;

Sit still.

DEN.—Madam—

CA.— Good lady, will you sit?

DEN.—So you be come to bind more
shame on me,

I can well bear more shame.

CA.— You are still foolish;

How have I set this anger in your face?
I make no parcel of these tears of yours;
No word that gets upon your lips to weep
Have I given use for.

DEN.— Ay, no use you say?
But I dream not that hold this hand in
that,

But I dream not that take your eyes with
mine;

But I dream not I am that very thing
That as a taint inside the imperilled flesh
Have made corruption of the king's close
will,

Put scarlet treason on his purpose, marred
The face of confidence, plucked words
from trust,

Taught murder to walk smooth and set his
feet

Upon the ways of faith; I am that thing,
I would it were some other.

CA.— Have you yet done?

DEN.—Yea, I have done all this.

CA.— I do believe you;
And though your thoughts ungently look
my way,

I have such sorrow for you sown at heart
As you should reap a liberal help thereof
Would you but pay thin thanks.

DEN.— No, I'll no thanks;
Yea, though I die, I will not thank you;
no;

For I can hold my breath into my lip,
Or twist my hair to choke my throat upon,
Or thrust a weak way thus to my rent
heart

Even with these bare and feeble fingers
here.

Making each nail a knife; look you, I'll
do't.

CA.—You talk too wide; I came to do
you good.

DEN.—That were good news indeed;
things new, being good,
Come keener to put relish in the lip;
I pray you let me see this good i' the face,
Look in its eyes to find dead colors out,
For deadly matters make up good for me.

CA.—Nay, you shall find my favor large
as love;

I make no talk of gold, no costly words,
No promise, but this merely will I say,
You holding by me grapple to a hold
Full of all gracious office and such wealth
As love doth use for surety; such good
riches

As on these latter lips of womanhood
Are sweet as early kisses of a mouth
Scented like honey. Keep but fast my
side,

No time shall hew the planted root away
That faith of your dear service sets in me.
Nor violence of mistempered accident
Cleave it across.

DEN.— I would I were clear of you

What would you get? You are a great
queen, grave soul,
Crown-shaped i' the head; your work is
wonderful

And stoops men to you by the neck, but I
Can scantily read it out. I know just
this,—

Take you this patience from my wretched
lips,

Pluck off this evidence of the bolted steel,
Make wide the passage of my chambered
feet

And I will take a witness in my mouth
To set the cries of all the world on you
And break my shame to lead your neck
with half

Like a thief's neck.

CA.—You are slower than weighed lead
To use my speech aright. But though you
be

Twice dull or thrice, and looser of your lip
Than that swift breath that outwings rumor,
yet

No babble slipt upon my purposes
Could manage me a peril, no tongue's trip
Cross me between. Who puts belief
to speech

Crown from some theft, that stains me with
report

From mine own lips caught like infection?
Look,

Though you could preach my least word
spoken out

To the square in Paris where noise thickens
most,

It hurts me nothing. 'Tis not that popu-
lous tongue

That savors insolence and raw distaste
Can riot out my will. Nay, keep your
cheeks:

I would not kill the color past all help,
For I have care of you; and liberal fruit
shall you reap of it, and eat quiet bread
When white want shrinks the rest.

DEN.— I will not do it.

Nay, though I were your foolish work-
woman,

There is no room for good to do me good;
That blessed place wherein love kissed me
first

is now waxed bare enough. I might ask
alms

Of meanest men, being by mine own repute
made less than time makes them; I am not
good nor fair,

For the good made on me by love is gone,
And that affection of the flattered blood
Which fills this holy raiment of the soul
With inwrought shapeliness and outside
rose

Keeps now no tide in me; the unpulsed
sense

Hath like a water settled and gets flat
As dead sands be at utmost ebb that drink
The drained salt o' the sea. Nay, to talk
thus

Is foolish as large words let out in drink;
Therefore I am not wise; what would
you have of me?

CA.—Nay, nothing but your peace,
which I'll assure

Beyond large time's assault. Yet I'll do
something with you,

Put sudden bitter in your sweet of lips,
A knife's edge next your throat, that when
you drink

Shall spill out wine i' the blood,—some-
thing like this;

Feed you upon the doubt, and gnash and
grieve,

Feeding so trapped. You'll show fierce teeth
at me,

Take threats of me into your milky mouth?
You'll maim my ruined patience, put me
out

Of sober words and use of gravities?

DEN.—Yea, I can read you are full-
tempered now;

But your sharp humors come not in my fear.

CA.—Yea so? high-tempered said she?
yea, true, true,—

I'm angered,—give me water to cool out
This o'er-tongued fever of intemperance,
Bid one come in and see how wroth
I am;

Am I not angered now? see you,—and
you,—

Do not I chafe and froth the snaffle white
With the anger in my mouth? see, do I
not?

—Thou hast the tender impotence of talk
That men teach daws; a pitiful thing,—in
sooth

I am not so chafed; I have something in
my will

That makes me chide at thee, my play-
thing; look,

I do half choose to chide at it, sweet
wretch,

It almost chafes me such a daw should live,

DEN.—It chafes me too; I will not be forgiven;

If shame go smooth and blood so supple it,
Kingdoms will turn from the grave word of man

To side with hoofed herds; I were best die
And get no grace of God.

CA. "No grace" it said?
Dost thou make such a gracious dunce of God

To look thee out in the time's jarring sun,
Choose thy room forth and hearken after thee

To find thee place and surety and eased
breath?

God's no such bat to be at pains for this.

Pray now, go pray; speak some wise word
or two

To pluck his mercies back your way.
God's name!

It marvels me how any fool i' the flesh
Must needs be sure of some fore-facing
help

To make him fragrant means for living
well,

Some blind God's favor bound across his
head

To stamp him safe in the world's im-
perilling.

Pardon thy sin? who blabs thy pretty
slips

I' the ear of his broad knowledge, scores
thy stains,

Makes him partaker of all times and rooms
Where thou hast made shuddering occasions

To try Eve's huskless apple with thy teeth?
Doth such care dwell on thy breath's lean
reserves,

Thy little touches and red points of shame?
I tell thee, God is wise and thou twice
fool,

That wouldst have God con thee by rote,
and lay

This charge in thee, shift off that other
charge,

And mete thine inward inches out by rule
That hath the measure of sphered worlds
in it

And limit of great stars. Wilt thou serve
yet?

DEN.—Not you herein at all; though
you spake right,

As it may be this speech does call truth
kin.

I would not sin beyond my ancient way,

And couple with new shame.

CA. — This is your last;
For the sad flesh that lurgeons out of this

Take your own blame, for I will none—
You, there,

You that make under uses of the door
Leave off your ear-work and come in; nay,
come;

Enter YOLANDE.

Here's use for you; look well upon this
girl,

Count well the tender feet that make her
flesh

And her soft inches up; nay, view them
close;

For each poor part and specialty of her
You hold sharp count to me; I'll have you
wise;

You that are portress shall be jailer—you,
Mark me, just you—I would not have you
slip;

Come not into my danger; but keep safe,
I do you good indeed.

YOL.— I will do truly.

CA.—Farewell, sweet friend; (*to Denise*)
I am right grieved that you

Will mix my love with your impatience.
Though I more thinly fare in your esteem,

Fare you yet well for mine, and think of
me

More graciously than thus; so have you
peace

As I do wish you happily to have.
God give you sleep.—Look heedfully to her

As you would have me prosperous to you.
Exeunt severally.

SCENE III. *The Marshall's House.*

Enter two Captains.

1 CAP.—May this be true that we are
bidden so?

2 CAP.—I think it is.

1 CAP.—Did the king speak with you?

2 CAP.—No, the lord marshal,

1 CAP.— He is hot on this;

But did he tell you to be forth to-night?

2 CAP.—Before the chime of twelve.

1 CAP.— Why then we have

A broken four hours' work upon us yet
Between this time and that most bloody
one,

There is a yellow point upon the sky
Where the last upper sun burns sideways
out,

Scoring the west beneath.

2 CAP.— I see the mark:
It shines against the Louvre; it is nigh gone.

1 CAP.—Yea, the strong sun grows sick;
but not to death.

Which side have you to take?

2 CAP.— The south side, I.

1 CAP.—I to the west. Would this were really through

2 CAP.—Who gave you news o' the office?

1 CAP.— Maurevel.

2 CAP.—O, he that hurt the admiral some days back?

That plague-botch of the Guisards?

1 CAP.— Yea, the same:

I had a mind to strike him in the mouth.

2 CAP.—Why had you so? you have the better place.

1 CAP.—O, sir, in such hard matters he does best

Who does not most. I had rather be a dog,

One half unleashed to feed on bitten orts
Than have his post herein.

2 CAP.— Whose? Maurevel's?

1 CAP.—Even his; for he has carved him a broad piece

Out of the body of this wounded town.

2 CAP.—What, does the work so startle you? for me,

I hold it light as kissing a girl's head.

1 CAP.—If they should face us, well; but to put knives

Into their peaceable and sleeping beds—

2 CAP.—You talk too like a fool. I loathe so far

Their slow lank ways of envious gravity,

Their sparing pride and lavish modesty,

Cunning so tempered with hot insolence

As in that Pardaillan—in him or him—

I say I do abhor them, and in my soul

I think there's no priest half so glad as I

To rid them out of wrong-doing. We are

Most kind to them; for give them six more space,

Each year should heap up hell upon their backs

And leave them better; whereas we rid them now

And they just die half-lambs.

1 CAP.— You are merciful.

2 CAP.—I would be so; for him whose spleen is thick,

Made bitter and side-clogged with cruel use,

I hate as much as these.

1 CAP.— The marshal tarries;
I doubt there will be nothing done.

2 CAP.— You doubt?

Say you desire it; if you pray for it,
Shame not to answer your own hope.

1 CAP.— I do not;
I should be glad if all went out in speech

And never smutched our hands with smoke thereof.

2 CAP.—This is your poor and barren piety

That mercy calls offence, and law doth put Rebuke upon. I do not praise it in you

1 CAP.—Do you mislike it?

2 CAP.— If I should say I did—

1 CAP.—What then?

2 CAP.—I did you nothing less than right.

1 CAP.—You will not say so.

2 CAP.— By your head, I do;
I will and do.

1 CAP.—This will take time to mend.

2 CAP.—Mend it your way; take time to patch it with

My hand shall not be slack. Here comes the marshal.

Enter TAVANNES.

TAV.—Now, sirs, how are your men disposed? have you

Had pains with them?

1 CAP.—Mine gave no pains at all.

TAV.—Why, well; I would the temper of such men

Were made the habit of all France. Sir, yours?

2 CAP.—I may say better of them; I could not

So eagerly give tongue to my desire

But they did grasp it first; such emulous haste

To jostle speech aside with the push of act
I have not known.

TAV.— Good; they do hunger then?

2 CAP.—Sir, most impatiently.

TAV.— Their galls are hot?

2 CAP.—Enough to burn out patience from the world.

TAV.—Such I would have; good dogs, keen in the feet,

Sworn in the spleens of them; 't is very good.

Your presence flags, sir.

1 CAP. Mine, my lord?

TAV.—Ay, sir.
You have the gait of an unmaiden'd girl
That carries violence in her girdle. Humph!
I do not relish it.

1 CAP. My lord—

TAV.—Ay, what?
Speak your own way; make answer; nay,
be swift.

1 CAP.—My lord, you have not known
me blink or blench

In the red face of death; no peril hath
Put fear upon my flesh; altered the heat
That colors on my cheek the common blood
To a dead sickness or a bruise of white;
Nor doth it now.

TAV.—No, doth not? are you sure?

1 CAP.—You do not think so.

TAV.—Nay, there's no peril in't.
But you had more; make out the worst;
get on.

1 CAP.—Truly I have a motion in my
blood

Forbidding such a matter to receive
Smooth entertainment there; I would be
fain

To shift the service off; my fellow here
Knows I regard it something loathfully.

TAV.—Ay, do you, sir?

2 CAP.—Indeed he said so.

TAV.—Said?

2 CAP.—But I do know him for a noble
man

That would acknowledge all things honor-
ably.

Commune with no base words, nor wear
such office

As cowards do; I must report him such.

TAV.—You must! I pray show me what
humor then

Crosses him thus at point.

2 CAP.—I will not think.

TAV.—Sir, you that have such tender
make at heart,

That wear a woman in your blood, and put
Your mother on your cheeks,—you that are
pure,

That will not fail,—you piece of dainty talk,
Pluck me this halting passion from your
heart,

Or death shall nail it there.

1 CAP.—I do not fear you, sir.

TAV.—Observe me, sir; I do not use to
threat;

Either take up your office for this time
And use it honorably, or I will leave you
No place at all. What sort of fool are you
To start at such a piece of lawful work
As is the manage of more noble hands
Than are familiar with your beard? You
are

Too gross a fool.

1 CAP.—My lord, you wrong me much.

2 CAP.—Sir, you push far; he is a gentle-
man.

TAV.—The Devil shall make a better of
strawn dung;

I do proclaim him for a thief, a coward,
A common beggar of safe corner holes,
A chamber hirelin to wash pots—Begone,
I will not bear such knaves. Take you his
place.

Go, go, eat scrap:

1 CAP.—Sir, you shall do me right.

TAV.—I say thou art a knave, a side-
stair thief,—

God's precious body! I am sick with
anger

That such a pad of slack worm-eaten silk
Should wear the name of any soldiership.

Give up thine office.

1 CAP.—You do yourself much shame.
[Exit.

TAV.—Fie on him, rag! frayed velvet
face! I'd beat him

But for pure shame. So, is he gone?
Make after

And push him out at door. Take you his
place.

Attend me presently.

2 CAP.—My, lord, I shall. [Exeunt.

SCENE IV. *The Louvre.*

*The Queen-Mother, MARGARET, Duchess
of Lorraine, and Ladies.*

CA.—No, no—the scandal stands with
us, not—

That have no lot in it. Well, God be
praised,

It does not touch me inwardly and sharp
To be so rid of him; but I do pity

The means of his removal, from my heart
I pity that. 'Tis a strange deed; I have
not—

Seen any that may call it brother, since

That dame's who slew her lord, being
caught in middle

Of some more lewd delight; her name
now?

DUCH.— Châteaudun.

CA.—True, so it was; I thank you; Châteaudun.

MAR.—How says she yet? will she confess his death?

CA.—No, but outbears all comfort with keen words.

MAR.—Truth, I commend her for it; I would not have her

Show the wet penitence of fools that are More weak than what they do.

CA.— I partly hold with you. Have we no music? Nay, I would hear none;

I am not bowed that way; my sense will not stoop

To the pleasurable use of anything.

Is it not late?

MAR.— I think it wears to nine.

CA.—Nay, it lies further; I am sure it does.

DUCH.— Madam, it is not late.

CA.— I say it is;

If I am pleased to reckon more than you, It shall be late.

MAR.— I promised at this time To be about my husband; if I fail, My faith is breached with flaw of modesty.

DUCH.— Nay, go not yet.

CA.—Will you lay hands on her?

DUCH.— I do beseech you—

MAR.—What makes you cling to that.

DUCH.—If you would show me kindness, do not go.

CA.—You play love's fool awry.

MAR.— Show me some reason.

DUCH.—I have no reason broader than my love;

And from the sweetest part of that sweet love

I do entreat you that you will not go,

But wake with me to-night. I am not well.

MAR.—Sister, I am quite lost in your desire.

CA.—What; are you ill? how shall it get you whole

To wake the iron watches of the night

Companioned with hard ache of weariness

And bitter moods that pain feeds full upon?

Come, you are idle; I will wake with you,

If you must wake; trouble not her so much.

MAR.—Indeed it would a little tax me.

CA.— Nay,

Think not upon it; get you hence and sleep.

Commend me to your lord; bid him thank me

That he to-night doth side you; it is a grace

Worth honorable thanks.

DUCH.— Still I beseech you To keep me company some poor two hours; My prayer is slight, more large my need of it:

I charge you for pure pity stay with me.

CA.—Are you gone mad? what makes your prayer in this?

As you regard my wrath or my fair mood, And love me better peaceable than harsh, Make a quick end of words.—Margaret, good night.—

Nay, sit you close.—At once good night, my love;

I pray you do my message.

MAR.— Madam, I will; No less fair night with you and with my sister,

Whom I shall look to see as whole in health

As sound in spirit.

CA.—I will take pains for it;

She shall get healed with pains; have no such fear.

[Exit MARGARET.]

Are you so much a fool? by heaven I am ashamed

That ever I did use your faith like mine,

Nay that some blood of mine was lost on you

To make such shallow stuff as you are of.

DUCH.—Madam, you have not thought—

CA.— What ailed my wit?

To lay so precious office on your brain,

Which is filled out with female matters, marred

With milky mixtures? I do loathe such women

Worse than a leper's mouth.

DUCH.— Consider but her state: It is your flesh, my sister and my blood,

That must look death in the eyes; you bid her hold

Keen danger by the skirt, gripe hands with him;

For those that scape the edges of your men,

Being refuged in her lodging, may as well Turn their own points on her; if none

escape,

Then in the slaying of her husband's men

She may well chance on some one's iron
side

And death mistake her end.

CA.— I did mistake
More grossly, to believe the blood in you
Was not so mean in humor as it is.
She is safe enough; he that but strikes at
her

With his bare hand doth pluck on his bare
head

Sudden destruction. Say she were not
safe,

Must we go back for that and miss the
way

That we have painfully carved out and
hewn

From the most solid rivet of strong time?

DUCH.—If you would bid her watch—

CA.— I will do nothing.

DUCH.—Let me but speak to her.

CA.— You shall not move;

This thing is heavier than you think of it

And has more cost than yours. You shall
sit still,

And shall not frown or gape or wag your
head,

As you respect the mood of my misliking.

Enter Attendant.

ATT.—Madam, the Duke of Anjou—

CA.— What would he?

ATT.—He prays you dearly be about the
king;

What he would have I cannot tell; I am
sure

He is much moved, and, as I think, with
fear.

CA.—This is an absolute summons. I

will go. [*Exit Attendant.*]

So, get you in; you have no lot beyond;

That I should have such need to use such
fools!

Get you to bed and sleep.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

ACT V.

SCENE I. *The Louvre.*

The King, Queen-Mother, BRANTÔME,
TAVANNES, LA ROCHEFOUCAULD, TE-
LIGNY, and Attendants.

Charles.

PUT up the dice; you do not play me
fair.

CA.—Indeed the cast did lie too much
his way.

LA R.—Do me right, sir; the chance so
thrown on me

May come to serve your hand.

CH.— Nay, God forbid!
I would not fare so well, less men should
scent

The sudden savor of sharp-relished ill
To snuff my luck behind. Put them away.

LA R.—So I may take my leave, my
lord, I will.

CH.—Abide a little.

LA R.—Sir, in pure faith, I may not.

CH.—Lay down your chariness; I pray
you stay;

I am your friend that do entreat you stay
To help me use my better humors well.

LA R.—This grace of yours doth jar
with time in me.

CA.—Fair son, put no dispute in mar-
riage; think,

Our noble friend is yet i' the green of time,
The summer point of wedlock; cross him
not.

CH.— No, he shall stay.

CA.— I love him none the less
That would enfranchise his obedience,

Saying "let pass."

BRA.— I have known an honest lady
That would have bit her lips atwain for
spite

Sooner than slip her lord's obedience so
And slacken the remitted service of him

For such light points; I do remember me—

CA.—This tale will hold you, sir.

BRA.— I bade her choose a friend,

She seeming bare of any courtesy

That is well done to such; I bade her
choose—

LA R.—I take a second leave.

BRA.— As 'twere for form --

"Seeing, look you," said I, "a lady's
office is

To endure love and wear a good man's
name

As the lace about her wrist"—

CH.— You shall not go.

LA R.—Sir, needs I must; you shall
well pardon it.

BRA.—She with a face, as thus, let side-
ways down,

Catching her page i' the eye,—a thing so
bearded

As are a woman's lips—

CA.— My lord Bourdeilles,
I pray you take my way, I'll hear this out.
BRA.—Please you so suffer me—

CA.— Fair son, good night.

[*Exeunt CATU., BRANT., and Attendants.*]

CH.—Good night, sweet mother.—Is she truly gone?

Then I will pray you leave not me to-night;
I'll not to bed; I would not have you go;
Yea, by God's blood, I put my heart in-
deed

Into this prayer of mine. Come, pleasure me;

It might avail you: what, by God's own face,

I think I sue to you. Is this much alms That you should please me?

LA R.— Sir, for my poor half,
I must tie thanks upon the neck of No
And turn him forth of me.

CIT.— Then you keep here?

LA R.—Good faith, I cannot so; and I well think

This lord speaks with me.

TEL.— Even your sense, indeed.

CH.—You use me hardly, but my wish to you

Lives none the less a good and honest wish;
So, if my meaning tastes not sweet to you,
Farewell, yea well. One see my dear friends out.

LA R., TEL.—Good night, fair lord.

[*Exeunt LA ROCU. and TEL.*]

CH.— I would have kept them yet.
So, if a man have sight of a big stone,
And will needs trip and sprawl with a
bruised head,

Is it my fault that show him such a stone?
Or say one filches a fair sword of mine
To rip himself at side, is my sin there?

Nay not that much, but walking with my sword

It galls him in the thigh; am I his hurt?

Twice, yea now thrice, if you shall mark me, sir,

Yea, God knows well I sued three times to them,

I would have had their scars keep off their flesh,

But God's will is not so.

TAV.— You do the wiser
To let them pass.

CH.— Why truly so I think.

But I am heart-stung for these; this
Téligny

That might have laid a word of help my way

And kept such sullen lips of doubtfulness.
I have loved him well. The other, see you, sir,

I have twined arms with him, fed from his eyes,

Made a large pleasure out of usual things
Wherein his lot fell evenly with mine,

Laid my heart on him; yea, this singled man

Was as the kin made closest to my flesh
And in the dearest of my secret will

Did as a brother govern. But he may go;
I were fallen wrong too far to pity him;

So, though they manly mar him with their pikes,

Stab till the flesh hath holes like a big net,
I will not think I am compassionate;

Yea, though my thought of him pricks me at brain,

I will believe I do not pity him.

Show me the matter of your place, your way;

The measure of your men; nay, my sweet lord,

Pray you hold fast on this; be not made pitiful.

Nay, but stand sure; nay, I beseech you, sure. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. Denise's Apartment.

Enter DENISE.

DEN.—It is the time; had but this solid earth

A capable sense of peril, it should melt
And all disjoint itself; the builded shape of things

Should turn to waste and air. It is as strange

As is this perilous intent, that men

Should live so evenly to-night; talk, move,
Use contemplation of all common times,

Speak foolishly, make no more haste to sleep

Than other days they do; I have not seen
A man to-day seem graver in the mouth,

Wear slowness on his feet, look sideways out,

Make new the stuff and subject of his speech,

Reason of things, matter of argument,

For such a business. I see death is not feared,
Only the circumstance and clothes of death;
Or else men do not commune more with time
Nor have its purpose in them larger writ
Than a beast has. Why, I did surely think
Such ill foreknowledge would have mastered me
Quite beyond reason; when he'd my sense
Brought me to a dull default. But I do live
Have reasonable breath within my lips;
Keep my brain sound, and all my settled blood
Runs the right way. Perhaps I sleep and dream
That such things are as my fear dotes upon.
Why then I should be mad; and being mad
I might hold sound opinion of my wit
When it were truly flawed. If I not dream
And have no passionate mixture in my brain,
Large massacre to-night should fill itself
With slaughtered blood and the live price of men.
Why this? forsooth because of that and that,
For this man's tongue and that man's beard
or gait,
For some rank slip of their opinion.
I see full reason why men slay for state,
But for opinion or slack accident
I get no cause at all. Then I am mad
That I do think what works so much awry
And is past reason so, the natural sense
Doth sicken in receiving it for news,
To be the absolute act and heart of truth.
I will not credit this. Yet wherefore am I
So used as prisoner here? why taxed with sin?
Why watched and kept so hard? called
murderess?
I'll be assured of it. You jailer, you—
And yet I am afraid to call her forth.
O, she is come.

Enter YCLANDE.

YOL.— Did you not call for me?

DEN.—I think I did cry out, being moved in sleep

I had a dream of you.

YOL.— Ay, had you so?

And I had set a waking thought on you.

DEN.—What time is it?

YOL.— Just hard upon eleven.

DEN.—I have slept four hours. I pray you tell me now.

As you are gentle,—I do love you much,—
Is it my dream I am a prisoner?

YOL.—Did you not call me jailer?

DEN.— True, I did.

Now I begin to pick my dream again
And find the colors right. I dreamed I was

Some sort of evil beast that loved a man,
And the man's heel did cause it in the neck

YOL.— Take heed of it; you were a snake by this.

DEN.— I do not know; it may be so. I was

I dreamed of you too; for you took me up
And hid me in a cage and gave me food,—
I think I was a kind of dismal bird,—
And having eaten of your seed and drunk
Water more sharp than blood, I waxed all

thorough
To a dull disease of overgrowth
And so was choked to death; and men
there came

That roasted me food and being eaten

as suddenly did break in twain and die
That was the dream.

YOL.— It was a foolish dream.

DEN.—Then I fell back to dream of you
like you
who held me prisoner, which was
dangerous;

For I, being grown to mad passion
Took thought to kill you.

YOL.— If I do now not so good,

DEN.—Why will you not get hence?

Only the little part
I'll kill myself; nay, I

YOL.— Do you will?

DEN.— I shall be with it.
(As I, more hardy, am) be great of me;

I will find ways to have the tax
YOL.— Pleasure yourself; I bid you not refrain.

DEN.—It is a poor mercy that I ask.

OT.—Too much for me.
 DEN.—O, 'tis less in worth
 Than God spares barest men; the most
 base need on earth
 Is richer in his pity than you are
 In comfortable use of me, who am
 Fit to be his scourge.

I will not do it.
 DEN.—Prayers, long while denied,
 are sweeter held
 In being than granted; do not s with
 mine;

I will be the knave more than beggars are,
 Master with grace too soon
 I have patience in my ear; you
 I have thought with me; even

Some liberty to live,
 Some piece of grace to be hard
 than king's

Show no such grace to slaves
 That wear at the word

is be whole have fle
 That is in the weather out

Than a slave with happy blood i' the
 and ungalled. There's nothing in
 the world

so worth as freedom; pluck this freedom
 out,

You have the rag and residue of man
 Like a bird's back displymed. That man
 hath not

dom of his name, and cannot make
 the as time and place would please

as the dog of service at his heel
 holding the sound gait; this is no man
 a man's dog; the pattern of a slave

I model for a beast.

VOL.—What do you mean by this?

DEN.—To show you what unworthy
 pain it is

Your office lays on me.

VOL.—It is my place;

My faith is taken to assure you that,

And you have bought such usage at my
 hands

our own act.

DEN.—No, by your life, I have not.

VOL.—You are impeached and must
 abide the proof.

DEN.—The proof, say, proof; do, put
 me to the proof.

There is not proof enough upon me known
 To stop a needle's bore. The man now
 lead

I hear my friend, was sorry for his death,
 Not pricked for guilt of it. Poor fool, I
 could

That I had borrowed such a death of him
 And left him better times to boot than do
 Keep company with me.

VOL.—I would you had.
 Were one so better dead than stained so
 much?

I think so; for myself, in such a scale
 The weights were easy to make choice of.

DEN.—I would not die.

VOL.—Did you not say his share were
 easier?

DEN.—'Tis as I said so; yet I would
 live long

VOL.—Why would you so? is there
 such grace in you

To wear out all the bar and thwart of
 time

And take smooth place again? The life
 you have,

Like a blown candle held across the wind,
 Dies in the use of it; you are not loved,

Or love would kiss out shame from either
 cheek,

New-join the broken patience in your
 eye

Comfort of your so scarred repute
 Where the scabches on it; honored you
 are

For the loss of many-mouthed
 esteem

Cries harsher than on common
 thieves

When they file me and all; you are not
 secure,

For the most thin divisions of a day
 That score the space between two breaths,
 to you

Are perilous implements edged with all
 hate

To use upon your life; you are not happy
 either,

For guilty, shame doth brise your side
 with lead,

Or clean, why rumor stabs you in the face,
 Spite in your mouth. What sweet is in
 this life

That you would live upon?

DEN.— I do not know;
But I would live; though all things else be
sharp,
Death stays more bitter than them all; I
would not
Touch lips with death.

YOL.— No? I have no such doubt.

DEN.—Is it your place to make me
friends with death?

YOL.—It is my pity.

DEN.— I should find it so
Were I the cushion for a fool's feet, or
A fool indeed of yours.

YOL.— I called you none.

DEN.—I were the bell i' the worst fool's
cap alive
If I rang right to this wrong breath of
yours.

You talk to get me harmed.

YOL.— Put off that fear.

DEN.—I will not truly; you would talk
me out,
Be rid of me this whispering way, this
fashion

That pulls on death by the ear; I feel your
wisdom;

'Tis craft thick-spun, but I shall ravel it.

YOL.—This is your garment that you
thrust me in.

DEN.—It must not be so late; there will
be time;

I was a fool to call it over late.

Give up your keys.

YOL.—What madness bites you now?

DEN.—She called you jailer; give me up
the keys,

You have the keys; the outer door is fast;
If this be madness I am friends with it;

Give me the keys.

YOL.— Will you put hands on me?

DEN.—I'll have them out, though God
would make you man

To use me forcibly.

YOL.— I have, none such;

Threaten me not, or you shall smite your-
self.

DEN.—I say, the keys.

YOL.— What will you do to me?

DEN.—Keep there, you get not out.

YOL.— Are you stark crazed?

DEN.—It may look like enough. What
chain is that?

Give me the chain.

YOL.— I swear I have them not.

DEN.—I do not ask for them. Give me
the chain;

Pray you now, do; good truth you are not
wise

To use me so; I know you have no keys.
Give me the chain; soft, soft—

YOL.— Here are the keys.

Take them and let me pass.

DEN.— I thank you, no;

If I be mad I must do warily

Or they will trap me. Get you into my
chamber;

Now am I twice the sinew of all you
And twice as wise. I say, get in; God's
love!

How you do pull my patience! in sound
wits

It were too hard to bear. Make haste, I
say. [*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE III. A Cabinet.

Enter the Queen-Mother and TAVANNES.

CA.—So, you did see them forth?

TAV.— Madam, I did;

The king doth fare by this more temperately

CA.—If he turn white and stagger at his
point,

It is too late. The mortal means of danger
Are well abroad; and this sole work o' the
world

Fit to set hands to. How do you feel by
this?

TAV.—Why, well; as if my blood were
full of wine.

CA.—I am hot only in the palm of the
hands.

Do you not think, sir, some of these dead
men;

Being children, dreamed perhaps of this?
had fears

About it? somewhat plucked them back,
who knows,

From wishing to grow men and ripen up

For such a death to thrust a sickle there?

TAV.—I never found this woman mixed
in you.

CA.—No.—I am certain also that this
hour

Goes great with child-birth and with fortu-
nate seed,

Worth care to harvest: sons are born and
die,

Yea, and choke timeless in the dead strait
womb,

Of whom we know not; each day breeds
worse; it is

The general curse of seasons.

TAV.— Well, what help?

CA.—True.—It hurts little for a man to
die,

If he be righteous. Were I a swordsman
born,

A man with such red office in my hands
As makes a soldier,—it would touch me
not

To think what milk mine enemy's mouth
had drunk,

When both were yearlings a span long.
My God!

It is too foolish that conceit of blood
Should stick so on the face; I must look
red;

Give me the little mirror-steel; now see;
Here is no painting.

TAV.— Yea, but let me go

CA.—It is man's blood that burns so
deep and bites

No crying cleans it. If one kill a dog,
The spot sticks on your skirt as water
might;

The red rain is a worse thing. Humph:
I see;

We have some hot and actual breath in us
That blood lets out; we feed not as they do;
So the soul comes and makes all motion
new;

One guesses at it.

TAV.— Will you go mad for this?

CA.—No.—If one strike me on the
mouth or breast,
And I am hurt and bleed to death,—is
that

Murder? I would not kill them for their
blood;

God's mercy! wherein can their blood
serve me?

Let all go through.

TAV.— Madam, I take my leave;
All shall run out ere we two speak again.

CA.—Hark! I hear shots; as God shall
pity me,

I heard a shot. Who dies of that? yea,
now,

Who lies and moans and make some inches
red?

TAV.—Not for an hour yet; the first
dial-rim

Makes the first shot.

CA.—The noise moves in my head,

Most hotly moves; pray you keep clear
of me.

God help my woman's body for a fool's
I must even sit.

TAV.— Be patient with your cause;
Give it all room, then you get heart again;
I know those ways.

CA.—Too sharp to drink, too sharp,
Sweet Christ of mine; blood is not well to
drink,

God put this cup some little off my mouth.
Yea, there it catches in mine eyes like
smoke,

The smell of blood, it stings and makes
one weep;

So, God be patient till I breathe again.

TAV.—Are you fallen foolish? woman,—
madam,—thou!

Take heart to speak at least.

CA.— I will take heart.
What is there in it that should bar my
breath,

Or make me babble stark across the sense
As I did then? can the flesh merely
prate

With no mind in it to fall praying, ha?

Give me some wine. Go out and cheer
your men:

Bid them be bold; say, work is worth such
pains;

Be quick and dangerous as the fire that
rides

Too fast for thunder. Tell them the king,
the king

Will love each man, cherish him sweetly,
say,

And I will hold him as that brother is

Whom one flesh covered with me.—Will it
rain?

TAV.—No; the wide ends of the sky are
clear with stars;

It is broad moon-time.

CA.— I would fain see rain.
Art thou so slow of purpose, thou great

God,

The keenest of thy sighted ministers
Can catch no knowledge what we do? for
else

Surely the wind would be as a hard fire,

And the sea's yellow and distempered
foam

Displease the happy heaven; wash corn
with sand

To waste the mixture; mar the trees of
growth;

Choke birds with salt, breach walls with
 tidied brine
 And chase with heavy water the horned
 brood
 Past use of limit; towers and popular
 streets
 Should in the middle green smother and
 drown,
 And havoc die with fulness.—I should be
 mad,
 I talk as one filled through with wine;
 thou, God,
 Whose thunder is confusion of the hills
 And with wrath sown abolishes the fields,
 I pray thee if thy hand would ruin us,
 Make witness of it even this night that is
 The last for many cradles, and the grave
 Of many reverend seats; even at this turn,
 This edge of season, this keen joint of
 time,
 Finish and spare not. If no thunder came
 When thou wert full of wrath to the fierce
 brim,
 Next year would spit on worship.—I am
 faint yet;
 See you, I have to chatter these big words
 To keep my head straight; each small
 nerve it hath
 Is like a chord pulled straight to play upon
 Till the string ache at sound. Sir, bear
 with me.
 TAV.—Keep but soft speech. Nay,
 pray you let me go;
 Open the door; I should be hence in time.
 [*The King of Navarre passes over the stage.*]
 CA.—Good night, lord marshal. You
 come late, fair sir,
 To bear my daughter commendations.
 I doubt she looks for you; I have had
 pains
 To bring her safe and presently your way;
 She had some will to watch.
 HEN.—I am the more bound to you.
 CA.—Let my praise sleep to-night,
 unless you do
 Speak well of me to her. See, the white
 stars
 Do burn upon the fair blue weather's
 waste
 Thick as a lulled wind carries the marred
 leaves;
 Yea, see how gray my likenesses are
 grown,
 That grow on my gray years!
 HEN.—Madam, good night. [Exit.]

CA.—That gives one heart; and yet I
 seem to choke,
 I shall feel weak till I do hear them shoot.
 Pray you take order that the watch be
 sharp.
 Upon this boy.
 TAV.— I shall take order.
 CA.— Yea,
 But go with me till I have seen the king.
 [Exit.]

SCENE IV. A Street.

Enter GUISE with Soldiers.

GR.—Keep in, let no man slip across
 of you;
 Hold well together; what face I miss of
 mine
 Shall not see food to-morrow; but he that
 makes
 So dull a mixture of his soul with shame
 As spares the gold hair or the white, shall
 be
 Dead flesh this hour. Take iron to your
 hands,
 Fire to your wills; let not the runagate
 love
 Fool your great office; be pity as a stone
 Spurned either side the way. That breast
 of woman
 That suckles treason with false milk and
 breeds
 Poison i' the child's own lip, think not
 your mother's;
 Nor that lank chin which the gray season
 shakes
 Hold competent of reverence. Pluck me
 that corn
 Which alters in the yellow time of man;
 And the sick blade of ungrown days dis-
 root,
 The seed makes rot the flower. There's no
 such use
 But reason turns to holy, and keen right
 Washes as pure as faith; therefore be swift,
 and let
 Cold mercy choke on alms.
 A CAPTAIN.— We shall not fail.
 GUI.—Some ten go with me to the ad-
 miral's house;
 You shall be one,—and you; pluck him
 from bed,
 And use his body as your edges please,
 Then hale him through the street. The
 rest of you,
 As you see time, fire either way; then draw

And strike across the thickest ends of flight,
God helping you. Say "Guise" now and
set on. [Exeunt.

SCENE V. *The Admiral's House.*

Enter COLIGNY and LA NOUE.

LA N.—That this is true we have clean
proofs; she hath made us
pawps of her game; this very France of
ours

Is as a cloth to wipe her feet upon,
Her bed and stool of lust; and hath put on
The naked patience of a beaten face
And sufferance of a whore.

Co.— I think so. Sir,
I have believed this marriage of Navarre
Began our waste.

LA N.—That stings me not so hard
As that men mix us in their mouths with
fools

Who are not worth our slight esteem of
them,

And yet have sewn religion on their sleeve
And badged their caps with us.

Co.— They have done more harm;
There is no lean or lesser villainy
That war or peace-time saddles them
withal.

But it must be our blame, the fault of it
Throws dirt on us and each man's several
hand

That wets no finger in the Catholic way;
That bites the nearest.

LA N.— We are imperilled; well;
Danger should be the coat across my back,
Meat in my lips, if I saw clear and good
The choice and shape of our necessity;
But here to blunder the chance out,—my
lord,

No help for us then here?

Co.— I see no help.
Nay too, I bind not all the weight on
them;

In me and you the plague is well at work
That rots all chances. We have let go the
times

That came with gold in the hands; and
that slow snake,

Impotent patience of pernicious things,
Hath won upon us, and blown murderous
breath

Between the wide unwarded lips of sleep.
Come, talk no more. Is the night fair?
methinks

I heard some humming ors run through
it.

LA N.—Sir, fair enough; there goes a
little wind

Among the roofs, but slow as a maimed
man;

The skies burn sharp with point of the lit
stars,

Even to the larger cope of all there is
No air but smooth.

Co.— 'T is a good night for sleep;
Fair time to you.

LA N.— I pray God set such peace
Upon the seasonable eyes of sleep

As may well comfort you. Dear lord, good
night. [Exit.

Co.— Farewell.—Now might I put lean
patience in my prayers

If I should pray to-night; I have no will
To leave my witness against men and pray

That God would suffer them. Surely I
think he bears

Somewhat too much with such side-working
sins

As lame the laboring hope of men, and
make

Endurance a blind sort of sleepy lie
To confute God with. This woman here

grows old,
As I am old; we have drawn this way and
that

So long, the purpose lessens from the
doing,

Turns to a very function of the flesh
So used for custom. She carries France

her way,
And my way breaks. Then if one sees the
end,

The goal that shuts the roadway sheer
across,

The builded limit of a complete will,
All these side-briers and puddled rain-

shallows
That rend or drench us, are but naught
thereto,

Well, here I tire for one, and fain would
use

This winter of bleached hair and fallen
flesh

To make me quiet room,—Shut up the
house;

Let nothing wake the windows.—I will to
bed.—

The wind gets thick indeed. What noise
is there?

[Firing outside.

Get me a light.

GUI.—(*Within.*)—Nay, but get you first in;

Throw the knave out at window.

CO.—Yea, my Guise?

Then are the sickles in this corn, I doubt.

GUI.—(*Within.*)—This way men, this!

CO.—Not so; the right hand, sirs.

SCENE VI.—*Outside the Louvre.*

Enter DENISE.

DEN.—I cannot find a man; the cries are thick;

I came too late. Alas, I fear the king
Hath put the order forward; I may see him
And so prevent some peril; and though
they slay me,

I die of my misdoing. Yet I fear death
Most piteously, wear passion on my cheek
White as a coward's. I'll yet forth and
look;

For in the temper of this bloody time
Must sleep my help or end; I may discover
him

And that may be some grace; now God be
good,

Or I am so far bruised this way, as death
Can bite no sharper. [*Exit.*]

SCENE VII. *A Balcony of the Louvre,*

Enter many Ladies.

1 LA.—Did you not see him?

2 LA.—Give me place, place, place;
I have the news.

3 LA.—Not you; I can say more.

2 LA.—How your sides push! let me
get breath—O Mary!

I have seen such things—

4 LA.—As should wear silence.

2 LA.—Nay,

For they felt sweet.

3 LA.—See, there goes one,—and there;
O well run, you! now trip him,—ware
stones, ho!

Or you may catch a bruise.

1 LA.—Now is he down.

5 LA.—Not so; you have no eyes.

3 LA.—Had I a bow,
I would take four myself. Look, look, a
chase!

O, now you thrust.

4 LA.—Way, sirs! make way for him!

5 LA.—There's a child slain; I will not
look that side;

They thrust him in the back.

2 LA.—Go and sew threads;
Go sew; you are a fool.

1 LA.—Who has that side?

4 LA.—Do him no hurt, sirs; yea, the
the point now, yea,
Not the edge,—look you! just the nape
across,—

Down with him, there!

3 LA.—Is the old man yet slain?

2 LA.—Ay, by the Guise; they took him
in his bed,
Just in a fumbled sheet.

1 LA.—No, he was risen.

Enter RENÉE.

RENÉE.—Why are you here? next room
serves best for show;

There they have drawn to head, that all the
street

Swells up and cries; Soubise and Marsillac
Hold off their pikes.

4 LA.—Show us the way to that.

RENÉE.—This way—I pray, you hurt
me not,—this way;

Do not push close. God's love, what heat
is here! [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VIII. *The Streets.*

*Enter GUISE, TAVANNES, with Soldiers;
MARSILLAC, SOUBISE, PARDAILLAN,
and others confusedly.*

SOL.—Guise, Guise! down with them!
for the king, the king!

Guise, Guise!

1 SOL.—Here, dog, take this to choke
upon.

MAR.—Sirs, stand by me; hew down
that knave at right,

I pray you, sir. Nay, we shall spoil them
yet;

Stand but a little fast.

A HUGUENOT.—Mercy! God he'p!

TAV.—Thrust me a steel nail in that
tongue and throat;

So, sir; prate now as you do love such nails.
Set on; this August serves for reaping time.

Bleed the plague out with your incisions.

MAR.—Guise, if thou hast a man's mark
left on thee,

Do me this right. I thank you, sir; the
office

Spares me some work.

GUI.—Stand to me, men; down with
him!

My heel hath rent a better face to-night.

TAV.—Kill me this scapegate harlot in her smock,
The child to water. Charge their face again;
Make a clean way and we shall smite them all.

PAR.—Yea, devil's dog, wilt only snarl at me?

Prithee, but room to die in and take breath,
One stifles this way stupidly,—ah! beasts!
[Dies.

TAV.—(Crossing *Soubise*.)—Ah thing,
what set thee on such work to do?
Die, fragment, and turn carrion fit for use.
[Stabs him.

There's not a man the less.

SOI. Tavannes! Tavannes!

OTHERS.—Guise, Guise! upon them for the king, the king!
[Exeunt.

SCENE IX. *The Louvre.*

The Queen-Mother, YOLANDE, MARGARET, Duchess of Lorraine, and Attendants.

CA.—Where is the king?

YOL.—Madam, gone forth I think.

CA.—Are you whole yet? you look half slain with fear;

Quiet yourself.

MAR.—You know what I saw.

No, not your hand; let me sit here.

CA.—Yea, sit.—

O, are you there?

YOL.—Madam, it is no fault

To say she is escaped.

CA.—No fault!

What, have you let her go? how came she out?

YOL.—Do your best will with me; I will speak truth.

CA.—How came she forth? you are a worthy guard,—

Do, as you love the better chance of time.
I have a will to smite you by the cheek;

Answer to that.

YOL.—By heaven I speak all pure;

By heaven I do; she had the key of me.

CA.—Do not you mock; I may turn sharp with you.

YOL.—Alas, I do not; she put force on me

To let her forth; I could not please you;
do not

Lay your great wrath my way.

CA.—

O fool,—fool,—fool!

Were you so much compassionate of her?
I was bewitched to give you such a charge.
Where is she now? speak still.

YOL.—

I have not seen.

CA.—If these be lies I'll find a bitter way,—

I'll do,—I have no time to think of it,
But I'll make shame as wide as your desert

To show your penitence. Find me this girl,

Or punishment shall reach beyond your deed,

Put pity out of service. Look for her;

Bring her to me; if I so miss her,—Go.

[Exit YOLANDE.

How does my daughter?

DUCH.—Madam, well by this.

MAR.—But shaken to the brain.

CA.—Poor child; what cause?

MAR.—I was unclothed for sleep, heavy at eyes,

And fit for my bed's heat, when thus at point

There comes a cry and beating of two hands

Hard at my door; then snaps the hinge from it,

And a man comes, smeared shamefully and red

With a new wound i' the side; flings him on me,

Plucks me half slain with fear across the bed,

Cries for some pity, hales me by the hand,
And so clings hard; when my great fear got strength

To wellnigh wrench me clear and throw off him,

Begins such piteous prayer and puts rebuke

To such a tune, so bitter, I did even

Make mercy wet with tears; whereon (as peril

Would outgrow its own face and turn like death,

Doubling my fear) the soldiers after him,
Some three or four, flecked murderously

with blood,
All weaponed for their work, and crying out,

Broke in on us; he twisting with sore fright

Obscures himself with me; and thus in doubt

He shuffled this side death; for as they bore on him
Still holding to me, comes their captain in,
Chides the knave off that had a hand on us,
And plucks him loose; then with mixt laughter did
Swear the man safe; he could not choose but laugh
To see me harried so, so haled and drawn,
Nor I to see him laugh; and so our laughter
Got off my friend.

Enter the King with an arquebuse and
TAVANNES.

CH.— O, are you here? I have
Some three—some six—by God I have
some six

Already to my share.

CA.—(*To Tav.*)— Sir, what is this?

TAV.—The king has slain some six of
them, he says;

I saw him shoot indeed.

CH.— Ay, did I not?
Hear you, he says I did; hear him a little.
One—two—see, I can take them either
hand,

The place is wide.

TAV.— Here, by this balcony;
I saw him shoot myself.

CA.— How goes the work?

TAV.—Even like a wave that turns; the
thing opposed

Is as the weed it rends at root away,
Dies ere the touch for fear.

CA.— It is well done.

TAV.—The king did summon me to
speak with; there

I left them midway. Are you yet
abashed?

I think it smirches you with half a red,
This pity; are you nothing plagued with
it?

CA.—Not I a jot; I would all such i' the
world

Were here to be so rid.

Re-enter YOLANDE.

Now? have you her?

YOL.—She has been seen to-night; one
found her late

Ranging the rooms and passage of the
court

Like one distempered; now catching at this
man

To pray him pity her, crying on him
To let her go; or poring in side ways
To follow up their feet, as she would trace
The consequence and graft of peril through
To know it thoroughly.

CA.— This doth approve it like
That she is fled; where should she hide
herself?

YOL.—Madam, the main half your ladies
are
Gone forth to gaze upon this slaughter.

CA.— Ay!
May she be there? Lord marshal, have
you seen

These ladies that she talks of?

TAV.— Madam, I have;
They were about the windows next the
street

Searching each side with large and curious
eyes;

I saw some twenty with sweet laughing
mouths

And hair wherein the flame of lights did
make

New colors red as blood, gathered upon
A corpse I slew myself, with fleers and
gibes

Abusing the blind thing; it made me
merry

To hear how they did mock the make
of it,

As blood were grown their game.

CA.— The king is sad;
I have a word like mercy in my mind,

But it doth wound itself; I see no use
That sorrow fails not in, where things are
done

That will not be wept out.

TAV.— 'T is a strange night;
But not to me displeasing; I esteem

Our service wholesome. I will not forth
again,

For I have watched into a weariness.

CA.—How does our son?

CH.— I think some runagates be
Yet by this passage. Give me that again;
I'll score them too. Nay, if one wet his
knees,

Best over ears and all. *[Exit.]*

CA.— They are too far to hit;
I'll wager them safe out. What do you
see?

TAV.—They have escaped the points of
the guard; I doubt

He will not bear it so.

YOL.— O, that way—there—
Can you make out ? a woman as I think—

CA.—Some poor man's wife; I would
she might get safe.

TAV.—See, the king thrusts out far; 'tis
a brave king;
Look how his bowing body crooks itself
After the aim.

CA.— Ten pieces to a doit
The issue scars not her.

TAV.— I take you, madam.
The king comes back.

Re-enter King.

CA.— Have I waged wrong on you ?

CH.—I have slain seven. Mother, I
could begin
To sicken of this way.

CA.— What way, fair son ?

CH.—I did not think the blood should
run so far.

There was a woman I saw lately slain,
And she was ript i' the side; at point
to die,

She threw her on her child and there came
one

Who clove it by the throat. Then I grew
sick

And my head seemed to change as if the
stroke

Had dulled it through the bone; the sense
of that

Still aches in me.

CA.— Set your thought otherwise.

CH.—Why so I do; and cannot choose
but think

How many that rose fresh with wholesome
thoughts

And with my credit washed their faiths in
me

Do sleep now bloodily.

CA.— You hurt yourself
To lay repentance on such deeds as are

Necessity's mere proof. Put this away;
And tell yourself how many dead in war

Gave battle welcome and their time went
out

Even in the wording of it; and but for this
(Though I confess the sense feels sick on it)

We should have had worse wars.

CH.— I think we might.

CA.—Bethink you too, what stings us in
the seeing

It is no new infection of the world
Corrupting all its usual office, or

The common blood of it, with some strange
sore,

More gross being new; such things have
have chanced ere this,

Yea, many thousand times have men put
hand

To a worse business, and given hire to
death

To captain them i' the first and play their
man,

Used him with fellowst who knows,
sweet son,

But here, and in this very Paris, where
Our work now smells abhorred, some such

may come

To try more bloody issues, and break faith
More shamefully? make truth deny its

face,

Kill honor with his lips; stab shame to
death,

Unseat men's thoughts, evenom all belief,
Yea, spit into the face and eyes of God

His forsworn promise? Such things may
be; for time,

That is the patient ground of all men's
seed

And ripens either corn alike, may bring
Deeds forth which shall as far outreach

our act

As this doth common things; and so they
wear

The clothes and cover of prosperity,
Those tongues where blame of us yet sticks

shall put
Applause on them.

CH.— It may be you say true;
I would believe you with a perfect will.

*Enter RENÉE, ANNE, and others, with
DENISE.*

CA.—What is this business? quick—
CH.— O now, now, now—

This is the very matter of my thought
That was a ghost before; this is the flesh.

The bone and blood of that my thin
surmise,

Palpably shaping fear. I will not see her.
CH.—How fell this out? you, speak.

RENÉE.— We found her so—
Wounded I think to death.

ANNE.— She hath besought us
To bring her to this presence.

CA.— Can she speak still?
ANNE.—Yea, and speak straight; I
would not pawn my word

This touch were deadly to her.

RENÉE.— I say it is;
She has a wound i' the side.

CA.— Set her down gently;
She will do well; deal softly with her;
good;

Be heedful of your hands. So; look to
her.

DEN.—I thank you, madam; let me sit
a little.

MAR.—Give her some wine.

DEN.— Sir, are not you the king?
He was grown kind; let them not slay me
then,

I'll swear you are no less. I think I am
hurt;

Let me speak to you; my side hurts indeed.

CH.—Nay, if hell comes in sleep, then
hell itself

Is like the face of a dream. Eh? this
were quaint,

To find such hell at last.

DEN.— I thank you too;
For I am well, so near the heart of quiet,
The most hushed inward of obscur'd peace,
I feel my spirit a light thing and sweet,
Evened with what it was.

CA.— Hath she a hurt indeed?

YOL.—Yea, the right side; she holds her
gown on it.

CA.—I did believe this was the stab of
fear.

Get her away.—My son, remove your arms.
Some one fetch help; but not too quickly,
mark,

[*Aside to YOLANDE, who goes out.*
Lest speed undo itself.—Release her, sir.

DEN.—No, let him hold me safe; your
hand that side,

I shall breathe better. Do they still slay?
Alas,

It is a night shall mark you red forever
I' the honest eyes of men.

CA.— Will she talk now?

CH.—How came this hurt on you?

CA.— Make that no question.

CH.—Will you teach me? Here, sweet,
this way; you know

I always loved you.—Give us room; she
will

Get present breath.

DEN.— It was a window shot,—
A side-shot striking by the wall; O God!
It pains me sore; but ease me with your
arm.

CH.—Is God fallen old at once, that he
is blind

And slays me not? I am beneath all hell,
Even past the limit and conceit of reach
Where fire might catch on me. Why, I
have slain

The chiefest pearl o' the world, the perfect
rule

To measure all sweet things; now even to
unseat God

Were a slight work.

DEN.— Was it your aim indeed?

CH.—O no, no aim. Get me some
help; all you

That gape and shiver on this act enstaged,
You are all parts of murder.

CA.— Sir, be patient;

This cross is not your sin.—He heeds us
not;

Do not speak to him.

CH.— Is she yet warm? I'll give
That man that will but put an hour in her

My better part of kingdom. Nay, look up;
This breath that I do speak to thee withal

Shall be the medicine to restore thine own
Though I spend all. Sweet, answer me;

I'll make thee

Queen of my present power and all that
earth

Which hangs upon it.

DEN.— Disquiet not yourself;

I do not chide you; nay, I know too, sir,
You never hated me; nor did I ever

Make such a fault as should have plucked
me thus

Into your hate or stroke. I am dead indeed;
And in this flesh hath God so scourged

your act

As I now bleed for it; so I do think
That from this time his adverse hand will

not

Push your loss further.

MAR.— This is a bitter sight.

CA.—A pitiful; but come you not into't;
You have no part.

DEN.— I tax you not for it.

I have good hope that you have done herein
Mere blind man's work, not put upon your

hands

Murder's own wear; which ministry of
yours

God punishes in me. Too much of that.
Do not you yet for this my foolish sake

Make dull your better seasons; let remorse,
If such will bite, feed otherwise than here;

For me, indeed I leave no blur of it
To blot your love at all. For my grace
 given
Give me grace back; change mercy with
 me, for

I have wronged you too. In this large
 world, dear lord,

I have so little space I need use time
With most scant thrift; yet that my love
 holds out

Let me catch breath to say. No, stir not
 yet;

Be but two minutes patient of me; keep
Your arm more straight. Say I have slain
 myself

And the thought clears you; be not moved
 thereat;

For though I slew a something that you
 loved

I did it lovingly.

[Dies.

CA.— Ay, there it breaks;
I am sorry for her, she was fair enough.

Does she not breathe?

CH.— No whit; the lips are dull.
Now could I rail God out of pity, change
The blessed heaven with words; yea, move
 sphered souls

Into a care of me; but I'll say nothing;
No reason stands I should say anything,

Who have this red upon my soul. Yea,
 dead?

She is all white to the dead hair, who was
So full of gracious rose the air took color,
Turned to a kiss against her face. Sirs,
 help;

I would fain have her hence; I am bound
 to you;

Sirs, hurt her not to touch her side; yea, so.

[Exit, with some bearing out the body.

CA.—(To Tav.)—Come hither, sir; as
 you respect my grace,

Lay your good care on him, that in waste
 words

His mood gall not himself. For this girl
 slain,

Her funeral privacy of rite shall be
Our personal care through her deserts
 were such

As crave no large observance, yet our pity
Shall almost cover the default in them

With all smooth grace that grace may do to
 her.

You to my son, and you this way with me;
The weight of this harsh dawn doth bruise
 my sense,

That I am sick for sleep. Have care of
 him.

ROSAMOND.

I. *The Maze at Woodstock.*

ROSAMOND, CONSTANCE.

Constance.

TAKE not such thought of it.

Ros.— Nay, I take none.

They cannot put me out of love so much
As to take thought for them; yet I am
hurt

And my sense wrung at this a little. See,
If six leaves make a rose, I stay red yet
And the wind nothing ruins me; who
says

I am at waste?—Look, since last night!—
for me,

I care not though you get through all they
said.

All this side dashed with fits of weeping
time,

See you, the red struck out; an evil year.
If such times vex me till no sleep feels
good,

It is not that I think of such lewd words
With wine still hot in them. Who calls it
spring?

Simply this winter plays at red and green.
Clean white no color for me, did they
say?

I never loved white roses much; but see
How the wind drenches the low lime-
branches

With shaken silver in the rainiest leaves.

Mere winter, winter. I will love you
well,

Sweet Constance, do but say I am not
fair,

No need for patience if I be not fair,

For if men really lie to call me fair

He need not come; I pray God keep him
close

For fear he come and see I am not fair.

Can you not speak, not say if this be true,

That I may cease? come, am I fair or no?
Speak your pure mind.

CONST.— Nay, madam, for you know
Doubtless it was delight to make your
face

And rippled soft miraculous gold hair
Over the touched veins of most tender
brows

Meant for men's lips to make them glad of
God

Who gives them such to kiss.

Ros.— Leave off my praise,
It frets me flesh and all as sickness doth

Till the blood wanes; yea, and quaint news
to hear,

That I am fair, have hair strung through
with gold,

Smooth feet, smooth hands, and eyes worth
pain to see!

Why once the king spake of my hair like
this,

“As though rain filled and stained a tress
of corn

Loose i' the last sheaf of many slackened
sheaves;

Or if” (ay, thus) “one blew the yellow
dust

That speckles a red lily off both cheeks
Held in the sun, so if in kissing her

I let the wind into her hair, it blows

Thin gold back, shows the redder thread
of it,

Burnt saffron-scented;” some faint rhyme
of his

Tuned brown and colored after his French
wise.

CONST.—You learnt such sonnets of
him?—A man's step,—

Ah, that girl's binding the wet tendrils
there

Last night blew over.

Ros.— See, at my hands end,

Those apple-flowers beaten on a heap,
So has the heavy weather trod on them.
There are my rhymes all spoilt and blown
with wind,
Broken like birds' wings blown against a
wall.

(Girl, do you know I lived so quiet once,
Leaning whole days in a warmed side-win-
dow

With the chin cushioned up and soft vague
feet

Thrust out to sleep, and warm sides
couched for ease

Full of soft blood, pulsed slow with happi-
ness

Such fair green seasons through, with
dreams that lay

Most blossom-soft between the lids,—and
love

A little way I thought above my brows,
His finger touching them; yea, for whole
months

I was so patient to serve time and have
Love's mouth at last set suddenly on mine;
Abode and heard the blood that grew in
me

More sweet, and the days' motion in my
ears

Touched audibly.

CONST.—This was a gracious time.

ROS.—One song you have, I pray but
sing me that,

I taught it you; and yet I like it not;
Trouverres have sweet lips with a bitter
heart,

And such a gracious liar, I doubt, wrote
this;

But sing it; it shall do no harm to hear.

CON.—Sweet, for God's love, I bid you
kiss right close

On mouth and cheek, because
you see my rose

Has died that got no kisses
of the rain;

So will I sing to sweeten my
sweet mouth,

So will I braid my thickest hair
to smooth,

And then,—I need not call
you love again.

I like it well enough.

ROS.—The sick sweet in it
Taints my mouth through.—Could the heat
make me sleep!

My feet ache like my head. Doth this I say

Tire you so hard you cannot answer me?

CONST.—Madam, I would v words
were wine to drink

That might heal all your better sense and
blood;

But some hurts ache in the bone past oil
and wine,

And I do think the words I heard of you
Burn you thus hot only with hate of shame.

ROS.—Shame? who said shame? am I
so sick of love

That shame can hurt me? there's no shame
in the world

Whose wound would hurt more than too
hard a kiss

If love kept by the face of blinking shame
To kill the pain with patience. Am I his
wife

That it should fret me to be trod by
shame?

Ah, child, I know that were my lord at
right

And shame stood on this left with eager
mouth

For some prepared scorn,—I could but
turn

Saying,—lo, here this hand to cover me,
Lo, this to plait my hair and warm my
lips;

I could well pity thee, dull snake, poor
fool,

Faint shame, too feeble to discredit me.

CONST.—I would I had never come
hither.

ROS.—Are you tired?

But I seem shameful to you, shameworthy,
Contentable of good women, being so
bad,

So bad as I am. Yea, would God, would
God,

I had kept my face from this contempt of
yours.

Insolent custom would not anger me
So as you do; more clean are you than I,

Sweeter for gathering of the grace of God
To perfume some accomplished work in
heaven?

I do not use to scorn, stay pure of hate,
Seeing how myself am scorned unworthily;

But anger here so takes me in the throat:
I would speak now for fear it strangle me.

Here, let me feel your hair and hands and
face;

I see not flesh is holier than flesh,
Or blood than blood more choicely qualified

That scorn should live between them.
Better am I

Than many women; you are not over fair,
Nor delicate with some breeding good
In the sweet flesh; you have no much
tenderer soul

Than love is moulded out of for God's use
Who wrought our double need; you are not
so choice

That in the golden kingdom of your eyes
All coins should melt for service. But I
that am

Part of the perfect witness for the world
How good it is; I chosen in God's eyes
To fill the lean account of under men,
The lank and hunger-bitten ugliness
Of half his people; I who make fair heads
Bow, saying, "Though we be in no wise
fair

We have touched all beauty with our eyes,
we have

Some relish in the hand, and in the lips
Some breath of it," because they saw me
once;

I whose curled hair was as a strong staked
net

To take the hunters and the hunt, and
bind

Faces and feet and hands; a golden gin
Wherein the tawny-lidded lions fell,
Broken at ankle; I that am yet, ah yet,
And shall be till the worm hath share in
me,

Fairer than love or the clean truth of God,
More sweet than sober customs of kind use
That shackle pain and stablish temperance;
I that have roses in my name, and make
All flowers glad to set their color by;
I that have held a land between twin lips
And turned large England to a little kiss;
God thinks not of me as contemptible,
And that you think me even a smaller
thing

Than your own goodness and slight name
of good,

Your special, thin, particular repute;
I would some mean could be but clear to
me

Not to condemn you.

CONST.— Madam, I pray you think
I had no will to whet you to such edge;
I might wish merely to be clear of pain
Such as I have to see you weep,—to see
That wasp contempt feed on your colored
rind

Whose kernel is so spiced with change of
sweet;

No more, I swear to you by God no more.

ROS.—I will believe you. But speak
truly now

As you are fair, I say you are fair too,
Would you be wiser than I was with him?
A king to kiss the maiden from your lips,
Fill you with fire as water fills the sea,
Hands in your hair and eyes against your
face,—

Ay, more than this, this need not strike at
heart,

But say that love had bound you like a dog,
Leashed your loose thoughts to his uncer-
tain feet,

Then would you be much better than such
are

As leave their soul upon two alien lips
Like a chance word of talk they use for
breath?

O girl, that hast no bitter touch of love,
No more assurance of it than report
Flaunts in the teeth of blame,—I bid you
know

Love is much wiser than we twain, more
strong

Than men who hold the pard by throat and
jaw.

Love's signet-brand stamps through the
gold o' the years,
Severs the gross and chastens out the
mould.

God has no plague so perilous as love,
And no such honey for the lips of Christ
To purge them clean of gall and sweet for
heaven.

It was to fit the naked limbs of love
He wrought and clothed the world with
ordnance.

Yea, let no wiser woman hear me say
I think that whoso shall unclathe his soul
Of all soft raiment colored custom weaves,
And choose before the cushion-work of
looms

Stones rough at edge to stab the tender
side,

Put honor off and patience and respect
And veils and relics of remote esteem
To turn quite bare into large arms of love,
God loves him better than those bitter fools
Whom ignorance makes clean, and blood-
less use

Keeps colder than their dreams.

CONST.—

It may be true,

I know not; only to stay maiden-souled
Seems worthier to me.

ROS.— Doth it so? Ah you
That tie the spirit closer to the flesh
To keep both sweet, it seems again to me
You kill the gracious secret of it, and mar
The wholesome heaven with scent of ruined
things

That breed mere flies for issue. Ay, and
love

That makes the daily flesh an altar-cup
To carry tears and rarest blood within
And touch stained lips with feast of sacra-
ment,—

So sweet it is, God made it sweet! Poor
words,

Dull words, I have compassion on them,
girl,

Their babble falls so far this side of love
Significance faints in them. This I know,
When first I had his arms across my head
And had his mouth upon my heated hair
And his sharp kisses mixed into my blood,
I hung athirst between his hands, and said,
Sweet, and so sweet! for both mine eyes
were weak,

Possessed with rigorous prophecy of tears
To drench the lids past sleeping, and both
lips

Stark as again rims of a sweet cup drunk
out.

CONST.—My first need serves me here;
this may be all

ROS.—Say this, y tender wo-
man's race,

Do you love children?—we touch your
blood

To see God's word touch a child's
face

For us to touch and handle? seems it sweet
To have such things in the world to hold
and kiss?

CONST.—Yea, surely.

ROS.—Yea? then be most sure of this,
Love doth so well surpass and foil the
sense

That makes us pleasure out of children
seen,

That I being severed from the lips of mine
Feel never insufficient sight, or loss
Of the sweet natural aim or use in eyes
Because they are not; but for only this;
That seldom in grave passages of time
Such gracious red possesses the full day
A leaves me light to look into his face

Who made me children.

CONST.— Does he love you as well?
Then two such loves were never wrought in
flesh

Since the sun moved.

ROS.— Ah girl, you fail fair truth;
He doth love me, would let me take his
name

To soil, his face to set my feet upon;
But love is no such new device we need
Boast over that. Nay, are you dull indeed?
All stories are so lined and sewn with love,
Ravel that gold and brodered thread in
them,

You rend across the mid and very seam.
Yea, I am found the woman in all tales,
The face caught always in the story's face,
I Helen, holding Paris by the lips,
Smote Hector through the head; I Cressida
So kissed men's mouths that they went sick
or mad,
Stung right at brain with me; I Guenevere
Made my queen's eyes so precious and my
hair

Delicate with such gold in its soft ways
And my mouth honeyed so for Launcelot,
Out of good things he chose his golden soul
To be the pearlwork of my treasuring
hands,

And so our love foiled God; I that was
these

And am no sweeter now than Rosamond
With most full heart and mirth give my
lord up

Body's due breath and soul's forefashioned
peace

To pay love with; what should I do but
this

That am so loved? Ay, you might catch
me here

Saying his touch wife smites my love
across

With soft strange lips; yea, I know too she
may

Pluck skirts of an afterthought, kiss pity's
feet,

Mary remembrance with a broken ring;
No time so famished, no such idle place
As spares her room next his; a wife, his
wife,—

If I be no king's wife, prithee what need
That she should steal the word to dress her
name

That suits my name as well? take love,
take all;

What shall keep hunger from the word of wife?

What praise, if reputation wear thin shoes,
Shall keep the rain from honored women's feet?

Wife, wife,—I get no music out of wife;
I see no reason between me and wife
But what breath mars with making; yea,
poor fool,

She gets the harsh bran of my corn to eat.
CONST.—Men call the queen an addler
underfoot,

Dangerous obedience in the trodden head;
I pray you heed your feet in walking here.

ROS.—Fear is a cushion for the feet of love,

Painted with colors for his ease-taking;
Sweet red, and white with wasted blood,
and blue

Most flower-like, and the summer-spoused green

And sea-betrothed soft purple and burnt black.

All colored forms of fear, omen and change,
Sick prophecy and rumors lane at heel,

Anticipations and astrologies,
Perilous inscription and recorded note,

All these are covered in the skirt of love
And when he shakes it these are tumbled forth,

Beaten and blown in the dusty face of the air.

Were she ten queens and every queen his wife,

I could not find out fear. Where shame is hid

I can but guess when patience leaves me sick;

But where the lank bat fear is huddled in
Doth no conjecture smell.

CONST.— Mine holds yet out,
Seeing the queen is reconciled: their son
Ties peace between both hands; she will
do much

To move him from his care set over you.

ROS.—I care not; let her bind him heel
to head,

So she may keep him, clip and kiss him so.
For me, I will go in; no doubt he shall

Be here to-night; I were best sleep till then

And have the sweet of sleep about my face

To touch his senses with; for he shall come,

I have no doubt of him but he shall come.
Kiss me yet, sweet, I would not anger you,
[Exit.]

CONST.—Yea, I taste through this way
of yours; so fair

Her sin may serve as well as holy ways.
Shall not it so? Let the queen make some tale,

A silk clue taken in the king's spur's gold,
No fear lest I be taken; and what harm

To catch her feet in the dragnets of her sin
That is so full of words, eats wicked bread,

Shares portion with shame's large and common cups,

Feeds at lewd tables, girds loose garments on?

For all this brave breath wasted out of heart,

I doubt this frets her; verily I think
Some such pain only makes her gibe at me

Fair fool, with her soft shameful mouth!
at least

I keep clean hands to do God's offices
And serve him with my noose upon her neck

[Exit.]

1. The Palace at Shene.

QUEEN ELEANOR and ROBERT DE BOUCHARD.

Queen Eleanor.

YEA, true for such; but he and I were old

Already; though men say his hair keeps black,

Ay, black-bright hair, touched deep as poppies' black

They cover up in scarlet; that's my lord;
Sweet color, with a thought of black at heart.

Some flowers they say, if one pluck deep enough,

Bleed as you gather.

BOUCH.— That means love, I think:
You gather it and there's the blood at root.

QU. EL.—How much, my Bouchard?
let your beard alone;

You could well strike me, I believe at heart;

God help me that am troubled with you so;
Feel both hands now; the blood's alive there, beats

And flutters in the fingers and the palms.

BOUCH.— True, hot enough; what will you do? the king

Comes back to take farewell and hold his way
 With some thin train that gathers London-wards;
 Thence ere he take ship shall my lord make way
 Among the westward akler-meadows, thrust
 Between soft Godstow poplars and warm grass
 Right into Woodstock and pleached rose-places;
 Shall the queen follow lest he lack a face
 For welcome, and sweet words to kiss i' the lip?
 I would go with you lest some harm should fall.
 QU. EL.—No need, for would God let them hurt me? Well,
 I would fain see the rose grow, Robert.
 BOUCH.— Being fair,
 A woman is worth pains to see.
 QU. EL.— Being fair.
 Sweet stature hath she and fair eyes, men say;
 I am but black, with hair that keeps the braid,
 And my face hurt and bitten of the sun
 Past medicine of all waters; so his tooth
 Bites hard in France, and strikes the brown grape hot
 Makes the wine leap, no skin-room spares for white,—
 I know well now; the woman has that white,
 His water-weed, his golden girl-flower
 With lank sapped stem and green rind moist at core.
 Ay, gold! but no crown's gold to all this hair,
 That's hard, my Robert.
 BOUCH.— See how men will lie;
 They call you hard, this people, sour to bite;
 Now I will trust your sweetness, do but say
 You will not touch her if I get you through.
 QU. EL.—I will not hurt her, Bouchard;
 for God's love,
 Help me; I swear by God I will not hurt,
 I will not—Ah, sweet Robert, bear me through,
 Do not make smiles and never move your mouth:
 When we ride back I will do anything.
 Wear man's dress, take your horse to water,—yea,

Kiss clean your feet of any travelling dust,—
 Yea, what your page has never done I will
 For mere love, Robert, for pure love of you;
 Nay, if I meant to stab or poison her,
 You might so chide me, Bouchard, bid me back,
 Not now! I will not hurt her; there again.
 Kiss me! I love you as a man loves God.
 Be sorry for me!
 BOUCH.—Ah well, well; no doubt
 But my Lord wrought me with a tender hand,
 Spoiled half a man in making; there, sit, sit.
 I felt your teeth come through that bitter kiss.
 Sit now and talk; it is my service, madam,
 A man's good service merely, nothing else,
 To ride for you, to ride with you,—not more.
 QU. EL.—I have some help yet of this
 Bouchard, then?
 See now, sir, you are knight and gentleman;
 I pray you that your service fail not here.
 For wears a man rich office and rich name
 Nearer than wife about him? so the king
 Wears me; and so I bid you serve him, sir,
 I bid you? rather I take prayer to me
 And catch your faith with prayer; right meek I am,
 Chide with me, Bouchard, if I be not meek;
 No child was ever so milk-mouthed, no bird
 That picks out seed from scented and pink palms.
 To say soft words is seasonable; and good
 To think of all men sinoothly; else a sin
 May sting you suddenly—as him it stung—
 Hell's heat burn through that whorish mouth of hers!
 BOUCH.— Madam!
 QU. EL.—And God that knows I weep!
 BOUCH.— Keeps count
 (The monks' song says it) of your flitting times,
 Seals all your tears up safely, doth he not?
 Hark, there's one singing.
 QU. EL.— But no monk this time.
 Look, in the garden by the red wall's turn,

The king's fool under covert, and steals
fruit;
Pluck such raw pears and spoil so bad a
song,
That breaks my patience; a lewd witch-
burden!

One sings outside:—

This was written in God's name;
The Devil kissed me
Mouth on mouth with little shame
Under a big tree.
He fed me full with good meat,
The best there might be;
He gave me black wine and sweet
Red fruit and honey-meal to eat;

Domine, laudamus te.

He made straight the lame
And fat he made me;
So he gat good game,
Kisses three by three.
He was shapen like a carl,
A swine's foot had he;
Like a dog's his mouth did snarl,
His hands were foul with loam and marl.

Domine, laudamus te.

Qu. EL.—Eh, what lewd words so
nut'ter in his teeth?
I hear no good ones; bid them see him
whipped.

Outside:—

A bat came out of heaven
That had a flat snout;
A loaf withouten leaven,
Crums thereof fell out;
The Devil thrust up with his thumb,
Said tho to me,
Lo you, there shall be left no crumb
When I and you in heaven come;

Domine, laudamus te.

There were many leavés thick
Grown well over me;
A big branch of a little stick
In this greené tree;
He showed me brave things to wear,
Pleasant things to see;
A good game had we twain there,
The leavés weren broad and fair;

Domine, laudamus te.

Qu. EL.—Bid the grool's whip him;
even a dog like that
Can be a fret to me, a thorn-prick. Ah,
Such beasts as feed about us, and we
make
Communion of their breath! I am sick at
him.

Why, my sweet friend, I pray you of your
love

Do me some service.

BOUCH.— Nay, the fool's no harm;
Let be a little; service was your word?

See now, he creeps by nodding his fool's
head,

With back and shoulders rounded for the
sun;

Let the poor beast be; 't is no worse than
dogs

When the rain makes them howl, soaks to
the bone

As he is sodden through the wits of him.

Now, sweet, sit closer, talk with me; you
said

Service? what service must I do? the
king,

It's the king has me at his heels, a dog

For service; the best work one does for
love

As I do service for my Lord the king.

Qu. EL.—Ay, for you love him; I have
learnt you, sir,

Can say my Bouchard through and turn the
leaf.

Are you his servant, lackey, chattel, purse,
The sheath where he's the hilt? you love
him; eh?

BOUCH.—Service and love make lord-
ship stable; well

Suppose I love him; there be such about

As would stoop shoulder and fit knee to
bear

Worse weight than I do, only for pure
love,—

Clean love, that washes out so much!

Qu. EL.—

They make you laugh, then? Ah, sir,

BOUCH.— Well, not loud; a brush

That strikes one's lips with laughter as a fly
Touches a fruit and drops clean off, you
see.

Men love so, pay them wages (ah, not gold,
No gold of course, but credit, name, safe
room,

Broad space to sun the back and cram the
sides

And shake fat elbows and grow longer
beards,—
There's all one wants, now) pay them such,
I say—
Lo, sir, our friend hath never wrought for
that,
That he should take it; love holds other-
where
Than by the purpled corners of your sleeve,
Eats no such food as keeps your pages warm
Nor wears such raiment.
QU. EL.— Ay, my Bouchard, so ?
I've measure of you somewhere; why serve
me ?
Why sweat and crawl to get me such a
rose
And save my gloves one thorn ?
BOUCH.— Nay, I know not;
Find some clean reason for a miry foot
Or tell me why God makes the sun get up
Pricked out like a tame beast, I'll answer
you
Why I am pleased to be so serviceable.
But why our friend's lip tastes a sweet
therein
Who serves for honesty? this were more
hard to say.
Still the truth stands, he'll work some
three good hours
Outside your hireling; yea, that's much for
him;
And all to get such dog's wage as a rag
To wrap some naked wound's unseemliness
Caught serving you, lest the sight turn your
blood
And swell your sick throat out at him.
QU. EL.— No more ?
I doubt you do belie both sides of love.
BOUCH.—But ask him rather; there's
Jean Becqueval,
King Louis has him throttled up in steel
That was a strong knight once, and had
broad bones
To get the mail shut over, not so tight.
A keen sword, madam, makes blunt work
in time,
For this man struck two blows for you or
three
Some years back, when your courtiers
snarled and spat;
Who might have children beat him on his
mouth
And could not shake about the chin for
spite

To save their plucking at his beard. Poor
fool,
I dare well say he hates you not the least,
Most like would bite now for you with his
teeth,
Since both hands could not pull the
scabbard straight
Or loose the band o' the visor and not let
The steel snap on his fingers.
QU. EL.— If you say truth,
I swear by God's blood I am shamed
in it,
Shamed out of face; but I misdoubt you
lie
Your old hard way, lie perfectly. Be
good,
Say you did lie.
BOUCH.—I have said short of truth.
Nay, now you find this wound in him of
yours,
Should you fall weeping? ask our lord so
much;
He'll swear by God's face, finger his own
beard,
And twist a hawk's foot round or hurt its
neck,
And say by God such things are pitiful.
Come, is your friend less pinched for his
good will ?
You know he would not, set things broadly
down,
Sweep this cast up and leave him room to
throw,
Change his soiled coat to be set clean in
gold;
He would just choose to serve you his best
way
Something beyond my warrant. Why, in
France
Last March the king's friend, Guerrat of
Sallières,
—A good knight,—has that long mouth
like a toad's,
And eats a woman like a grape with it,—
(Spits the husk out I mean and strains the
core)
Spake thus to me; "Sir Robert, there's a
man
Lies flat with rust upon his lips to chew
Who while your Queen touched Paris with
her feet
Would have plucked out his hairs for
cushion-stuff
To save her shoes a sprinkle of weak
rain,—

Burnt out his eyes a-sputter in the head
If she misliked their color."

QU. EL.— Not Sallières?

BOUCH.—It was my question; at which
word thrown out

His head went sideways as a big fish
flaps

And shoves with head and body, showing
white

I' the black oil of sea-water before storm
(You take such off-shore with sides wel-
tering)

And the cheeks got quick twinkles of eased
flesh

And the chin laughed; "By Mary's hand,"
he said,

"I think I would not."

QU. EL.— Ah, the fool he was!
Is he grown fat? he must be fat by this.

BOUCH.—I held to him; what name and
ways and work,
Where the man hid; whereat my Guerrat
rolls

And chatters,— "By the milk of Pilate's
nurse

And by the sleeve that wiped king Herod's
beard,

I hope the place be something worse than
hell,

Or I shall fare the worse next world, by
God!"

QU. EL.—What noise runs towards us?
is the king past Thames

Think you, by this?—Take this one word
of me;

Albeit I lay no heavy thought on it
Lest pain unmake me, hold this truth of
mine.

Sir Robert, which your swordsmen and
blank wits,

I doubt, would feel for half one's life and
miss;

I had sooner fare as doth this Becqueval
Than as I fare; yea, if a man will weep,

Let him weep here. God is no good to me,
Nor any man i' the world; I have no love

And no smooth hour in those twelve pricks
of plague

That smite my blood each once a day.
Nay, go;

Do me some greeting to my lord. Fare-
well.

[Exit BOUCHARD.]
I shall find time to hate you; yea, I do

Hate him past speech. Let me just cool
my head

And gather in some breath to face the king
I am quite stilled.

Enter King HENRY.

Fair days upon my lord.

K. HEN.—How does the queen?— Three
—not four provinces

To shut one's hand on.—Are you well?—
next month

My face at Paris, and his hands in mine
Touch service; two, three provinces at
most;

I must have more.

QU. EL.—I thank you, well enough.
How doth my Paris?—That means ill to
me,

That beat of his two fingers on the cheek.
Will Bouchard make no liar, does one
know?

K. HEN.—Fair news; our Louis to the
throat in steel,

And cannot clear his saddle at a leap,
But slips and sticks there as he did years
back,

Not in the saddle, but across a bed
His feet in time grew clear of and made
room.

QU. EL.—Made room for you to slide
between and thrust

Across the pillows with a sideways head
To warm about the corner where his feet
Were thrust out late; so God keep heat for
it

To please you always!

K. HEN.— Ay, not best at swords,
Good Louis; I was eased with swinging
steel

In thick fields under lusty months of sun;
He would play blind, wring back my hand
in his,

Fall in hard thought. But see now; have
I not

A dozen French heads broken through the
neck

Hung at my sleeve here, madam, threes
and threes?

Guy d'Héricourt and Guerrat of Sallières,
Denis of Gordes, Peter of the March,
I have their tongues shut with gold coins
of mine

To seal the lips back; Jacques Becqueval
Shows teeth to nibble; if these fail me quite,
I'll say we have played at luck with God
and lost

By some trick's foil ; being no such fools of his

As chew the lazy purpose with their teeth,
Eat and wax full and laugh till hair falls out ;

Why, all the world lives without sleeping-
whiles,

God makes and mars and turns not weak
one whit,

But we must find some roost to perch and
blink

And wag thick chins at the world ; I hate
all men

That have large faces with dead eyes in
them

And good full fronts of fool.

QU. EL.— Am I worth words ?

K. HEN.—So quick, so quick ! are you
true wife to me ?

QU. EL.—I praise God for it, how loyal
I have lived

Your soul shall answer.

K. HEN.— What, I see the blood
That goes about the heart and makes you
hot,—

French blood, south blood ! I would not
tax you far,

But spare my Louis ; he did no such wrong
As I did when I let you slip my hand

In a new French glove you had sewn with
gold.

QU. EL.—This is a courteous holiness of
yours

That smites so in my face ; have you not
heard

Of men whose swerved feet lie delicate
In common couches, with beds made to
them

Where priests shed no fair water ? Nay,
this breath

You chide me with makes treason to your
breath

That was my promise ; if I be your wife,
The unclean witness of my well-doing
Is your own sin.

K. HEN.— This is a fevered will
That you seem drunk withal.

QU. EL.— I bond-broken ?
You lay your taint my ways ; blush now a
little,

Pay but some blood ; do but defend your-
self ;

It is a double poison in revolt
When it deserts the bare rebellion
To be half honest.

K. HEN.— You are not wise.

QU. EL.— I would not :
For wisdom smites away, when foolishness
Keeps the clean away.

K. HEN.—Have you done yet with me ;

QU. EL.—I thrust your bags out with
round cheeks of gold

That were my people's ; thickened with
men the sides

Of your sick, lean, and barren enterprise ;
Made capable the hunger of your state

With subsidies of mine own fruitfulness ;
Enriched the ragged ruin of your plans

With purple patched into the serge and
thread

Of your low state ; you were my pensioner ;
There's not a taste of England in your
breath

But I did pay for.

K. HEN.—Better I had never seen you
Than wear such words unchallenged. You
are my wife ;

I would the name were lost with mine to it.
I put no weight upon you of the shame

That is my badge in you ; the carriage of it
Pays for your gold.

QU. EL.— Ay, you will tax not me,
Being made so whole of your allegiance,
you,

Perfect as patience ? why, the cause, this
cause

(Be it what you say,—but saying it you lie,
Are simply liar, my lord !) the shame would
prick

A very dog to motion of such blood
As takes revenge for the shame done, the
shame

I' the body, in the sufferance of a blow,—
But you are patient.

K. HEN.—I will not find your sense.

QU. EL.—Nay, I think so ; when you do
understand,

Praise me a little then. For this time, sir,
I have no such will to trouble you ; and
here,

Even here shall leave-taking atone us
twain ;

Therefore farewell. When I am dead, my
lord,

I pray you praise me for my sufferance ;
You see I chide not ; nay, I say no word ;

I will put seals like iron on my mouth
Lest it revolt at me, or any shame

Push some worse phrase in than "God
keep, you sir." [Exit.

K. HEN.—I am her fool; no word to get
her dumb?
I am like the tales of Cornish Mark long
since,
To be so baffled. Well, being this way
eased,
I need not see her anger twice i' the eyes.
Get me a hawk to ride with presently.

[Exit.

III. At Woodstock.

King Henry and ROSAMOND, seated.

Rosamond.

BELLE est madame, et bien douce en
son dire;
Dieu lui fit don de pleurer ou de rire
Plus doucement que femme qui soupire
Et puis oublie.

Bonne est madame, et me baise de grace;
Bien me convient baiser si belle face,
Bien me convient que si doux corps
embrasse
Et plus n'oublie.

Blonde est madame, ayant de tristes yeux;
Entre or et roux Dieu fit ses longs cheveux;
Bien mal me fait, si l'en aime bien mieux.
Et moins oublie.

Blanche est madame et gracieuse avoir;
Ne sais si porte en corps azur ou noir;
Que m'a donné sa belle bouche à voir
Jamais n'oublie.

I bade them tell you I was sick; the sun
Pains me. Sit here.

K. HEN.—There's no sick show in you.
Sing still, and I will sit against your feet,
And see the singing measure in your
throat

Moved evenly; the headband leaves your
hair

Space to lie soft outside.

Ros.— Stoop then and touch
That I may bind it on your hands; I would
Fain have such hands to use so royally.
As you are king, sir, tell me without shame
Doth not your queen share praise with you,
show best

In all crowned ways, even as you do? I
have heard

Men praise the state in her and the great
shape;

Yet pray you, though you find her sweet
enow,

Praise her not over-measure; yet speak
truth;

But so I would not have you make her
praise

The proper pleasure of your lips, the
speech

Found best in them; yet do not scant her so
That I may see you tender of my pain,
Sparing to gall my wits with laud of her.

K. HEN.—O sweet, what sting is this
she makes in you?

A Frenchwoman, black-haired and with
gray lips

And fingers like a hawk's cut claw that
rips

One's wrist to carry—is this so great a
thing

As should wring wet out of your lids?

Ros.— I know

That for my sake you pinch her praises in,
Starve her of right; do not so fearfully;

I shall best love you if you praise her,
seeing

I would not have you marry a worse face,
Say, than mine even; therefore be liberal,

Praise her to the full, till you shall see
that I

Fall sick upon your words, bid them be
pitiful

And bruise not me.

K. HEN.—I will not praise her to you.

Show me a little golden good of yours,
But some soft piece of gracious habit
grown

Common with you, quite new with me and
sweet.

It is the smell of roses where you come
That makes my sense faint now; you taste
of it,

Walk with it always.

Ros.— Hark, the rain begins,
Slips like a bird that feels among shut
leaves;

One—two; it catches in the rose-branches
Like a word caught. Now, as I shut your
eyes,

Show me what sight gets first between the
lids,

So covered in to make false witness true.
Speak, and speak faith.

K. HEN.—I think this first; here once
The hard noon being too strong a weight
for us,

We lay against the edges of slant leaves
Facing the grass, our bodies touching them,
Cooled from the sun, and drank cold wine;
you had

A straight gown flaked with gold i' the
undersleeves;

And in your throat I caught the quick
faint red

Drunk down, that ran and stained it out of
white,

A long warm thread not colored like a
vein

But wine-colored; this was a joy to see.
O little throat, so tender to show red,
Would you not wear my lips as well, be
kissed

To a soft mark if one but touched you so?
I will not touch; only to feel you fast,
Lie down and take your feet inside both
hands,

Untie your hair to blind both eyes across —
Yea, there sweet, kiss me now.

Ros. — Do but stoop yet
And I will put my fingers where the hair
Is mixed upon the great crown's wearing-
place;

Sir, do you think I must fall old indeed
First of us two? look how between my
wrists

Even about the purplest seat of them
This lean scant flesh goes in. I am grown
past love;

The breath aches each way in my sobbing
sides

When I would sing, and tears climb up my
throat

In bitter breaks like swellings of round fruit
From the rind inwards, and my pulses go
Like fits of singing when the head gives
way

And leaves pure naught to stammer in
spoilt lips,

Even for this and my sad patience here
Built up and blinded in with growing green,
Use me not with your eyes untenderly,
But though I tire you, make you sigh at
me,

Say no blame overloud; I have flowers
only

And foolish way to get me through the
day,

And songs of yours to piece with weeping
words

And famish and forget. Pray you go now,
I am the abuse of your compassion.

K. HEN. — I am gone presently; but for
this space

Give me poor leave to love you with mine
eyes

And feasted expectation of shut lips.
God help! your hair burns me to see like
gold

Burnt to pure heat; your color seen turns
in me

To pain and plague upon the temple-vein
That aches as if the sun's heat snapt the
blood

In hot mid measure; I could cry on you
Like a maid weeping-wise, you are so fair

It hurts me in the head, makes the life sick
Here in my hands, that one may see how
heats

Feverous blue upon my finger-tips.
Touch me now gently; I am as he that
saith

In the great song sick words and sorrowful
Of love's hard sweet and hunger of harsh
hours;

Your beauty makes me blind and hot, I am
Stabbed in the brows with it.

Ros. — Yea, God be good,
Am I fair yet? but say that I am fair,

Make me assured, praise me quite perfectly
Lest I doubt God may love me something
less

And his hot fear so nip me in the cheek
That I burn through. Nay, but go hence;
I would

Even lose the sweet I love, that I may
lose

The fear of losing it.
K. HEN. — I am gone quickly.

You know my life is made a pain to me
With angry work, harsh hands upon my
life

That finger in the torn sad sides of it
For the old thorn; touch but my face and
feel

How all is thwarted with thick networking
Where your lips found it smooth, clung
soft; there, now,

You take some bruise and gall of mine
clear out

With a cool kissing mouth.
Ros. — I had a will

To make some chafing matter with your
pride

And laugh at last; ay, also to be eased
Of some small wrath at your harsh tarri-
ance;

But you put sadness softly in my lips
With your marred speech. Look, the rain
slackens yet.

K. HEN.—I will go now that both our
hearts are sweet
And lips most peaceable; so shall we sleep
Till the next honey please them, with a
touch
Soft in our mouths; sing once and I am
gone.

ROS.—I will sing something heavy in the
word
That it may serve us; help me to such
words.
The marigolds have put me in my song,
They shine yet redly where you made
me it.

Hélas, madame, ayez de moi merci,
Qui porte en cœur triste fleur de souci;
N'est plus de rose, et plus ne vois ici
Que triste fleur.

M'est trop grand denil, hélas, dans cette
vie;

Car vieil espoir me lie et me délie,
Et triste fleur m'est force, ô belle amie,
Porter en cœur.

See the rain! have you care to ride by
this?

Yea, kiss me one strong kiss out of your
heart,

Do not kiss more; I love you with my lips,
My eyes and heart, your love is in my
blood,

I shall die merely if you hold to me.

IV. *Ante-Chapel at Shene. Choir-music
from within. In the passage outside,
ARTHUR, a boy of the choir, reading.*

Enter SIR ROBERT DE BOUCHARD.

Bouchard.

SHE spares me time to think of it;
well, so

I pull this tumbled matter square with God,
What sting can men's mouths hurt me
with? What harm

Because the savor of undieted sense
Palates not me? the taste and smell of
love

Sickens me, being so fed with its keen use
That delicate divisions of soft touch

Feel gross to me as duldest accident?
That way of will most men take pleasure in
It tires my feet to walk. Then for the
harder game,—

Joust where the steel swings, fight that
clears up blood,

I want the relish too; being no such sinewed
ape,

Blunder of brawn and jolted muscle-work,
As beats and bleeds about his iron years,
Anoints his hide with stupid lust and sleep,
Fattens to mould and dies; rubs sides with
dust,

Ending his riddle. I have seen time
enough,

Struck blows and tricked and paid and
won and wrought,

I know not well why wrought. A monk,
now—there's right work;

Dull work or wise, body and head keep
up;

I should have pulled in scapular and alb
To shut my head up and its work, who
knows?

Arthur (outside). They told me I should
see the king come in;

I shall not get the words out clear enough,
No time, I doubt. I wonder will he wear
Chain-mail or samite-work? I would
take mail,—

A man fares best in good close joints of
mail.

Fautor.—I seem to catch it up their way;
This time I'll come off clear yet. One
rhyme sticks—

(He repeats.)

*Fautor meus, magne Deus, quis adversum
tibi stabit?*

*Parum ridet qui te videt; sponsam sponsus
accusabit;*

*Sicut herbam qui superbam flau gentem
dissipabit.*

*Flectit celum quasi velum quo personam
implicabit.*

There, all straight out, clean forthright
singing, this;

I'll see the king in the face and speak out
hard

That he shall hear me. Last time all fell
wrong;

I had that song about the lily-plants
Growing up goodly in their green of time
With gold heads and gold sprinkles in the
neck

And God among them, feeding like a lamb,
That takes out sin; so I let slip his name,
Euh! I can touch the prints of the big
switch;

One, six, twelve,—ah! the sharp small
suckers stung

Like a whole hive loose, as Hugh's arm
swung out,

Good for this king that I shall see to have
Fine padded work and silk seats pillow-puft
Instead of wood to twist on painfully.

BOUCH.—So comes mine answer in; I
thank you, Lord;

I'll none of this. Give men clean work and
sleep,

And baby bodies this priest's blessed way.
But, being so set between the time's big
jaws

To dodge and keep me from the shut o' the
teeth,

Shuffle from lip to lip, a shell with priest
For kernel in the husk and rind of knight,
No chink bit in me, but nigh swallowed
whole,—

Who says my trick that, played on either,
makes

Music for me and sets my head on work,
Is devil's lesson? Pity that lives by milk
Suckles not me; I see no reason set

To keep me from the general use of things
Which no more holds the great regard of
man

Than children spoiling flies. Respect and
habit

Find no such tongue against me; I but
wear

The raiment of my proper purpose, not
The threadworn coat of use. Even who
keeps on

Such garments for the reputation's want,
Wears them unseamed inside. The boy
there now—

ARTH.—Yea, I loathe Hugh. Peter he
beat, and me,—

Me twice, because that day the queen
came in

I twisted back my head to thrust well
through

The carved work's double lattice to get
sight

Of a tall woman with gold clothes and hair
That shone beyond her clothes; so sharp
he smote,

The grim beast Hugh with boarish teeth
and hair

All his chin long and where no hair should
be!

And Peter pinched and pushed all vespers
through

To get my turn and see her. How she
went

Holding her throat up, with her round neck
out

Curdwhite, no clot in it not smooth to
stroke,—

All night I shook in sleep for that one
thing,

Stirred with my feet and pulled about
awry.

I think too she kept smiling with her
mouth

(Her wonderful red quiet mouth) and
prayed

All to herself. Now that men call a
mouth,—

And Hugh's begrimed big lips you call the
same

That make a thick smile up with all their
fat

Never but when he gets one by the nape
To make him sprawl and weep. How all
the hair

Drew the hard shining of the candle-fires
And shone back harder with a flare in it

Through all the plaits and bands. Then
Hugh said,—“Look,

You Arthur, that white woman with such
eyes

Is worse in hell than any devil that seethes;
She keeps the color of it in her hair

That shakes like flame so. Wait till I
get in

And teach the beast's will in your female
flesh

With some red slits in it, to get out loose
In such dog's ways.” But Hugh lied hard,

I think:

For he said after in his damned side-room
What fierce account God made of such a
name

And how the golden king that made God
songs

Child at their ways and called them this
and that;

And he loved many queens with just such
hair

And such good eyes, and had more scores
of them

Than I have stripes since last red week
on me.

So I can see Hugh lied. For no Jew's
wife

Looked ever so, or found such ways to
hold

Her sweet straight body.—But my next,—
that's hard. (Reads.)

BOUCH.—Yea, there the snake's head
blinks? yea, doth it there?

O this sweet thorn that worries the kind
flesh!

Yea, but the devil's seedling side-graft,
Lord,

That pinches out the sap. I'll talk to
him.

Enter from the Chapel, QUEEN ELEANOR.

QU. EL.—Ah, you here, Bouchard? is
it well with you

When you hear music? I am hot i' the
face;

Kiss me now, Robert, where the red
begins,

And tell me, does no music hurt you?
Ah,—

Will no man stop them?

BOUCH.— Speak me lower then;
No time to kiss bad words out on the
mouth

As one treads flame out with the heel.
Well were it,

That you should keep the purpose in your
lips

From knowledge of your eyes; let none
partake,

No inquisition of the air get out

One secret, or the imperious sun compel

One word of you. Wisdom doth sheathe
her hand

To smite the fool behind.

QU. EL.— I pray you, sir,
Let be your sentence; O, I am sick to
death,

Could lie down here and bruise my head
with stone,

Cover up hands and feet and die at once.

Nathless I will not have her eyes and
hair

Crown-circled, and her breasts embraced
with gold,

When the grave catches me. It is mere
time,

The mere sick fault of age I limp with;
yea,

Time was I had put such fierce occasion on
Like a new scented glove; but now this
thing

Takes harsh as if I drank that blood in-
deed

Which I'll not even have spilled in dust;
it clings,

Under the lip, makes foul the sense,—ha,
there,

I knew that noise was close upon my head.

Arthur (outside)

*Matrem pater, fratrem frater, iste condem-
nabit eum;*

*Eril nemo quem postremo tu non incensabis
eum*

*Nihil tactum quod non fractum; fulgor ibit
ante Deum;*

*Mea caro prodest raro; non est laudi caput
meum.*

QU. EL.—Say now you love me, Robert,
I fear God,

Fear is more bitter than a hurt worm's
tooth,

But if God lets one love me this side
heaven

And puts his breath not out, then shall I
laugh

I' the eyes of him for mere delight,
pluck off

Fear that ties man to patience, white
regret,

All mixture of diseased purpose, made
To cut the hand at wrist; remorse and
doubt

Shall die of want in me.

BOUCH.— Too much of this;
Get your eyes back. Think how some ten
days gone

He drew loose hair into his either hand
And how the speech got room between
their mouths

Only to breathe in and go out; at times,
How she said "Eleanor" to try the name,

Found not so sweet as Rosamond to say;
Perhaps too, "Love, the Frenchwoman

gets thin,
Her mouth is something older than her
hair;

Count by these petals, pluck them three
and three,

What months it takes to rid the sun of her,
And make some grave-grass wealthier;"

will you bear

This?

QU. EL.—Do men tie the sword this
way, or that?

Were I a knight now I would gird it on

Strained hard upon the clasp, would feel
the hilt
Bruise my side blue and work the stamp
therein
Deep as blood hides i' the flesh. I love
pain well to feel;
As to wring in one's fingers,—the least
pain;
It kills the hard impatience of the soul,
Cools heat of head, makes bearable all
shame
That finds a work to do; yea, very sense
Tastes it for comfort, gets assured with it,
Being strong to smite the flesh, and wear
pain well.
She must hate pain, that woman; it should
jar
Her thin soft sense through, tear it up like
silk;
What, if worms eat me that sweet flesh in
time?

Arthur (outside).

*Motu mentis quasi ventis facit maria le-
vari;
Ex arena flatu plena facit dulcem sonum
dari;
Tument colles quasi folles quia jussit ex-
sufflari,
Et quæ deplet manu replet labra calicis
amari.*

QU. EL.—Ay, bitter; for it bites and
burns one through
As the sharp sting of wine curdles the
mouth.

He would not wed her if I died? I know,—
A laugh with all his teeth in it, the beard
So twisted from the underlip about,—

Eh, said he that he would not marry her?

BOUCH.—Nay, but who deemed else?
no man certainly.

When the weak lust falls dead and eyeless
flesh

Is as a beast asleep and sick of meat,
What marvel if no spirit there holds out?
No appetite, that like the unchilled sea
(In whose unprofitable and various womb
Fair ships lie sidelong with a fisher's buoy
Miles down in water) hungers for such orts
As riot spares lean want, is yet so wide,
So vast of ravin or so blind in scope,
As can abide the chewed and perished
meats

That relish died upon. Fill famine to the
lips,

The word of bread shall turn his throat
awry;

So doth the sense of love all love put out;
And kiss it from that very place o' the soul;
Mere wish made sweet indeed.

QU. EL.— I am sorry for you;
This foolish poison in your tongue forgets
All better things to say.

BOUCH.— It is dull truth;
This gift found in me should much profit
you.

QU. EL.—I care not for you; I could
wish you hanged

But for some love that sticks here in my
head,

Some stupid trick caught up,—like play
with straws,

Tune-burden twisted over in sick ears
That keeps up time with fever; so habit
fools me

To use you like a friend.

BOUCH.— It is a piteous thing
When honesty grown gray has hairs pluck-
ed out

By such unreverent fingers. Come, let be;
I marvel what lewd matter jars your talk
So much past tune.

QU. EL.— 'T is better talk than do
Where doing means actual harm. Per-
chance this thing

Shall trap our souls indeed, —eh?

BOUCH.— Doubt me not;
I think so truly. Prithee let us in,
Wash hands and weep.

QU. EL.—You have marred my will to
prayer.

God is right gracious, may be he shall help,
As we do honorably. I will not go.

Arthur (outside.)

*Multo fletu non expleto facit teneras pu-
pillas;*

*Dente tangi, manu frangi jubet nitidas
mamillas;*

*Quum amant parum genæ nudas exhibent
maxillas,*

*Fiet gravis odor suavis, si quis osculabit
illas.*

QU. EL.—Who made that hymn?

BOUCH.— Aloys of Blois.

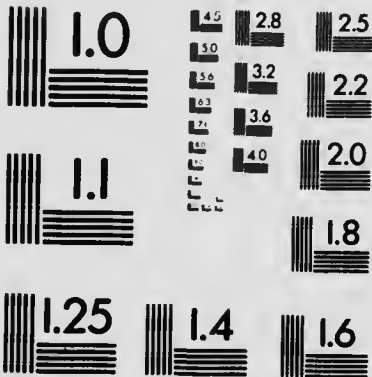
QU. EL.— Ah priest!
You should be priest, my Bouchard, scalp
and mouth,

You have such monk's ways. If she be
foul to God



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And her sweet breath ill savor in his lip,
 Then shall her blood-spilling be sacrifice;
 And cleanse us in the blow. I do thank
 God,
 I praise the wording of his prayer, will
 make
 Fast and sweet words and thereto thanks-
 giving,
 Be married to his love, my purpose making
 Such even wing and way with his.

BOUCH.— Yea, first
 Show me the perfect fashion of her death.

QU. EL.—What fashion? feel this flasket
 next my waist,

Full to the wicked lips, crammed up and
 full

With drugs and scents that touch you in
 the mouth

And burn you all up, face and eyes at
 once,—

They say so; they may lie, who knows?
 but kill

The thing does really; do you kiss me
 now?

BOUCH.—Some Frenchman gave my
 queen the thing to keep?

QU. EL.—I wot well England would not
 give a queen

Six grains of salt she paid in salt of tears.
 France makes good blood, made Becqueval
 and me;

I bade him get me for love's sake,—years
 gone,—

Such mortal matter. Ah, poor Becqueval,
 A good time had we in that pleasure-
 walk;

I with few dames about the white pear-
 trees,—

Spring was it? yea, for green sprang thick
 as flame

And the birds bit the blossom and sang
 hard,—

Now sat and tore up flowers to waste, wet
 strips

Of hyacinths, rain-sodden bells,—then
 stood

To make them braid my running hair well
 back,

Pluck out the broken plait of March-lilies,
 Lest one should mutter,—“Ha, the queen
 comes late,

Her hair unwoven and cheeks red as
 though

Fingers and lips had kissed and fondled
 them,—

Ay, pity of her!” so for that,—what words
 I choke with saying!

BOUCH.— Weak in words indeed;
 See how I shut them back upon the
 mouth.

The king comes here to chapel; let us
 hence.

QU. EL.—I am very ready. Nay, this
 turn it is;

I am so free and pleasant of my mood,
 I can scarce go for simple joyousness.

[Exeunt.]

Arthur (outside.)

*Pater, e me mendas deme, fac ut cingar
 prece suavi;*

*Pater, e me vinum premi, fac ut purgar
 face gravi;*

*Tu me bonis imple donis ut implentur melle
 favi,*

*Tu me rege tua lege, quia mundum non
 amavi.*

V. At Woodstock.

Rosamond.

LATE summer now, but in the fair blue
 spring

How shall God hear me? Once (men say)
 Lord Christ

Walked between rivers in his rose-garden
 With some old saint who had a wife by
 him

To feed with apple-pulp and honeycomb,
 A wife like Mary in King David's time

Long after,—but a snake so stung his foot
 He came back never, being lame at heel.

A story some priest wrote out all in gold,
 Painting the leaves green, for a king to
 read;

But the king burnt it; whom God there-
 fore took

And sold him to some Turk, with eyes
 thrust out.

Here in my garden, now his feet are healed
 From those twin stains where bit the hang-
 ing-nails,

He would not come to let me kiss them
 whole,

Wash them with oil and wet fruits bruised
 to juice,

Rare waters stained and scented through
 with rose—

Though my hair be as long as Magdalen's,

As yellow, maybe. Mine eyes and eyelids
ache,
Too thick to see past, weeping swells them
blue;
And the veins narrow visibly and waste
Where next the elbow neither hand could
span;
The flesh that wore glad color is gone gray,
And soon the hair will; yea, not milk but
blood
Fills my breast through, not good for any
child
To lay sweet lips to; I am as a gold cup
With beaten edges and dry mouths of dust,
That tears weep into, and that cunning
man
By whose wit I was fashioned lets them
run
And lets men break me. If I were well
dead,
Then were the tears all spilled over the
ground
And I made empty; also I pray God
To get me broken quickly; else, who
knows,
If I live long till these years too seem gray
As a flower ruined, then ere sleep at night
I shall be grown too stark and thin to pray,
Nor will God care to set me praying then.
Maids will keep round me, girls with
smooth warm hair
When mine is hard, no silk in it to feel,—
Tall girls to dress me, laughing under-
breath,
Too low for gold to tighten at the waist.
Eh, the hinge sharpens at the gate across?
Five minutes now to get the green walk
through
And turn,—the chesnut leaves will take his
hair
If he turn quick; or I shall hear some bud
Fall, or some pebble's clink along the fence
Or stone his heel grinds, or torn limc-
blossom
Flung at me from behind; not poppies now
Nor marigolds, but rose and lime-flower.

Enter QUEEN ELEANOR.

*Qu. EL. (to Bouchard within).—*Outside,—
outside,—I bade you keep outside;
Look to her people; tell me not of shame;
Look to her women.

ROS.— Ah God! shall this be so?

*QU. EL.—*I'll have no man at hand to
help her through;

Not till the king be come; tush, tell not
me,

No treaties—talk of promises, you talk!
I will not strike her; look to them; Lord
God!

I bade you have a heed; there, go now;
there!—

Here, golden lady, look me in the face;
Give me both hands, that I may read you
through,

See how the blood runs, how the eyes take
light,

How the mouth sets when one is beautiful,
Ah sweet, and shall not men praise God for
you?

*ROS.—*I shall die now. Madam, you
are the queen.

*QU. EL.—*Does fear so speak?

ROS.— Not so; for pain with me
Is a worn garment or that common food
That sleep comes after best; what wrath
will do

I make no reckoning with.

QU. EL.— What love hath done
I keep the count of; did he not hold this
way?

Did you not set both hands behind his
head,

And curl your body like a snake's? not set
Each kiss between the hair of lip and chin,
Cover your face upon his knees, draw
down

His hands on you, shut either eye to kiss?
Then it was "Love, a gold band either
side,

A gold ring to pull close each knot of
hair!"

"Nay, not so; kiss me rather like a bird
That lets his bill cut half the red core
through

And rend and bite for pleasure,—eh! I
felt

What pinched my lips up after;"—was it
not?

Did it not sting i' the blood, pluck at the
breath

If a bird caught his song up in the leaves?
Eh! this was sweet too, that you called the
king

Some girls name with no royal note in it
To spoil the chatter,—some name like a
kiss

The lips might loose and hesitate upon?
He would weave up this yellow skein of
yours

To knot and ravel, though his hands might
 pluck
 Some plait a little overmuch; your throat,
 Pure pearl, too fair to swell or strain with
 sobs,
 One would not have a rough thing rasp it
 round,
 Not steel to touch it, only soft warm silk.
 Will you not sing now, loose your hair
 well out
 For me to hold the gracious weft? Alas,
 So white you grow, love; the head drops
 indeed,
 A moan comes out of that kissed mouth of
 yours!
 You harlot, are you sick to look at me?
 Though my heel bruise you in the gold
 snake's head
 I choke to touch you.

Ros.— I shall die without.
 But give me time to speak; wherefore am I
 That am made soft in this my body's
 strength
 And in my soul smooth and affectionate
 So taken in your loathing? you do not
 right
 To hate me that am harmless; see my
 face,
 You will not smite me afterwards; this sin
 Was not begot of wilfulness in me
 To be your pain and a shame burning you;
 Yea verily, no evil will or wit
 Made me your traitor; there came not in
 my mind
 One thought to gall you past good patience;
 yea,
 If you could see the pained poor heart in
 me
 You would find nothing hateful toward
 you
 In all the soft red record its blood makes.

Qu. EL.—Thou art more fool than thief;
 I have not seen
 A beaten beast so humble of its mouth,
 So shaming me as you; I am ashamed
 That such a thing can see me in the eyes.
 You do not think that I shall let you go
 Being well caught? Ah harlot, have you
 made
 Thief's japes at me, lewd guesses on my
 wrath,
 Spat towards me? and now God gives me
 you
 I shall play soft and touch you with my
 gloves.

Nay, make my lips two kissing friends of
 yours
 Because mere love and a sweet fault i' the
 flesh
 Put you to shame? Look, you shall die for
 that,
 Because you sinned not out of hate to me
 That have and hate you. Do not shake at
 it,
 I will not strike you yet; what hands are
 mine
 To take such hangman's matter to their
 work
 And be clean after? but a charm I have
 Quick to undo God's cunning weft of flesh
 And mix with deadly waters the glad blood
 That hath so pure a sense and subtleness.
 This is a gracious death made out for you
 And praiseworthy; you shall die no base
 way,

Seeing what king's lips have fastened in
 your neck.
 Choose me this edge to try your flesh upon
 That feels so precious—like a holy thing
 Kissed by some great saint's mouth, laid
 afterwards
 With taper flame in middle altar-work,
 All over soft as your own lips that fed
 Between the king's eyes—

Ros.— Madam, be merciful,
 You hurt me, pinching in my throat so
 hard.

Alas, ah God, will not one speak for me?
 Qu. EL.—Yea, then choose this.

Ros.— I will not choose; God help!
 I will not choose: I have no eyes to choose;
 I will be blind and save the sight of choice.
 So shall my death, not looking on itself,
 Fall like a chance.

Qu. EL.—Put me not past mine oath;
 I am sworn deep to lay no stroke on you.

Ros.—I will not drink; so shall I make
 defeat

On death's own bitter will. Do not look
 hard;

I know you are more sweet at heart than so.
 Make me the servant of your meanest
 house.

And let your girls smite me some thrice a
 day,

I will bear that; yea, I will serve and
 be

Stricken for wage and bruised; give me
 two days

A poor man puts away for idleness,

Lest my soul ache with you,—nay, but,
sweet God,

Is there no thing will say a word for me,
A little sad word said inside her ears
To make them burn for piteous shame?
you see

How I weep, yea, fear wrings my body
round;

You know not hardly how afraid I am,
But my throat sickens with pure fear, my
blood

Falls marred in me; and God should love
you so
Being found his friend and made com-
passionate—

QU. EL.—I have a mind to pluck thee
with my hands,
Tear thy hair backward, tread on thee.
By God,

I thought no sin so sick and lame a fool
As this lust is.

ROS.— But I will drink indeed,
I will not yet; give me the sword to see
How that must hurt.

QU. EL.—Yea, this way will you see?

ROS.—I cannot hold it by the edge;
it is

Too keen to touch the sides thereof with
sight.

Yea, then, your drink.

QU. EL.—To spill here in the ground?
It were good game to get white iron out
As did God's priest with a king's harlot
once,

Burn up your hair and brand between your
eyes

That I might have you wear me so in red.
Besides to-night the king will look for you,
“Eh, Rosamond? she hides then closer
yet,

May be for fear of passengers that slip
Between those waters; I shall have her
now,

Ha love, have I said right?” would he kiss
you,

Spoilt face and all?—You will die simply
then?

You do the wiselier.

ROS.— God be pitiful!
No man in this sharp world to speak for
me

Of all that go and talk,—why now they
laugh,

Chatter of me, base people, say foul
things,—

Ah God, sweet lord, that death should be
so hard.

Nay, thou fair death, make me not wroth
with thee;

Use me the best way found in thee, fair
death,

And thou shalt have a pleasure of mine end,
For I will kiss thee with a patient lip
Even on this husk of thine; thou tender
death,

Do me none evil and no shame, that am
So soft and have such sufferance of thee
And talk such lovers' little talk; fair death,
Where thou hast kissed the latest lip of
man's

None shall drink after.

QU. EL.— Cease, and be not lewd;
Cease, and make haste. What harlot's wit
hast thou

To play death's friend this way?

ROS.— Yea, friends we are;
I have no breath that makes a curse for
you,

All goes to fashion prayer that God sow
pity

I' the grounds of wrath; you see me that I
drink;

So God have patience.

QU. EL.— It is done indeed.
Perchance now it should please you to be
sure

This were no poison? as it is, it is.
Ha, the lips tightens so across the teeth
They should bite in, show blood; how
white she is,

Yea, white! dead green now like a fingered
leaf.

Enter KING HENRY and BOUCHARD.

K. HEN.—Is it all done? Yea, so, love
come to me,

You are quite safe, held fast; kiss me a
little.

Speak, hast thou done?

QU. EL.— So, would you praise me
now?

It is done well, and as I thought of it.

K. HEN.—O, sweetest thing, you do not
bleed with her?

She cannot speak. By God's own holiness
Each fear put on you shall be as blood
wrung

From her most damned body. Do but
speak.

This is just fear. Ay, come close in and weep.

This is your fear?

Ros.— Nay, but my present death. Doth fear so ruin all the blood in one As this spoils mine? Let me get breath to help;

And yet no matter; I will not speak at all, I can die without speaking.

K. HEN. (*to the Queen*).—Listen to this, Thou art worse caught than anything in hell,—

To put thy hands upon this body— God, Curse her for me! I will not slay thee yet,

But damn thee some fine quiet way—O love, That I might put thee in my heart indeed To be kept well! thou shalt be healed of her—

Poor sweet; she hath even touched thee in the neck

Thou art so hurt. This is not possible O God, that I could see what thou wilt do With her when she is damned! Thou piece of hell,

Is there no way to crawl out of my hate By saving her? pray God then till I come, For if my hands had room for thee I would Hew thy face out of shape.—She will not die.

This heat in her is pure, and the sweet life With holy color doth assure itself In death's sharp face; she will not die at all.

Thou art all foiled, found fool and laughable

And halt and spat upon and sick,—O love

Make me not mad! if you do so with me I am but dead.

Ros.— Do not so cry on me; I am hurt sore, but shall not die of it. Be gracious with me, set your face to mine, Tell me sweet things. I have no pain at all,

I am but woman and make words of pain Where I am well indeed; only the breath Catches, for joy to have you close. I would

Sing your song through; yea, I am good you said,

Gracious and good; I cannot sing that out, But am I good that kiss your lips or no? That keeps yet sweet; there is not so much pain

As one might weep for; a little makes us weep;

To die grown old were sad, but I die worth

Being kissed of you; leave me some space to breathe,—

I have thanks yet. (*Dies.*)

QU. EL.—So is the whole played out; Yea, kiss him. Ah, my Bouchard, you said that?

K. HEN.—Ay, keep the mouth at ease; shut down the lids;

You see I am not riotously moved,

But peaceable, all heat gone out of me.

This is some trick, some riddle of a dream, Have you not known such dreams? I bid you stand,

Being king and lord, I make you come and go;

But say I bid my love turn and kiss me, No more obedience? here at sight of her The heart of rule is broken. No more obedience?

She hath forgotten this; were I a man, Even that would slay me; I beseech you, sir,

Take no care of me; I can bid you; see, I touch her face; the lips begin to stir, Gather up color; is there sound or speech, Or pleasant red under the white of death? She will speak surely; for dead flesh is gray

And even the goodliest pattern wrought of man

Coldness and change disfigure; what was red

A new disconsolate color overpaints, And ever with some ill deformity The secret riddle and pure sense of flesh Becomes defeated and the rebel taste

Makes new revolt at it; I pray take note of me,

Here comes no new thing; do you not see her face,

How it hath shut up close like any flower, With scents of sleep and hesitating sweet I' the heaviest petal of it? Note her eyes, They move and alter; and if I touched her lips

(Which lest she wake I will not) they would be

As red as mine; yea that pure cheek of hers

Turn redder.

QU. EL.— Will you speak to him?

BOUCH.—

Fair lord—

K. HEN.—Sir, pardon me, I know she
is but dead,
She is not as I am; we have sense and
soul;
Who smites me on the mouth or plucks by
the hair,
I know what feels it; stab me with a knife,
I can show blood: and when the eyes turn
wet,
There's witness for me and apparent proof
I am no less than man; though in the test
I show so abject and so base a slave
As grooms may snarl at, and your stabled
hound
Find place more worth preferment. For
the queen,
See how strong laughter takes her by the
throat
And plucks her lips! her teeth would bite,
no doubt,
But she keeps quiet; she should live in-
deed;
She hath mere motion, and such life in her
Accuses and impeaches the Lord God,
Who wrought so miserably the shapes of
man
With such sad cunning. Lo you, sir, she
weeps;
Now see I well how vile a thing it is
To wear the label and the print of life
Being fashioned so unhappily; for we
Share no more sense nor worthier scope of
time
Than the life breath that is in swine and
apes
As honorable, now she that made us right
In the keen balance and sharp scale of God
Becomes as pasture and gross meat for
death,

Whereon the common ravin of his throat
Makes rank invasion. Time was, I could
not speak
But she would praise or chide me; now I
talk
All this time out, mere baffled waste, to
get
That word of her I find not. Tell me,
sweet,
Have I done wrong to thee? spoken thee
ill?
Nay, for scorn hurts me, Rosamond; be
wise,
As I am patient; do but bow your face,—
By God she will not! Abide you but
awhile
And we shall hear her; for she will not
fail.
She will just turn her sweet head quietly
And kiss me peradventure; say no word,
And you shall see her; doubtless she will
grow
Sorry to vex me; see now, here are two
She hath made weep, and God would
punish her
For hardness, ay though she were twice as
fair,
He would not love her; look, she would
fain wake,
It makes her mouth move and her eyelids
rise
To feel so near me.—Ay, no wiser yet?
Then will I leave you; may be she will
weep
To have her hands made empty of me; yea,
Lend me your hand to cover close her face,
That she may sleep well till we twain be
gone;
Cover the mouth up; come each side of me.

CHASTELARD,

A TRAGEDY.

Au milieu de l'avril, entre les lys naquit
Son corps, qui de blancheur les lys mêmes vainquit;
Et les roses, qui sont du sang d'Adonis teintes,
Furent par sa couleur de leur verneil dépeintes.

RONSARD.

What need ye hech! nd how! ladies?
What need ye he or me?
Ye never saw grace traceless face;
Queen Mary! to gie.

The Queen's Maria

I DEDICATE THIS PLAY,
AS A PARTIAL EXPRESSION OF REVERENCE AND GRATITUDE,
TO THE CHIEF OF LIVING POETS;
TO THE FIRST DRAMATIST OF HIS AGE;
TO THE GREATEST EXILE, AND THEREFORE TO THE
GREATEST MAN OF FRANCE;

TO

VICTOR HUGO.

PERSONS.

DARNLEY.
MARY STUART.
MARY BEYTON.
MARY SEATON.
MARY CARMICHAEL.
MARY HAMILTON.
PIERRE DE BOSCOSEL DE
CHASTELARD.

MURRAY.
RANDOLPH.
MORTON.
LINDSAY.
FATHER BLACK.

*Guards, Burgesses, a Preacher,
Citizens, &c.*

Another Yle is there toward the Northe, in the See Ocean, wher that ben fulle
cruelle and ful evele Wommen of Nature: and thei han precious Stones in hire Eyen;
and thei ben of that kynde, that zif they beholden ony man, thei slen him anon with
the beholdynge, as doth the Basilisk.

MAUNDEVILE'S *Voiage and Travaile*, Ch. xxviii.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Upper Chamber in Holyrood.**The four MARIES.*MARY BEATON (*sings*):—

1.

Le navire
Est à l'eau ;
Entends rire
Ce gros flot
Que fait luire
Et bruire
Le vieux sire
Aquila.

2.

Dans l'espace
Du grand air
Le vent passe
Comme un fer ;
Siffle et sonne,
Tombe et tonne ;
Prend et donne
A la mer

3.

Vois, la brise
Tourne au nord,
Et la bise
Souffle et mord
Sur ta pure
Chevelure
Murmure
Et mord.

MARY HAMILTON.

You never sing now but it makes you sad ;
Why do you sing ?

MARY BEATON.

I hardly know well why ;
It makes me sad to sing and very sad
To hold my peace.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

I know what saddens you.

MARY BEATON.

Prithee, what ? what ?

MARY CARMICHAEL.

Why, since we came from France.
You have no lover to make stuff for songs.

MARY BEATON.

You are wise, for there my pain begins
indeed,
Because I have no lovers out of France.

MARY SEYTON.

I mind me of one Olivier de Pesme,
(You knew him, sweet) a pale man with
short hair,
Wore tied at sleeve the Beaton color.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

Blue—
I know, blue scarfs. I never liked that
knight.

MARY HAMILTON.

Me ? I know him ? I hardly knew his
name.
Black, was his hair ? no, brown.

MARY SEYTON.

Light pleases you :
I have seen the time brown served you well
enough.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

Lord Darnley's is a mere maid's yellow.

MARY HAMILTON

No ;
A man's good color.

MARY SEYTON.

Ah, does that burn your blood ?
Why, what a bitter color is this red
That fills your face ! if you be not in love,
I am no maiden.

MARY HAMILTON.

Nay, God help true hearts !
I must be stabbed with love then, to the
bone,
Yea, to the spirit, past cure.

MARY SEYTON.

What were you saying ?
I see some jest run up and down your lips.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

Finish your song ; I know you have more
of it ;
Good sweet, I pray you do.

MARY BEATON.

I am too sad.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

This will not sadden you to sing ; your song

Tastes sharp of sea and the sea's bitterness,
But small pain sticks on it.

MARY BEATON.

Nay, it is sad;
For either sorrow with the heav'n lips
Sings not at all, or if it does get breath
Sings quick and sharp like a hard sort of
mirth:

And so this song does; or I would it did.
That it might please me better than it
does.

MARY SEYTON.

Well, as you choose then. What a sort of
men
Crowd all about the squares!

MARY CARMICHAEL.

Ay, hateful men;
For look how many talking mouths be
there,
So many angers show their teeth at us.
Which one is that, stooped somewhat in
the neck,
That walks so with his chin against the
wind,
Lips sideways shut? a keen-faced man—lo
there,
He that walks midmost.

MARY SEYTON.

That is Master Knox.
He carries all these folk within his skin,
Bound up as 'twere between the brows of
him
Like a bad thought; their hearts beat inside
his;
They gather at his lips like flies in the
sun,
Thrust sides to catch his face.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

Look forth; so—push
The window—further—see you anything?

MARY HAMILTON.

They are well gone; but pull the lattice in,
The wind is like a blade aslant. Would
God
I could get back one day I think upon
The day we four and some six after us
Sat in that Louvre garden and plucked
fruits
To cast love-lots with in the gathered
grapes;

This way; you shut your eyes and reach
and pluck,
And catch a lover for each grape you get.
I got but one, a green one, and it broke
Between my fingers and it ran down through
them.

MARY SEYTON.

Ay, and the queen fell in a little wrath
Because she got so many, and tore off
Some of them she had plucked unwittingly
She said, against her will. What tell to
you?

MARY BEATON.

Me? nothing but the stalk of a stripped
bunch
With clammy grape-juice leavings at the
tip.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

Ay, true, the queen came first and she won
all;
It was her bunch we took to cheat you
with.
What will you weep for that now? for you
seem
As one that means to weep. God pardon
me!
I think your throat is choking up with
tears.
You are not well, sweet, for a lying jest
To shake you thus much.

MARY BEATON.

I am well enough:
Give not your pity trouble for my sake.

MARY SEYTON.

If you be well sing out your song and
laugh,
Though it were but to fret the fellows
there.—
Now shall we catch her secret washed and
wet
In the middle of her song; for she must
weep
If she sing through.

MARY HAMILTON.

I told you it was love;
I watched her eyes all through the masquing
time
Feed on his face by morsels; she must
weep.

MARY BEATON.

4

Le navire
Passe et luit,
Puis chavire
A grand bruit;
Et sur l'onde
La plus blonde
Tête au monde
Flotte et fuit.

Moi, je rame,
Et l'amour,
C'est ma flamme,
Mon grand jour,
Ma chandelle
Blanche et belle,
Ma chapelle
De séjour.

6

Toi, mon âme
Et ma foi,
Sois ma dame
Et ma loi;
Sois ma mie,
Sois Marie,
Sois ma vie,
Toute à moi!

MARY SEYTON.

I know the song; a song of Chastelard's
He made in coming over with the Queen.
How hard it rained! he played that over
twice

Sitting before her, singing each word soft,
As if he loved the least she listened to.

MARY HAMILTON.

No marvel if he loved it for her sake;
She is the choice of women in the world,
Is she not, sweet?

MARY BEATON.

I have seen no fairer one.

MARY SEYTON.

And the most loving: did you note last
night
How long she held him with her hands and
eyes,
Looking a little sadly, and at last
Kissed him below the chin and parted so
As the dance ended?

MARY HAMILTON.

This was courtesy;
So might I kiss my singing-bird's red bill
After some song, till he bit short my lip.

MARY SEYTON.

But if a lady hold her birds anights
To ring to her between her fingers—ha?
I have seen such birds.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

O, You talk empty;
She is full of grace; and marriage in good
time
Will wash the fool called scandal off men's
lips.

MARY HAMILTON.

I know not that; I know how folk would
gibe
If one of us pushed courtesy so far.
She has always loved love's fashions well;
you wot,
The marshal, head friend of this Chaste-
lard's,
She used to talk with ere he brought her
here
And sow their talk with little kisses thick
As roses in rose-harvest. For myself,
I cannot see which side of her that lurks
Which snares in such wise all the sense of
men;
What special beauty, subtle as man's eye
And tender as the inside of the eyelid is,
There grows about her.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

I think her cunning speech—
The soft and rapid shudder of her breath
In talking—the rare tender little laugh—
The pitiful sweet sound like a bird's sigh
When her voice breaks; her talking does it
all.

MARY SEYTON.

I say, her eyes with those clear perfect
brows:
It is the playing of those eyelashes,
The lure of amorous looks as sad as love,
Plucks all souls toward her like a net.

MARY HAMILTON.

What, what!
You praise her in too lover-like a wise
For women that praise women; such
report

Is like robes worn the rough side next the skin,
Frets where it warms.

MARY SEYTON.

You think too much in French,

Enter DARNLEY.

Here comes your thorn; what glove against it now?

MARY HAMILTON.

O, God's good pity! this a thorn of mine?
It has not run deep in yet.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

I am not sure:
The red runs over to your face's edge.

DARNLEY.

Give me one word; nay, lady for love's sake;

Here, come this way; I will not keep you; no.

—O my sweet soul, why do you wrong me thus?

MARY HAMILTON.

Why will you give me for men's eyes to burn?

DARNLEY.

What, sweet, I love you as mine own soul loves me;

They shall divide when we do.

MARY HAMILTON.

I cannot say;

DARNLEY.

Why, look you, I am broken with the queen;

This is the rancour and the bitter heart
That grows in you; by God it is nought else.

Why, this last night she held me for a fool—

Ay, God wot, for a thing of stripe and bell.

I bade her make me marshal in her masque—

I had the dress here painted, gold and grey

(That is, not grey but a blue-green like this)—

She tells me she had chosen her marshal, she,

The best of the world for cunning and sweet wit;

And what sweet fool but her sweet knight,
God help!

To serve her with that three-inch wit of his?

She is all fool and fiddling now; for me,
I am well pleased; God knows, if I might choose

I would not be more troubled with her love.

Her love is like a briar that rasps the flesh,

And yours is soft like flowers. Come this way, love;

So, further in this window; hark you here.

Enter CHASTELARD.

MARY BEATON.

Good morrow, sir.

CHASTELARD.

Good morrow, noble lady.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

You have heard no news? what news?

CHASTELARD.

Nay, I have none.

That maiden-tongued male-faced Elizabeth
Hath eyes unlike our queen's, hair not so soft,

And hands more sudden save for courtesy;
And lips no kiss of love's could bring to flower

In such red wise as our queen's; save this news,

I know none English.

MARY SEATON.

Come, no news of her;
For God's love talk still rather of our queen.

MARY BEATON.

God give us grace then to speak well of her.

You did right joyfully in our masque last night;

I saw you when the queen lost breath (her head

Bent back, her chin and lips catching the air—

A goodly thing to see her) how you smiled
Across her head, between your lips—no doubt

You had great joy, sir. Did not you take note

Once how one lock fell? that was good to see.

CHASTELARD.

Yea, good enough to live for,

MARY BEATON.

Nay, but sweet
Enough to die. When she broke off the
dance,
Turning round short and soft—I never
saw
Such supple ways of walking as she has.

CHASTELARD.

Why do you praise her gracious looks to me?

MARY BEATON.

Sir, for mere sport; but tell me even for
love
How much you love her.

CHASTELARD.

I know not: it may be
If I had set mine eyes to find that out,
I should not know it. She hath fair eyes:
may be
I love her for sweet eyes or brows or hair,
For the smooth temples, where God
touching her
Made blue with sweeter veins the flower-
sweet white;
Or for the tender turning of her wrist,
Or marriage of the eyelid with the cheek;
I cannot tell; or flush of lifting throat,
I know not if the color get a name
This side of heaven—no man knows; or her
mouth,
A flower's lip with a snake's lip, stinging
sweet,
And sweet to sting with: face that one
would see
And then fall blind and die with sight of it
Held fast between the eyelids—oh, all
these
And all her body and the soul to that,
The speech and shape and hand and foot
and heart
That I would die of—yea, her name that
turns
My face to fire being written—I know no
whit
How much I love them.

MARY BEATON.

Nor how she loves you back?

CHASTELARD.

I know her ways of loving, all of them:

A sweet soft way the first is; afterward
It burns and bites like fire; the end of that,
Charred dust, and eyelids bitten through
with smoke.

MARY BEATON.

What has she done for you to gird at her?

CHASTELARD.

Nothing. You do not greatly love her,
you,
Who do not—gird, you call it. I am
bound to France;
Shall I take word from you to any one?
So it be harmless, not a gird, I will.

MARY BEATON.

I doubt you will not go hence with your life.

CHASTELARD.

Why, who should slay me? no man north-
wards born,
In my poor mind; my sword's lip is no
maid's
To fear the iron biting of their own,
Though they kiss hard for hate's sake.

MARY BEATON.

Lo you, sir,
How sharp he whispers, what close breath
and eyes—
And hers are fast upon him, do you see?

CHASTELARD.

Well, which of these must take my life in
hand?
Pray God it be the better: which
hand?

MARY BEATON.

I think, none such. The man is goodly
made;
She is tender-hearted toward his courtesies,
And would not have them fall too low to
find
Look, they slip forth.

Exeunt DARNLEY and MARY HAMILTON.

MARY SEYTON.

For love's sake, after them,
And soft as love can.
Exeunt MARY CARMICHAEL and MARY SEYTON.

CHASTELARD.

True, a goodly man,
What shapeliness and state he hath, what
eyes,

Brave brow and lordly lip! were it not fit
Great queens should love him?

MARY BEATON.

See you now, fair lord.
I have but scant breath's time to help
myself,
And I must cast my heart out on a chance;
So bear with me. That we twain have
loved well,
I have no heart nor wit to say; God wot
We had never made good lovers, you
and I.
Look you, I would not have you love me,
sir,
For all the love's sake in the world. I
say,
You love the queen, and loving burns you
up,
And mars the grace and joyous wit you
had,
Turning your speech to sad, your face to
strange,
Your mirth to nothing; and I am piteous, I,
Even as the queen is, and such women
are;
And if I helped you to your love-longing,
Mescems some grain of love might fall my
way
And love's god help me when I came to
love;
I have read tales of men that won their
loves
On some such wise.

CHASTELARD.

If you mean mercifully,
I am bound to you past thought and thank;
if worse,
I will but thank your lips and not your
heart.

MARY BEATON.

Nay, let love wait and praise me, in God's
name,
Some day when he shall find me; yet, God
wot,
My lips are of one color with my heart.
Withdraw now from me, and about mid-
night
In some close chamber without light or
noise
It may be I shall get you speech of her;
She loves you well; it may be she will
speak,
I wot not what; she loves you at her heart.

Let her not see that I have given you
word,
Lest she take shame and hate her love.
Till night.
Let her not see it.

CHASTELARD.

I will not thank you now,
And then I'll die what sort of death you
will.
Farewell. *[Exit.]*

MARY BEATON.

And by God's mercy and my love's
I will find ways to earn such thank of you.
[Exit.]

SCENE II.—*A Hall in the same.*

The QUEEN, DARNLEY, MURRAY, RANDOLPH, the MARIES, CHASTELARD, &c.

QUEEN.

Hath no man seen my lord of Chastelard?
Nay, no great matter. Keep you on that
side:
Begin the purpose.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

Madam, he is here.

QUEEN.

Begin a measure now that other side.
I will not dance; let them play soft a little.
Fair sir, we had a dance to tread to-night.
To teach our north folk all sweet ways of
France;
But at this time we have no heart to it.
Sit, sir, and talk. Look, this breast-clasp
is new,
The French king sent it me.

CHASTELARD.

A goodly thing:
But what device? the word is ill to catch.

QUEEN.

A Venus crowned, that eats the hearts of
men:
Below her flies a love with a bat's wings,
And strings the hair of paramours to bind
Live birds' feet with. Lo what small subtle
work:
The smith's name, Gian Crisostomo da—
what?
Can you read that? The sea froths under
foot;
She stands upon the sea and it curls up

In soft loose curls that run to one in the wind.

But her hair is not shaken, there's a fault;
It lies straight down in close-cut points and tongues,

Not like blown hair. The legend is writ small:

Still one makes out this—*Cave*—if you look.

CHASTELARD.

I see the Venus well enough, God wot,
But nothing of the legend.

QUEEN.

Come, fair lord,
Shall we dance now? my heart is good again.

[*They dance a measure.*]

DARNLEY.

I do not like this manner of a dance,
This game of two by two; it were much better

To meet between the changes and to mix
Than still to keep apart and whispering
Each lady out of earshot with her friend.

MARY BEATON.

That's as the lady serves her knight, I think:

We are broken up too much.

DARNLEY.

Nay, no such thing;
Be not wroth, lady, I wot it was the queen
Pricked each his friend out. Look you now—your ear—

If love had gone by choosing—how they laugh,

Lean lips together, and wring hands under-hand!

What, you look white too, sick of heart, ashamed,

No marvel—for men call it—hark you though—

[*They pass.*]

MURRAY.

Was the queen found no merrier in France?

MARY HAMILTON.

Why, have you seen her sorrowful to-night?

MURRAY.

I say not so much: blithe she seems at whiles,

Gentle and goodly doubtless in all ways,

7

But hardly with such lightness and quick heart

As it was said.

MARY HAMILTON.

'Tis your great care of her
Makes you misdoubt; nought else.

MURRAY.

Yea, may be so;
She has no cause I know to sadden her.
[*They pass.*]

QUEEN.

I am tired too soon; I could have danced down hours

Two years gone hence and felt no wearier.
One grows much older northwards, my fair lord;

I wonder men die south; meseems all France

Smells sweet with living, and bright breath of days

That keep men far from dying. Peace; pray you now,

No dancing more. Sing, sweet, and make us mirth;

We have done with dancing measures: sing that song

You call the song of love at ebb.

MARY BEATON (*sings.*)

1.

Between the sunset and the sea
My love laid hands and lips on me;
Of sweet came sour, of day came night,
Of long desire came brief delight:
Ah love, and what thing came of thee
Between the sea-downs and the sea?

2.

Between the sea-mark and the sea
Joy grew to grief, grief grew to me;
Love turned to tears, and tears to fire,
And dead delight to new desire;
Love's talk, love's touch there seemed to be

Between the sea-sand and the sea.

3.

Between the sundown and the sea
Love watched one hour of love with me;
Then down the all-golden water-ways
His feet flew after yesterday's;
I saw them come and saw them flee
Between the sea-foam and the sea.

4-

Between the sea-strand and the sea
 Love fell on sleep, sleep fell on me ;
 The first star saw twain turn to one
 Between the moonrise and the sun ;
 The next, that saw not love, saw me
 Between the sea-banks and the sea.

QUEEN.

Lo, sirs,

What mirth is here ! Some song of yours
 fair lord.

You know glad ways of rhyming—no such
 tunes

As go to tears.

CHASTELARD.

I made this yesterday ;
 For its love's sake I pray you let it live.
 [He sings.

1.

Après tant de jours, après tant de pleurs,
 Soyez secourable a mon âme en peine.
 Voyez comme Avril fait l'amour aux fleurs ;
 Dame d'amour, dame aux belles couleurs,
 Dieu vous a fait belle, Amour vous fait
 reine.

2.

Rions, je t'en prie ; aimons, je le veux.
 Le temps fuit et rit et ne revient guère.
 Pour baiser le bout de tes blonds cheveux,
 Pour baiser tes cils, ta bouch et tes yeux ;
 L'amour n'a qu'un jour auprès de sa mère.

QUEEN.

'Tis a true song ; love shall not pluck time
 back

Nor time lie down with love. For me I am
 old ;

Have you no hair changed since you
 changed to Scot ?

I look each day to see my face drawn up
 About the eyes, as if they sucked the
 cheeks.

I think this air and face of things here
 north

Puts snow at flower-time in the blood, and
 tears

Between the sad eyes and the merry mouth
 In their youth-days.

CHASTELARD.

It is a bitter air.

QUEEN.

Faith, if I might be gone, sir, would I
 stay ?

I think, for no mans' love's sake.

CHASTELARD.

I think not.

QUEEN.

Do you not mind at landing how the quay
 Looked like a blind wet face in waste of
 wind

And washing of wan waves ? how the hard
 mist

Made the hills ache ? your songs lied loud,
 my knight,

They said my face would burn off cloud and
 rain

Seen once, and filled the crannied land
 with fire,

Kindle their capes in their blind black-grey
 hoods—

I know not what. You praise me past all
 loves ;

And these men love me a little ; 'tis some
 fault,

I think to love me : even a fool's sweet
 fault.

I have your verse still beating in my head
 Of how the swallow got a wing broken

In the spring time and lay upon his side
 Watching the rest fly off i' the red leaf-

time,
 And broke his heart with grieving at himself

Before the snow came. Do you know that
 lord

With sharp-set eyes ? and him with huge
 thewed throat !

Good friends to me ; I had need love them
 well.

Why do you look one way ? I will not have
 you

Keep your eyes here : 'tis no great wit in me
 To care much now for old French friends

of mine.—
 Come, a fresh measure ; come, play well

for me,
 Fair sirs, your playing puts life in foot and

heart.—

DARNLEY.

Lo you again, sirs. how she laughs and
 leans,

Holding him fast—the supple way she
 hath !

Your queen hath none such; better as
she is

For all her measures, a grave English
maid,

Than queen of snakes and Scots.

RANDOLPH.

She is over fair
To be so sweet and hurt not. A good
knight;
Goodly to look on.

MURRAY.

Yea, a good sword too,
And of good kin; too light of loving
though;
These jangling song-smiths are keen love-
mongers,
They snap at all meats.

DARNLEY.

What! by God I think,
For all his soft French face and bright
boy's sword,
There be folks fairer: and for knightliness,
These hot-lipped brawls of Paris breed
sweet knights—
Mere stabbers for a laugh across the wine.—

QUEEN.

There, I have danced you down for once,
fair lord;
You look pale now. Nay then for courtesy
I must needs help you; do not bow your
head,
I am tall enough to reach close under it.

[Kisses him.]

Now come, we'll sit and see this passage
through.—

DARNLEY.

A courtesy, God help us! courtesy—
Pray God it wound not where it should
heal wounds.
Why, there was here last year some lord of
France
(Priest on the wrong side as some folk are
prince)
Told tales of Paris ladies—nay, by God,
No jest for queen's lips to catch laughter of
That would keep clean; I wot he made
good mirth,
But she laughed over sweetly, and in such
wise—
Nay, I laughed too, but lothly.—

QUEEN.

How they look!
The least thing courteous galls them to the
bone.
What would one say now I were thinking
of?

CHASTELARD.

It seems, some sweet thing.

QUEEN.

True, a sweet one, sir—
That madrigal you made Alys de Saulx
Of the three ways of love; the first kiss
honor,
The second pity, and the last kiss love.
Which think you now was that I kissed you
with?

CHASTELARD.

It should be pity, if you be pitiful;
For I am past all honoring that keep
Outside the eye of battle, where my kin
Fallen overseas have found this many a
day
No helm of mine between them; and for
love,
I think of that as dead men of good days
Ere the wrong side of death was theirs,
when God
Was friends with them.

QUEEN.

Good; call it pity then.
You have a subtle riddling skill at love
Which is not like a lover. For my part,
I am resolved to be well done with love,
Though I were fairer-faced than all the
world;
As there be fairer. Think you, fair my
knight,
Love shall live after life in any man?
I have given you stuff for riddles.

CHASTELARD.

Most sweet queen,
They say men dying remember, with sharp
joy
And rapid reluctance of desire,
Some old thing, some swift breath of wind,
some word,
Some sword-stroke or dead lute-strain,
some lost sight,
Some sea-blossom stripped to the sun and
burned

At naked ebb—some river-flower that
breathes
Against the stream like a swooned swim-
mer's mouth—
Some tear or laugh ere lip and eye were
man's—
Sweet stings that struck the blood in riding
—nay
Some garment or sky-colour or spice-smell,
And die with heart and face shut fast on it,
And know not why, and weep not; it may
be
Men shall hold love fast always in such
wise
In new fair lives where all are new things
else,
And know not why, and weep not.

QUEEN.

A right rhyme,
And right a rhyme's worth: nay, a sweet
song, though.
What, shall my cousin hold fast that love
of his,
Her face and talk, when life ends? as God
grant
His life end late and sweet; I love him
well.
She is fair enough, his lover; a fair-faced
maid,
With grey sweet eyes and tender tone of
talk;
And that, God wot, I wist not. See you,
sir,
Men say I needs must get wed hastily;
Do none point lips at him?

CHASTELARD.

Yea, guessingly.

QUEEN.

God help such lips! and get me leave to
laugh!
What should I do but paint and put him
up
Like a gilt god, a saintship in a shrine,
For all fools' feast? God's mercy on men's
wits!
Tall as a housetop and as bare of brain—
I'll have no staves with fool-faced carven
heads
To hang my life on. Nay, for love, no
more,
For fear I laugh and set their eyes on edge
To find out why I laugh. Good night,
fair lords;

Bid them cease playing. Give me your
hand; good night.

SCENE III.—MARY BEATON's Chamber :
night.

Enter CHASTELARD.

CHASTELARD.

I am not certain yet she will not come;
For I can feel her hand's heat still in mine,
Past doubting of, and see her brows half
drawn,
And half a light in the eyes. If she come
not,
I am no worse than he that dies to-night.
This two years' patience gets an end at
least,
Whichever way I am well dor: with it.
How hard the thin sweet moon is, split and
laced
And latticed over, just a stray of it
Catching and clinging at a strip of wall,
Hardly a hand's breadth. Did she turn
indeed
In going out? not to catch up her gown
The page let slip, but to keep sight of me?
There was a soft small stir beneath her eyes
Hard to put on, a quivering of her blood
That knew of the old nights watched out
wakefully.
Those measures of her dancing too were
changed—
More swift and with more eager stops at
whiles
And rapid pauses where breath failed her
lips.

Enter MARY BEATON.

O, she is come: if you be she indeed
Let me but hold your hand; what, no word
yet?
You turn and kiss me without word; O
sweet,
If you will slay me be not over quick,
Kill me with some slow heavy kiss that
plucks
The heart out at the lips. Alas! sweet
love,
Give me some old sweet word to kiss away.
Is it a jest? for car. I feel your hair
Touch me—I may embrace your body too?
I know you well enough without sweet
words.
How should one make you speak? This
is not she.

Come in the light; nay, let me see your eyes.

Ah, you it is? what have I done to you?
And do you look now to be slain for this
That you twist back and shudder like one
stabbed?

MARY BEATON.

Yea, kill me now and do not look at me:
God knows I meant to die. Sir, for God's
love

Kill me now quick ere I go mad with
shame.

CHASTELARD.

Cling not upon my wrists: let go the hilt:
Nay, you will bruise your hand with it:
stand up:

You shall not have my sword forth.

MARY BEATON.

Kill me now,
I will not rise: there, I am patient, see,
I will not strive, but kill me for God's
sake.

CHASTELARD.

Pray you rise up and be not shaken so:
Forgive me my rash words, my heart was
gone

After the thing you were: be not ashamed;
Give me the shame, you have no part in it;
Can I not say a word shall do you good?
Forgive that too.

MARY BEATON.

I shall run crazed with shame;
But when I felt your lips catch hold on
mine

It stopped my breath: I would have told
you all;

Let me go out: you see I lied to you,
And I am shamed; I pray you loose me,
sir,

Let me go out.

CHASTELARD.

Think no base things of me:
I were most base to let you go ashamed.
Think my heart's love and honor go with
you:

Yea, while I live, for your love's noble
sake,

I am your servant in what wise may be,
To love and serve you with right thankful
heart.

MARY BEATON.

I have given men leave to mock me, and
must bear

What shame they please: you have good
cause to mock.

Let me pass now.

CHASTELARD.

You know I mock you not.
If ever I leave off to honor you,
God give me shame! I were the worst
churl born.

MARY BEATON.

No marvel though the queen should love
you too,

Being such a knight. I pray you for her
love,

Lord Chastelard, of your great courtesy,
Think now no scorn to give me my last
kiss

That I shall have of man before I die.
Even the same lips you kissed and knew
not of

Will you kiss now, knowing the shame of
them,

And say no one word to me afterwards,
That I may see I have loved the best
love.

And man most courteous of all men alive?

MARY SEYTON (*within*).

Here, fetch the light: nay, this way; enter
all.

MARY BEATON.

I am twice undone. Fly, get some hiding,
sir;

They have spied upon me somehow.

CHASTELARD.

Nay, fear not;

Stand by my side.

*Enter MARY SEYTON and MARY HAMIL-
TON.*

MARY HAMILTON.

Give me that light: this way.

CHASTELARD.

What jest is here, fair ladies? it walks
late.

Something too late for laughing.

MARY SEYTON.

Nay, fair sir,

What jest is this of yours? Look to your lady:

She is nigh swooned. The queen shall know all this.

MARY HAMILTON.

A grievous shame it is we are fallen upon;
Hold forth the light. Is this your care of us?

Nay, come, look up: this is no game, God wot.

CHASTELARD.

Shame shall befall them that speak shamefully:

I swear this lady is as pure and good
As any maiden, and who believes me not
Shall keep the shame for his part and the lie.

To them that come in honor and not in hate

I will make answer. Lady, have good heart.

Give me the light there: I will see you forth.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

DARNLEY.

SCENE I.—*The great Chamber in Holyrood.*

The QUEEN and MARY SEYTON.

QUEEN.

But will you swear it?

MARY SEYTON.

Swear it, madam?

QUEEN.

Ay—

Swear it.

MARY SEYTON.

Madam, I am not friends with them.

QUEEN.

Swear then against them if you are not friends.

MARY SEYTON.

Indeed I saw them kiss.

QUEEN.

So lovers use—

What, their mouths close? a goodly way of love!

Or but the hands? or on her throat? Prithee—

You have sworn that.

MARY SEYTON.

I say what I saw done.

QUEEN.

Ay, you did see her cheeks (God smite them red!)

Kissed either side? what, they must eat strange food,

Those singing lips of his?

MARY SEYTON.

Sweet meat enough—

They started at my coming five yards off, But there they were.

QUEEN.

A maid may have kissed cheeks

And no shame in them—yet one would not swear.

You have sworn that. Pray God he be not mad:

A sickness in his eyes. The left side love (I was told that) and the right courtesy.

'Tis good fools' fashion. What, no more but this?

For me, God knows I am no whit wroth; not I;

But, for your fame's sake that her shame will sting,

I cannot see a way to pardon her—

For your fame's sake, lest that be prated of.

MARY SEYTON.

Nay, if she were not chaste—I have not said

She was not chaste.

QUEEN.

I know you are tender of her;

And your sweet word will hardly turn her sweet,

MARY SEYTON.

Indeed I would fain do her any good.

Shall I not take some gracious word to her?

QUEEN.

Bid her not come or wait on me to-day.

MARY SEYTON.

Will you see him?

QUEEN.

See—O, this Chastelard?

He doth not well to sing maids into shame;
And folk are sharp here; yet for sweet
friend's sake

Assuredly I'll see him. I am not wroth.
A goodly man, and a good sword thereto—
It may be he shall wed her. I am not
wroth.

MARY SEYTON.

Nay, though she bore with him, she hath
no great love,
I doubt me, that way.

QUEEN.

God mend all, I pray—

And keep us from all wrongdoing and wild
words.

I think there is no fault men fall upon
But I could pardon. Look you, I would
swear

She were no paramour for any man,
So well I love her.

MARY SEYTON.

Am I to bid him in?

QUEEN.

As you will, sweet. But if you held me
hard

You did me grievous wrong. Doth he wait
there?

Men call me over tender; I had rather so,
Than too ungracious. Father, what with
you?

Enter FATHER BLACK.

FATHER BLACK.

God's peace and health of soul be with the
queen?

And pardon be with me though I speak
truth.

As I was going on peaceable men's wise
Through your good town, desiring no man
harm,

A kind of shameful woman with thief's lips
Spake somewhat to me over a thrust-out
chin,

Soliciting as I deemed an alms; which alms
(Remembering what was writ of Magdalen)
I gave not grudging but with pure good
heart,

When lo some scurril children that lurked
near,

Set there by Satan for my stumbling-stone,
Fell hooting with necks thwart and eyes
asquint,

Screeched and made horns and shot out
tongues at me,

As at my Lord the Jews shot out their
tongues

And made their heads wag; I considering
this

Took up my cross in patience and passed
forth:

Nevertheless one ran between my feet
And made me totter, using speech and
signs

I smart with shame to think of: then my
blood

Kindled, and I was moved to smite the
knave,

And the knave howled; whereat the lewd
whole herd

Brake forth upon me and cast mire and
stones

So that I ran sore risk of bruise or gash
If they had touched; likewise I heard men

say,
(Their foul speech missed not of mine ear)
they cried,

"This devil's mass-priest hankers for new
flesh

Like a dry hound; let him seek such at
home,

Snuff and smoke out the queen's French—"

QUEEN.

They said that?

FATHER BLACK.

"—French paramours that breed more
shames than sons

All her court through;" forgive me.

QUEEN.

With my heart.

Father you see the hatefulness of these—
They loathe us for our love. I am not
moved:

What should I do being angry? By this
hand

(Which is not big enough to bruise their
lips),

I marvel what thing should be done with me
To make me wroth. We must have patience
with us

When we seek thank of men.

FATHER BLACK.

Madam, farewell;
I pray God keep you in such patient heart.
[Exit.

QUEEN.

Let him come now.

MARY SEYTON.

Madam, he is at hand. [Exit.

Enter CHASTELARD.

QUEEN.

Give me that broidery frame; how gone so soon?

No maid about? Reach me some skein of silk.

What, are you come, fair lord? Now by my life

That lives here idle, I am right glad of you; I have slept so well and sweet since yesternight

It seems our dancing put me in glad heart. Did you sleep well?

CHASTELARD.

Yea, as a man may sleep.

QUEEN.

You smile as if I jested; do not men sleep as we do? Had you fair dreams in the night?

For me—but I should fret you with my dreams—

I dreamed sweet things. You are good at sooth-saying:

Make me a sonnet of my dream.

CHASTELARD.

I will,

When I shall know it.

QUEEN.

I thought I was asleep
In Paris, lying by my lord, and knew
In some wise he was well awake, and yet
I could not wake too; and I seemed to know

He hated me, and the least breath I made
Would turn somehow to slay or stifle me.
Then in brief time he rose and went away,
Saying, *Let her dream, but when her dream is out*

I will come back and kill her as she wakes.
And I lay sick and trembling with sore fear,

And still I knew that I was deep asleep;

And thinking *I must dream now, or I die,*
God send me some good dream lest I be slain,

Fell fancying one had bound my feet with cords

And bade me dance, and the first measure made

I fell upon my face and wept for pain:

And my cords broke, and I began the dance

To a bitter tune; and he that danced with me

Was clothed in black with long red lines and bars

And masked down to the lips, but by the chin

I knew you though your lips were sewn up close

With scarlet thread all dabbled wet in blood.

And then I knew the dream was not for good.

And striving with sore travail to reach up

And kiss you (you were taller in my dream)

I missed your lips and woke.

CHASTELARD.

Sweet dreams, you said?

An evil dream I hold it for, sweet love. —

QUEEN.

You call love sweet; yea, what is bliter, then?

There's nothing broken sleep could hit upon

So bitter as the breaking down of love.

You call me sweet; I am not sweet to you,

Nor you—O, I would say not sweet to me,

And if I said so I should hardly lie.

But there have been those things between us, sir,

That men call sweet.

CHASTELARD.

I know not how *There is*Turns to *There hath been*; 'tis a heavier change

Than change of flesh to dust. Yet though years change

And good things end and evil things grow great,

The old love that was, or that was dreamed about,

That sang and kissed and wept upon itself,

Laughed and ran mad with love of its own
face,

That was a sweet thing.

QUEEN.

Nay, I know not well.

'Tis when the man is held fast under-
ground

They say for sooth what manner of heart
he had.

We are alive, and cannot be well sure
If we loved much or little: think you not
It were convenient one of us should die?

CHASTELARD.

Madam, your speech is harsh to understand.

QUEEN.

Why, there could come no change then;
one of us

Would never need to fear our love might
turn

To the sad thing that it may grow to be.
I would sometimes all things were dead
asleep

That I have loved, all buried in soft beds
And sealed with dreams and visions, and
each dawn

Sung to by sorrows, and all nights assuaged
By short sweet kisses and by sweet long
loves

For old life's sake, lest weeping overmuch
Should wake them in a strange new time,
and arm

Memory's blind hand to kill forgetfulness.

CHASTELARD.

Look, you dream still, and sadly.

QUEEN.

Sooth, a dream;

For such things died or lied in sweet love's
face,

And I forget them not, God help my wit!
I would the whole world were made up of
sleep

And life not fashioned out of lies and
loves.

We foolish women have such times, you
know,

When we are weary or afraid or sick
For perfect nothing.

CHASTELARD (*aside*).

Nor would one be fain

To know what bitter or what dangerous
thing

M

She thinks of, softly chafing her soft lip.
She must mean evil.

QUEEN.

Are you sad too, sir,

That you say nothing?

CHASTELARD.

I? not sad a jot—

Though this your talk might make a blithe
man sad.

QUEEN.

O me! I must not let stray sorrows out;
They are ill to fledge, and if they feel
blithe air

They wail and chirp untunefully. Would
God

I had been a man! when I was born, men
say,

My father turned his face and wept to think
I was no man.

CHASTELARD.

Will you weep too?

QUEEN.

In sooth,

If I were man I should be no base man;
I could have fought; yea, I could fight now
too

If men would shew me; I would I were
the king!

I should be all ways better than I am.

CHASTELARD.

Nay, would you have more honour, having
this—

Men's hearts and loves and the sweet spoil
of souls

Given you like simple gold to bind your
hair?

Say you were king of thews, not queen of
souls,

An iron headpiece hammered to a head,
You might fail too.

QUEEN.

No, then I would not fail,

Or God should make me woman back
again,

To be King James—you hear men say
King James

The word sounds like a piece of gold thrown
down,

Rings with a round and royal note in it—
A name to write good record of; this king

Fought here and there, was beaten such a day,
 And came at last to a good end, his life
 Being all lived out, and for the main part well
 And like a king's life; then to have men say
 (As now they say of Flodden, here they broke
 And there they held up to the end) years back
 They saw you—*yea, I saw the king's face hemmed
 Red in the hot lit foreground of some fight
 Hold the whole war as it were by the bit, a horse
 Fit for his knees' grip—the great rearing war
 That frothed with lips flung up, and shook men's lives
 Off either flank of it like snow; I saw
 (You could not hear as his sword rang), saw him
 Shout, laugh, smite straight, and flaw the riven ranks,
 Move as the wind moves, and his horse's feet
 Stripe their long flags with dust. Why, if one died,
 To die so in the heart and heat of war
 Were a much goodlier thing than living soft
 And speaking sweet for fear of men. Woe's me,
 Is there no way to pluck this body off?
 Then I should never fear a man again,
 Even in my dreams I should not; no, by heaven.*

CHASTELARD.

I never thought you did fear anything.

QUEEN.

God knows I do; I could be sick with
 wrath
 To think what grievous fear I have 'twixt
 whiles
 Of mine own self and of base men: last night
 If certain lords were glancing where I was
 Under the eyelid, with sharp lip and brow,
 I tell you, for pure shame and fear of them,
 I could have gone and slain them.

CHASTELARD.

Verily,

You are changed since those good days
 that fell in France;
 But yet I think you are not so changed at heart
 As to fear man.

QUEEN.

I would I had no need.

Lend me your sword a little; a fair sword;
 I see the fingers that I hold it with
 Clear in the blade, bright pink, the shell-color,
 Brighter than flesh is really, curved all round.
 Now men would mock if I should wear it here,
 Bound under bosom with a girdle, here.
 And yet I have heart enough to wear it well,
 Speak to me like a woman, let me see
 If I can play at man.

CHASTELARD.

God save King James!

QUEEN.

Would you could change now! Fie, this will not do;
 Unclasp your sword; nay, the hilt hurts my side;
 It sticks fast here. Unbind this knot for me:
 Stoop, and you'll see it closer; thank you: there.
 Now I can breathe, sir. Ah! it hurts me, though;
 This was fool's play.

CHASTELARD.

Yea, you are better so.
 Without the sword; your eyes are stronger things,
 Whether to save or slay.

QUEEN.

Alas, my side!
 It hurts right sorely. Is it not pitiful
 Our souls shall be so bound about with flesh
 Even when they leap and smite with wings and feet
 The least pain plucks them back, puts out their eyes,
 Turns them to tears and words? Ah my sweet knight,
 You have the better of us that weave and weep

While the blithe battle blows upon your eyes

Like rain and wind: yet I remember too
When this last year the fight at Corrichie
Re-learned the rushes with stained fen-water,
I rode with my good men and took delight,
Feeling the sweet clear wind upon my eyes
And rainy soft smells blown upon my face
In riding: then the great fight jarred and
joined,

And the sound stung me right through
heart and all;

For I was here, see, gazing off the hills,
In the wet air; our housings were all wet,
And not a plume stood stiffly past the ear
But flapped between the bridle and the
neck;

And under us we saw the battle go
Like running water; I could see by fits
Some helm the rain fell shining off, some
flag

Snap from the staff, shorn through or
broken short

In the man's falling: yea, one seemed to
catch

The very grasp of tumbled men at men.
Teeth clenched in throats, hands riveted in
hair,

Tearing the life out with no help of swords.
And all the clamor seemed to shine, the
light

Seemed to shout as a man doth; twice I
laughed—

I tell you, twice my heart swelled out with
thirst

To be into the battle; see, fair lord,
I swear it seemed I might have made a
knight,

And yet the simple bracing of a belt
Makes me cry out; this is too pitiful,
This dusty half of us made up with fears.—
Have you been ever quite so glad to fight
As I have thought men must? pray you,
speak truth.

CHASTELARD.

Yea, when the time came, there caught
hold of me

Such pleasure in the head and hands and
blood

As may be kindled under loving lips:
Crossing the ferry once to the Clerk's

Field,
I mind me how the plashing noise of
Seine

Put fire into my face for joy, and how
My blood kept measure with the swinging
boat

Till we touched land, all for the sake of
that

Which should be soon.

QUEEN.

Her name, for God's love, sir;
You slew your friend for love's sake? nay,
the name.

CHASTELARD.

Faith, I forget.

QUEEN.

Now by the faith I have
You have no faith to swear by.

CHASTELARD.

A good sword:
We left him quiet after a thrust or twain.

QUEEN.

I would I had been at hand and marked
them off

As the maids did when we played singing
games:

You outwent me at rhyming; but for faith,
We fight best there. I would I had seen
you fight.

CHASTELARD.

I would you had; his play was worth an
eye;

He made some gallant way before that pass
Which made me way through him.

QUEEN.

Would I saw that—
How did you slay him?

CHASTELARD.

A clean pass—this way;
Right in the side here, where the blood
has root.

His wrist went round in pushing, see you,
thus,

Or he had pierced me.

QUEEN.

Yea, I see, sweet knight.
I have a mind to love you for his sake;
Would I had seen.

CHASTELARD.

Hugues de Marsillac—
I have the name now; 'twas a goodly one

Before he changed it for a dusty name.

QUEEN.

Talk not of death; I would hear living talk
Of good live swords and good strokes
struck withal,

Brave battles and the mirth of mingling
men,

Not of cold names you greet a dead man
with.

You are yet young for fighting; but in fight
Have you never caught a wound?

CHASTELARD.

Yea, twice or so:

The first time in a little outlying field
(My first field) at the sleepy grey of dawn,
They found us drowsy, fumbling at our
girths,

And rode us down by heaps; I took a hurt
Here in the shoulder.

QUEEN

Ah, I mind well now;

Did you not ride a day's space afterward,
Having two wounds? yea, Dandelot it was,
That Dandelot took word of it. I know,
Sitting at meat when the news came to us
I had nigh swooned but for those Florence
eyes

Slanting my way with sleek lids drawn up
close—

Yea, and she said, the Italian brokeress,
she said such men were good for great
queens' love.

I would you might die, when you come to
die,

Like a knight slain. Pray God we make
good ends.

For love too, love dies hard or easily,
But some way dies on some day, ere we
die.

CHASTELARD.

You made a song once of old flowers and
loves,

Will you not sing that rather? 'tis long
gone

Since you sang last.

QUEEN.

I had rather sigh than sing
And sleep than sigh; 'tis long since verily,
But I will once more sing; ay, thus it was.

[Sings.

1.

J'ai vu faner bien des choses,
Mainte feuille aller au vent.
En songeant aux vieilles roses,
J'ai pleuré souvent.

2.

Vois-tu dans les roses mortes
Amour qui sourit cache?
O mon amant, à nos portes
L'as-tu vu couché?

3.

As-tu vu jamais au monde
Vénus chasser et courir?
Fille de l'onde, avec l'onde
Doit-elle mourir?

4.

Aux jours de neige et de givre
L'amour s'effeuille et s'endort;
Avec mai doit-il revivre,
On bien est-il mort?

5.

Qui sait où s'en vont les roses?
Qui sait où s'en va le vent?
En songeant à telles choses,
J'ai pleuré souvent.

I never heard yet but love made good
knights,

But for pure faith, by Mary's holiness,
I think she lies about men's lips asleep,
And if one kiss or pluck her by the hand
To wake her, why God help your woman's
wit,

Faith is but dead; dig her grave deep at
heart,

And hide her face with cerecloths; fare-
well faith.

Would I could tell why I talk idly. Look,
Here come my riddle-readers. Welcome
all;

Enter MURRAY, DARNLEY, RANDOLPH,
LINDSAY, MORTON, and other LORDS.

Sirs, be right welcome. Stand you by my
side,

Fair cousin, I must lean on love or fall;
You are a goodly staff, sir; tall enough,
And fair enough to serve. My gentle lords,

I am full glad of God that in great grace
He hath given me such a lordly stay as
this;

There is no better friended queen alive.
For the repealing of those banished men
That stand in peril yet of last year's fault,
It is our will; you have our seal to that.
Brother, we hear harsh bruits of bad report
Blown up and down about our almoner;
See you to this: let him be sought into:
They say lewd folk make ballads of their
spleen,

new miry ways of words with talk of
him;

If they have cause let him be spoken with.

LINDSAY.

Madam, they charge him with so rank a
life

Were it not well this fellow were plucked
out—

Seeing this is not an eye that doth offend
But a blurred glass it were no harm to
break;

Yea rather it were gracious to be done?

QUEEN.

Let him be weighed, and use him as he is;
I am of my nature pitiful, ye know,
And cannot turn my love unto a thorn
In so brief space. Ye are all most virtuous;
Yea, there is goodness grafted on this land;
But yet compassion is some part of God.
There is much heavier business held on
hand

Than one man's goodness: yea, as things
fare here,

A matter worth more weighing. All you
wot

I am to choose a help to my weak feet,
A lamp before my face, a lord and friend
To walk with me in weary ways, high up
Between the wind and rain and the hot
sun.

Now I have chosen a helper to myself,
I wot the best a woman ever won;
A man that loves me, and a royal man,
A goodly love and lord for any queen.
But for the peril and despite of men
I have sometimes tarried and withheld my-
self,

Not fearful of his worthiness nor you,
But with some lady's loathing to let out
My whole heart's love; for truly this is
hard,

Not like a woman's fashion, shamefaced-
ness

And noble grave reluctance of herself
To be the tongue and cry of her own heart.
Nathless plain speech is better than much
wit,

So ye shall hear with me; albeit I think
Ye have caught the mark whereat my heart
is bent.

I have kept close counsel and shut up men's
lips,

But lightly shall a woman's will slip out,
The foolish little winged will of her,
Through cheek or eye when tongue is
charmed asleep.

For that good lord I have good will to wed,
I wot he knew long since which way it
flew,

Even till it lit on his right wrist and sang.
Lo, here I take him by the hand: fair lords,
This is my kinsman, made of mine own
blood,

I take to halve the state and services
That bow down to me, and to be my head,
My chief, my master, my sweet lord and
king.

Now shall I never say "sweet cousin"
more

To my dear head and husband; here, fair
sir,

I give you all the heart of love in me
To gather off my lips. Did it like you,
The taste of it? sir, it was whole and true.
God save our king!

DARNLEY.

Nay, nay, sweet love, no lord;

No king of yours though I were lord of
these.

QUEEN.

Let word be sent to all good friends of ours
To help us to be glad; England and France
Shall bear great part of our rejoicings up.
Give me your hand, dear lord; for from
this time

I must not walk alone. Lords, have good
cheer:

For you shall have a better face than mine
To set upon your kingly gold and shew
For Scotland's forehead in the van of things.
Go with us now, and see this news set out.

Exeunt QUEEN, DARNLEY, and LORDS.

*As CHASTELARD is going out, enter MARY
BEATON.*

MARY BEATON.

Have you yet heard? You knew of this?

CHASTELARD.

I know.

I was just thinking how such things were made

And were so fair as this is. Do you know
She held me here and talked—the most
sweet talk

Men ever heard of?

MARY BEATON.

You hate me to the heart.
What will you do?

CHASTELARD.

I know not: die some day,
But live as long and lightly as I can.
Will you now love me? faith, but if you do,
It were much better you were dead and
hearsed.

Will you do one thing for me?

MARY BEATON.

Yea, all things.

CHASTELARD.

Speak truth a little, for God's sake: indeed
It were no harm to do. Come, will you,
sweet?

Though it be but to please God.

MARY BEATON.

What will you do?

CHASTELARD.

Ay, true, I must do somewhat. Let me
see:

To get between and tread upon his face—
Catch both her hands and bid men look at
them,

How pure they were—I would do none of
these,

Though they got wedded all the days in the
year.

We may do well yet when all's come and
gone.

I pray you on this wedding night of theirs
Do but one thing that I shall ask of you,
And Darnley will not hunger as I shall
For that good time. Sweet, will you
swear me this?

MARY BEATON.

Yea; though to do it were mortal to my
soul

As the chief sin.

CHASTELARD.

I thank you: let us go.

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

THE QUEEN.

SCENE I.—*The Queen's Chamber. Night.
Lights burning in front of the bed.*

Enter CHASTELARD and MARY BEATON.

MARY BEATON.

Be tender of your feet.

CHASTELARD.

I shall not fail:

These ways have light enough to help a
man
That walks with such stirred blood in him
as mine.

MARY BEATON.

I would yet plead with you to save your
head:

Nay, let this be then: sir, I chide you not.
Nay, let all come. Do not abide her yet.

CHASTELARD.

Have you read never in French books the
song

Called the Duke's Song, some boy made
ages back,

A song of drag-nets hauled across thwart
seas

And plucked up with rent sides, and
caught therein

A strange-haired woman with sad singing
lips,

Cold in the cheek, like any stray of sea,
And sweet to touch? so that men seeing

her face,
And how she sighed out little Ahs of pain

And soft cries sobbing sideways from her
mouth.

Fell in hot love, and having lain with her
Died soon? one time I could have told it
through:

Now I have kissed the sea-witch on her
eyes

And my lips ache with it: but I shall sleep
Full soon, and a good space of sleep.

MARY BEATON.

Alas

CHASTELARD.

What makes you sigh though I be found a fool?

You have no blame: and for my death, sweet friend,

I never could have lived long either way.

Why, as I live, the joy I have of this

Would make men mad that were not mad with love:

I hear my blood sing, and my lifted heart

Is like a springing water blown of wind

For pleasure of this deed. Now, in God's name,

I swear if there be danger in delight

I must die now: if joys have deadly teeth,

I'll have them bite my soul to death, and end

In the old asp's way, Egyptian-wise; be killed

In a royal purple fashion. Look, my love

Would kill me if my body were past hurt

Of any man's hand; and to die thereof,

I say, is sweeter than all sorts of life.

I would not have her love me now, for then

I should die meanlier some time. I am safe,

Sure of her face, my life's end in her sight,

My blood shed out about her feet—by God,

My heart feels drunken when I think of it.

See you, she will not rid herself of me,

Not though she slay me: her sweet lips and life

Will smell of my spilt blood.

MARY BEATON.

Give me good night.

CHASTELARD.

Yea, and good thanks.

[Exit MARY BEATON.]

Here is the very place:

Here has her body bowed the pillows in
And here her head thrust under made the sheet

Smell soft of her mixed hair and spice:
even here

Her arms pushed back the coverlet, pulled here

The golden silken curtain halfway in

It may be, and made room to lean out loose,

Fair tender fallen arms. Now, if God would,

Doubtless he might take pity on my soul
To give me three clear hours, and then red hell

Snare me for ever: this were merciful:

If I were God now I should do thus much.

I must die next, and this were not so hard

For him to let me eat sweet fruit and die

With my lips sweet from it. For one shall have

This fare for common days'-bread, which to me

Should be a touch kept always on my sense

To make hell soft, yea, the keen pain of hell

Soft as the loosening of wound arms in sleep.

Ah, love is good, and the worst part of it
More than all things but death. She will be here

In some small while, and see me face to face

That am to give up life for her and go

Where a man lies with all his loves put out

And his lips full of earth. I think on her,

And the old pleasure stings and makes half-tears

Under mine eyelids. Prithee, love, come fast,

That I may die soon; yea, some kisses through,

I shall die joyfully enough, so God

Keep me alive till then. I feel her feet

Coming far off; now must I hold my heart,

Steadying my blood to see her patiently.

[Hides himself by the bed.]

Enter the QUEEN and DARNLEY.

QUEEN.

Nay, now go back: I have sent off my folk,

Maries and all. Pray you, let be my hair;

I cannot twist the gold thread out of it

That you wound in so close. Look, here it clings:

Ah! now you mar my hair unwinding it.

Do me no hurt, sir.

DARNLEY.

I would do you ease;

Let me stay here.

QUEEN.

Nay, will you go, my lord?

DARNLEY.

Eh? would you use me as a girl does
fruit,
Touched with her mouth and pulled away
for game
To look thereon ere her lips feed? but see,
By God, I fare the worse for you.

QUEEN.

Fair sir,
Give me this hour to watch with and say
prayers;
You have not faith—it needs me to say
prayers,
That with commending of this deed to
God
I may get grace for it.

DARNLEY.

Why, lacks it grace?
Is not all wedlock gracious of itself?

QUEEN.

Nay, that I know not of. Come, sweet,
be hence.

DARNLEY.

You have a sort of jewel in your neck
That's like mine here.

QUEEN.

Keep off your hands and go:
You have no courtesy to be a king.

DARNLEY.

Well, I will go: nay, but I thwart you not.
Do as you will, and get you grace; farewell,
And for my part, grace keep this watch
with me!
For I need grace to bear with you so much.
[Exit.

QUEEN.

So, he is forth. Let me behold myself:
I am too pale to be so hot; I marvel
So little color should be bold in the face
When the blood is not quieted. I have
But a brief space to cool my thoughts upon.
If one should wear the hair thus heaped
and curled
Would it look best? or this way in the
neck?

Could one ungirdle in such wise one's heart

[Taking off her girdle.

And ease it inwards as the waist is eased
By slackening of the slid clasp on it!

How soft the silk is—gracious color too;
Violet shadows like new veins thrown up
Each arm, and gold to fleck the faint
sweet green

Where the wrist lies thus eased I am
right glad

I have no maids about to hasten me—
So I will rest and see my hair shed down
On either silk side of my woven sleeves,
Get some new way to bind it back with—
yea,

Fair mirror-glass, I am well ware of you,
Vea, I know that, I am quite beautiful.
How my hair shines!—Fair face, be friends
with me

And I will sing to you; look in my face
Now, and your mouth must help the song
in mine.

Alys la châtelaine
Voi' venir de par Seine
Thiébauld le capitaine
Qui parle ainsi:

Was that the wind in the casement? nay,
no more
But the comb drawn through half my his-
sing hair
Laid on my arms—yet my flesh moved at
it.

Dans ma camaille
Plus de clou qui vaille,
Dans ma cotte-maille
Plus de fer aussi.

Ah, but I wrong the ballad-verse: what's
good
In such frayed fringes of old rhymes, to
make

Their broken burden lag with us? meseems
I could be sad now if I fell to think
The least sad thing; aye, that sweet lady's
fool!

Fool sorrow, would make merry with mine
eyes

For a small thing. Nay, but I will keep
glad,
Nor shall old sorrow be false friends with
me.

But my first wedding was not like to this—
Fair faces then and laughter and sweet
game,

And a pale little mouth that clung on mine
When I had kissed him by the faded eyes

And either thin cheek beating with faint blood.

Well, he was sure to die soon; I do think He would have given his body to be slain, Having embraced my body. Now, God knows,

I have no man to do as much for me As give me but a little of his blood To fill my beauty from, though I go down Pale to my grave for want—I think not. Pale—

I am too pale surely—Ah!

[Sees him in the glass, coming forward.]

CHASTELARD.

Be not afraid.

QUEEN.

Saint Mary! what a shaken wit have I!

Nay, is it you? who let you through the doors?

Where be my maidens? which way got you in?

Nay, but stand up, kiss not my hands so hard;

By God's fair body, if you but breathe on them

You are just dead and slain at once. What adder

Has bit you mirthful mad? for by this light

A man to have his head laughed off for mirth

Is no great jest. Lay not your eyes on me;

What, would you not be slain?

CHASTELARD.

I pray you, madam,

Bear with me a brief space and let me speak.

I will not touch your garments even, nor speak

But in soft wise, and look some other way, If that it like you; for I came not here

For pleasure of the eyes; yet, if you will, Let me look on you.

QUEEN

As you will, fair sir.

Give me that coil to gather in my hair—

I thank you—and my girdle—nay, that side.

Speak, if you will: yet if you will be gone. Why, you shall go, because I hate you not.

8

You know that I might slay you with my lips,

With calling out? but I will hold my peace.

CHASTELARD.

Yea, do some while. I had a thing to say; I know not wholly what thing. O my sweet,

I am come here to take farewell of love That I have served, and life that I have lived

Made up of love, here in the sight of you That all my life's time I loved more than God,

Who quits me thus with bitter death for it. For you well know that I must shortly die, My life being wound about you as it is, Who love me not; yet do not hate me, sweet,

But tell me wherein I came short of love; For doubtless I came short of a just love, And fell in some fool's fault that angered you.

Now that I talk men dig my grave for me Out in the rain, and in a little while

I shall be thrust in some sad space of earth Out of your eyes; and you, O you my love, A newly-wedded lady full of mirth And a queen girl with all good people's love,

You shall be fair and merry in all your days.

Is this so much for me to have of you? Do but speak, sweet: I know these are no words

A man should say though he were now to die,

But I am as a child for love, and have No strength at heart; yea, I am afraid to die,

For the harsh dust will lie upon my face Too thick to see you past. Look how I love you;

I did so love you always, that your face Seen through my sleep has wrung mine eyes to tears

For pure delight in you. Why do you thus? You answer not, but your lips curl in twain And your face moves; there, I shall make you weep

And be a coward too; it were much best I should be slain.

QUEEN.

Yea, best such folk were slain,

Why should they live to cozen fools with lies?

You would swear now you have used me faithfully;

Shall I not make you swear? I am ware of you:

You will not do it; nay, for the fear of God

You will not swear. Come, I am merciful; God made a foolish woman, making me, And I have loved your mistress with whole heart;

Say you do love her, you shall marry her And she give thanks; yet I could wish your love

Had not so lightly chosen forth a face; For your fair sake, because I hate you not.

CHASTELARD.

What is to say? why, you do surely know That since my days were counted for a man's

I have loved you; yea, how past help and sense,

Whatever thing was bitter to my love, I have loved you; how when I rode in war Your face went floated in among men's helms,

Your voice went through the shriek of slipping swords;

Yea, and I never have loved women well, Seeing always in my sight I had your lips Curled over, red and sweet; and the soft space

Of carven brows, and splendor of great throat

Swayed lily-wise: what pleasure should one have

To wind his arms about a lesser love?

I have seen you; why, this were joy enough

For God's eyes up in heaven, only to see And to come never nearer than I am.

Why, it was in my flesh, my bone and blood,

Bound in my brain, to love you; yea, and writ

All my heart over: if I would lie to you I doubt I could not lie. Ah, you see now, You know now well enough; yea, there, sweet love,

Let me kiss there.

QUEEN.

I love you best of them.

Clasp me quite round till your lips cleave on mine,

False mine, that did you wrong. Forgive them dearly,

As you are sweet to them; for by love's love

I am not that evil woman in my heart That laughs at a rent faith. O Chastelard, Since this was broken to me of your new love

I have not seen the face of a sweet hour. Nay, if there be no pardon in a man, What shall a woman have for loving him? Pardon me, sweet.

CHASTELARD.

Yea, so I pardon you, And this side now; the first way. Would God please

To slay me so! who knows how he might please?

Now I am thinking, if you know it not, How I might kill you, kiss your breath clean out,

And take your soul to bring mine through to God,

That our two souls might close and be one twain

Or a twain one, and God himself want skill

To set us either severally apart.

O, you must overlive me many years, And many years my soul be in waste hell; But when some time God can no more refrain

To lay death like a kiss across your lips, And great lords bear you clothed with funeral things,

And your crown girded over deadly brows, Then after all your happy reach of life

For pity you shall touch me with your eyes,

Remembering love was fellow with my flesh

Here in sweet earth, and make me well of love

And heal my many years with piteousness.

QUEEN.

You talk too sadly and too feignedly.

CHASTELARD.

Too sad, but not too feigned; I am sad That I shall die here without feigning thus And without feigning I were fain to live.

QUEEN.

Alas, you will be taken presently
And then you are but dead. Pray you get
hence.

CHASTELARD.

I will not.

QUEEN.

Nay, for God's love be away;
You will be slain and I get shame. God's
mercy!
You were stark mad to come here; kiss me,
sweet.
Oh, I do love you more than all men! yea,
Take my lips to you, close mine eyes up
fast,
So you leave hold a little: there, for pity,
Abide now, and to-morrow come to me.
Nay, lest one see red kisses in my throat—
Dear God! what shall I give you to be
gone?

CHASTELARD.

I will not go. Look, here's full night
grown up;
Why should I seek to sleep away from
here?
The place is soft and the lights burn for
sleep;
Be not you moved; I shall lie well enough.

QUEEN.

You are utterly undone. Sweet, by my
life,
You shall be saved with taking ship at
once.
For if you stay this foolish love's hour out
There is not ten days' likely life in you.
This is no choice.

CHASTELARD.

Nay, for I will not go.

QUEEN.

O me! this is that Bayard's blood of
yours
That makes you mad; yea, and you shall
not stay.
I do not understand. Mind, you must die.
Alas, poor lord, you have no sense of me;
I shall be dead to you.

CHASTELARD.

Yea, I saw that;

But I saw not that when my death's day
came
You could be quite so sweet to me.

QUEEN.

My love!

If I could kiss my heart's root out on you
You would taste love hid at the core of me.

CHASTELARD

Kiss me twice more. This beautiful bowed
head
That has such hair with kissing ripples in
And shivering soft eyelashes and brows
With fluttered blood; but laugh a little,
sweetly,
That I may see your sad mouth's laughing
look
I have used sweet hours in seeing. O,
will you weep?
I pray you do not weep.

QUEEN.

Nay, dear, I have
No tears in me; I never shall weep much,
I think, in all my life; I have wept for
wrath
Sometimes and for mere pain, but for love's
pity
I cannot weep at all. I would to God
You loved me less; I give you all I can
For all this love of yours, and yet I am
sure
I shall live out the sorrow of your death
And be glad afterwards. You know I am
sorry.
I should weep now; forgive me for your
part,
God made me hard, I think. Alas, you
see
I had fain been other than I am.

CHASTELARD.

Yea, love.

Comfort your heart. What way am I to
die?

QUEEN.

Ah, will you go yet, sweet?

CHASTELARD.

No, by God's body.
You will not see? how shall I take you
see?
Look, it may be love was a sort of curse

Made for my plague and mixed up with my days
 Somewise in their beginning; or indeed
 A bitter birth begotten of sad stars,
 At mine own body's birth, that heaven
 might make
 My life taste sharp where other men drank
 sweet;
 But whether in heavy body or broken
 soul,
 I know it must go on to be my death.
 There was the matter of my fate in me
 When I was fashioned first, and given such
 life
 As goes with a sad end; no fault but God's.
 Yea, and for all this I am not penitent:
 You see I am perfect in these sins of mine,
 I have my sins writ in a book to read;
 Now I shall die and be well done with this.
 But I am sure you cannot see such things,
 God knows I blame you not.

QUEEN.

What shall be said?
 You know most well that I am sorrowful.
 But you should chide me. Sweet, you
 have seen fair wars,
 Have seen men slain and ridden red in
 them;
 Why will you die a chamberer's death like
 this?
 What, shall no praise be written of my
 knight,
 For my fame's sake?

CHASTELARD.

Nay, no great praise, I think;
 I will no more; what should I do with
 death,
 Though I died goodly out of sight of you?
 I have gone once: here am I set now,
 sweet,
 Till the end come. That is your husband,
 hark,
 He knocks at the outer door. Kiss me
 just once.
 You know now all you have to say. Nay,
 love,
 Let him come quickly.

*Enter DARNLEY, and afterwards the
 MARIES.*

DARNLEY.

Yea, what thing is here?
 Ay, this was what the doors shut fast upon—

Ay, trust you to be fast at prayer, my
 sweet?

By God I have a mind——

CHASTELARD.

What mind then, sir?

A liar's lewd mind, to coin sins for jest,
 Because you take me in such wise as this?
 Look you, I have to die soon, and I swear,
 That am no liar but a free knight and lord,
 I shall die clear of any sin to you,
 Save that I came for no good will of mine;
 I am no carle, I play fair games with faith,
 And by mine honor for my sake I swear
 I say but truth; for no man's sake save
 mine,
 Lest I die shamed. Madam, I pray you
 say
 I am no liar; you know me what I am,
 A sinful man and shortly to be slain,
 That in a simple insolence of love
 Have stained with a fool's eyes your holy
 hours
 And with a fool's words put your pity out;
 Nathless you know if I be liar or no,
 Wherefore for God's sake give me grace to
 swear
 (Yea, for mine too) how past all praise you
 are
 And stainless of all shame; and how all
 men
 Lie, saying you are not most good and inno-
 cent,
 Yea, the one thing good as God.

DARNLEY.

O sir, we know
 You can swear well, being taken: you fair
 French
 Dare swallow God's name for a lewd love-
 sake
 As it were water. Nay, we know, we
 know;
 Save your sweet breath now lest you lack
 it soon;
 We are simple, we; we have not heard of
 you.
 Madam, by God you are well shamed in
 him:
 Ay, trust you to be fingering in one's
 face,
 Play with one's neck-chain? ah, your
 maiden's man,
 A relic of your people's!

CHASTELARD.

Hold your peace,

Or I will set an edge on your own lie
Shall scar yourself. Madam, have out your
guard;

'Tis time I were got hence.

QUEEN.

Sweet Hamilton,
Hold you my hand and help me to sit
down.

O Henry, I am beaten from my wits—
Let me have time and live; call out my
people—

Bring forth some armed guard to lay hold
on him:

But see no man be slain. Sirs, hide your
swords;

I will not have men slain.

DARNLEY.

What, is this true?

Call the queen's people—help the queen
there you—

Ho, sirs, come in.

Enter some with the Guard

QUEEN.

Lay hold upon that man;
Bear him away, but see he have no hurt.

CHASTELARD.

Into your hands I render up myself
With a free heart; deal with me how you
list,

But courteously, I pray you. Take my
sword.

Farewell, great queen; the sweetness in
your look

Makes life look bitter on me. Farewell,
sirs,

[He is taken out.]

DARNLEY

Yea, pluck him forth, and have him hanged
by dawn;

He shall find bed enow to sleep. God's
love!

That such a knave should be a knight like
this!

QUEEN.

Sir, peace awhile; this shall be as I please;
Take patience to you. Lords, I pray you
see

All be done goodly; look they wrong him
not.

Carmichael, you shall sleep with me to-
night;

I am sorely shaken, even to the heart.

Fair lords,

I thank you for your care. Sweet, stay by
me.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

MURRAY.

SCENE I.—*The Queen's Lodging at St.
Andrew's.*

The QUEEN and the four MARIES.

QUEEN.

Why will you break my heart with praying
to me?

You Seyton, you Carmichael, you have
wits,

You are not all run to tears; you do not
think

It is my wrath or will that whets this axe
Against his neck?

MARY SEYTON.

Nay, these three weeks ago
I said the queen's wrath was not sharp
enough

To shear a neck.

QUEEN.

Sweet, and you did me right,
And look you, what my mercy bears to
fruit.

Danger and deadly speech and a fresh fault
Before the first was cool in people's lips;

A goodly mercy; and I wash hands of it.—
Speak you, there; have you ever found me
sharp?

You weep and whisper with sloped necks
and heads

Like two sick birds; do you think shame
of me?

Nay, I thank God none can think shame
of me;

But an I bitter, think you, to men's faults?
I think I am too merciful, too meek:

Why if I could I would yet save this man;
'Tis just boy's madness: a soft stripe or two

Would do to scourge the fault in his French
blood.

I would fain let him go. You, Hamilton,
You have a heart thewed harder than my
heart;

When mine would threat it sighs, and
wrath in it

Has a bird's flight and station, starves be-
fore

It can well feed or fly: my pulse of wrath
Sounds tender as the running down of tears.
You are the hardest woman I have known,
Your blood has frost and cruel gall in it,
You hold men off with bitter lips and eyes—
Such maidens should serve England; now,
perfoy,

I doubt you would have got him slain at
once.

Come, would you not? come, would you
let him live?

MARY HAMILTON.

Yes—I think yes; I cannot tell; maybe
I would have seen him punished.

QUEEN.

Look you now,

There's maiden mercy; I would have him
live—

For all my wifehood maybe I weep too:

Here's a mere maiden falls to slaying at
once,

Small shrift for her; God keep us from such
hearts!

I am a queen too that would have him live,
But one that has no wrong and is no queen,
She would—What are you saying there,
you twain?

MARY CARMICHAEL.

I said a queen's face and so fair an one's
Would lose no grace for giving grace
away;

That gift comes back upon the mouth it
left

And makes it sweeter, and sets fresh red
on it.

QUEEN.

This comes of sonnets when the dance
draws breath;

These talking times will make a dearth of
grace.

But you—what ails you that your lips are
shut?

Weep, if you will; here are four friends of
yours

To weep as fast for pity of your tears.
Do you desire him dead? nay, but men
say

He was your friend, he fought them on
your side,

He made you songs—God knows what
songs he made!

Speak you for him a little: will you not?

MARY BEATON.

Madam, I have no words.

QUEEN.

No words? no pity—

Have you no mercies for such men? God
help!

It seems I am the meekest heart on earth—

Yea, the one tender woman left alive,
And knew it not. I will not let him live,
For all my pity of him.

MARY BEATON

Nay, but, madam,

For God's love look a little to this thing.
If you do slay him you are but shamed to
death;

All men will cry upon you, women weep,
Turning your sweet name bitter with their
tears;

Red shame grow up out of your memory
And burn his face that would speak well
of you:

You shall have no good word nor pity,
none,

Till some such end be fallen upon you:
nay,

I am but cold, I knew I had no words,
I will keep silence.

QUEEN.

Yea now, as I live,

I wish not of it: troth, he shall not die.

See you, I am pitiful, compassionate,
I would not have men slain for my love's
sake,

But if he live to do me three times wrong,
Why then my shame would grow up green
and red

Like any flower. I am not whole at heart;
In faith, I wot not what such things should
be;

I doubt it is but dangerous; he must die.

MARY BEATON.

Yea, but you will not slay him.

QUEEN.

Swear me that,
I'll say he shall not die for your oath's
sake.
What will you do for grief when he is
dead?

MARY BEATON.

Nothing for grief, but hold my peace and
die.

QUEEN.

Why, for your sweet sake one might let
him live;
But the first fault was a green seed of
shame,
And now the flower, and deadly fruit will
come
With apple-time in autumn. By my life,
I would they had slain him there in Edin-
burgh;
But I reprove him; lo the thank I get,
To set the base folk muttering like smoked
bees
Of shame and love, and how love comes of
shame,
And how the queen loves shame that
comes of love;
Yet I say nought and go about my ways,
And this mad fellow that I respited
Being forth and free, lo now the second
time
Ye take him by my bed in wait. Now see
If I can get goodwill to pardon him;
With what a face may I crave leave of men
To respite him, being young and a good
knight
And mad for perfect love? shall I go say,
I fear lords, because ye took him shamefully,
Let him not die; because his fault is foul,
Let him not die; because if he do live
I shall be held a harlot of all men,
I pray you, sweet sirs, that he may not die?

MARY BEATON.

Madam, for me I would not have him live;
Mine own heart's life was ended with my
fame,
And my life's breath will shortly follow
them;
So that I care not much; for you wot well
I have lost love and shame and fame and
all
To no good end; nor while he had his life
Have I got good of him that was my love,

Save that for courtesy (which may God
quit)
He kissed me once as one might kiss for
love
Out of great pity for me; saving this,
He never did me grace in all his life.
And when you have slain him, madam, it
may be
I shall get grace of him in some new way
In a new place, if God have care of us.

QUEEN.

Bid you my brother to me presently.

[*Exeunt MARRIES.*]

And yet the thing is pitiful; I would
There were some way. To send him over-
seas,
Out past the long firths to the cold keen
sea
Where the sharp sound is that one hears
up here—
Or hold him in strong prison till he died—
He would die shortly—or to set him free
And use him softly till his brains were
healed—
There is no way. Now never while I live
Shall we twain love together any more
Nor sit at rhyme as we were used to do,
Nor each kiss other only with the eyes
A great way offere hand or lip could reach;
There is no way.

Enter MURRAY.

O, you are welcome, sir;
You know what need I have; but I praise
heaven,
Having such need, I have such help of you.
I do believe no queen God ever made
Was better holpen than I look to be.
What, if two brethren love not heartily,
Who shall be good to either one of them?

MURRAY.

Madam, I have great joy of your good will.

QUEEN.

I pray you, brother, use no courtesies
I have some fear you will not suffer me
When I shall speak. Fear is a fool, I
think,
Yet hath he wit enow to fool my wits,
Being but a woman's. Do not answer me
Till you shall know; yet if you have a word
I shall be fain to hear it; but I think
There is no word to help me; no man's
word;

There be two things yet that should do me good,

A speeding arm and a great heart. My lord,

I am soft-spirited as women are,
And ye wot well I have no harder heart:
Yea, with my will I would not slay a thing,
But all should live right sweetly if I might;
So that man's blood-spilling lies hard on me.

I have a work yet for mine honor's sake,
A thing to do, God wot I know not how,
Nor how to crave it of you: nay, by heaven,
I will not shame myself to show it you:
I have not heart.

MURRAY.

Why, if it may be done
With any honour, or with good men's
excuse,
I shall well do it.

QUEEN.

I would I wist that well.
Sir, do you love me?

MURRAY.

Yea, you know I do.

QUEEN.

In faith, you should well love me, for I
love
The least man in your following for your
sake
With a whole sister's heart.

MURRAY.

Speak simply, madam;
I must obey you, being your bounden man.

QUEEN.

Sir, so it is you know what things have been,
Even to the endangering of mine innocent
name,
And by no fault, but by men's evil will;
If Chastelard have trial openly,
I am but shamed.

MURRAY.

This were a wound indeed,
If your good name should lie upon his lip.

QUEEN.

I will judges put him not to plead,
For my fame's sake; he shall not answer
them.

MURRAY.

What, think you he will speak against your
fame?

QUEEN.

I know not; men might feign believe of
him
For hate of me; it may be he will speak;
In brief, I will not have him held to proof.

MURRAY.

Well, if this be, what good is to be done?

QUEEN.

Is there no way but he must speak to them,
Being had to trial plainly?

MURRAY.

I think, none.

QUEEN.

Now mark, my lord; I swear he will not
speak.

MURRAY.

It were the best if you could make that
sure.

QUEEN.

There is one way. Look, sir, he shall not
do it:
Shall not, or will not, either is one way;
I speak as I would have you understand.

MURRAY.

Let me not guess at you; speak certainly.

QUEEN.

You will not mind me: let him be removed;
Take means to get me surety: there be
means.

MURRAY.

So, in your mind, I have to slay the man?

QUEEN.

Is there a mean for me to save the man?

MURRAY.

Truly I see no mean except your love.

QUEEN.

What love is that, my lord? what think
you of,
Talking of love and of love's mean in me
And of your guesses and of slaying him?
Why, I say nought, have nought to say:
God help me!

I bid you but take surety of the man,

Get him removed.

MURRAY.

Come, come, be clear with me;
You bid me to despatch him privily.

QUEEN.

God send me sufferance! I bid you, sir?
Nay, do not go: what matter if I did?
Nathless I never bade you; no, by God.
Be not so wroth; you are my brother born;
Why do you dwell upon me with such eyes?
For love of God you should not bear me
hard.

MURRAY.

What, are you made of flesh?

QUEEN.

O, now I see.

You had rather lose your wits to do me
harm
Than keep sound wits to help me.

MURRAY.

It is right strange;
The worst man living hath some fear, some
love,
Holds somewhat dear a little for life's
sake,
Keeps fast to some compassion; you have
none;
You know of nothing that remembrance
knows
To make you tender. I must slay the
man?
Nay, I will do it.

QUEEN.

Do, if you be not mad.
I am sorry for him; and he must needs die.
I would I were assured you hate me not:
I have no heart to slay him by my will.
I pray you think not bitterly of me.

MURRAY.

Is it your pleasure such a thing were done?

QUEEN.

Yea, by God's body is it, certainly.

MURRAY.

Nay, for your love then, and for honor's
sake,
This thing must be.

QUEEN.

Yea, should I set you on?

Even for my love then, I beseech you, sir.
To seek him out, and lest he prate of me
To put your knife into him ere he come
forth:

Meseems this were not such wild work to
do.

MURRAY.

I'll have him in the prison taken off.

QUEEN.

I am bounden to you, even for my name's
sake,
When that is done.

MURRAY.

I pray you fear me not.

Farewell. I would such things were not
to do,

Or not for me; yea, not for any man.

[Exit.

QUEEN.

Alas, what honor have I to give thanks?
I would he had denied me: I had held my
peace

Thenceforth for ever; but he wrung out the
word,

Caught it before my lip, was fain of it—

—'twas his fault to put it in my mind,

Yea, and to feign a loathing of his fault.

Now is he about devising my love's death,

And nothing loath. Nay, since he must
needs die,

Would he were dead and come alive again
And I might keep him safe. He doth live
now

And I may do what love I will to him;

But by to-morrow he will be stark dead,
Stark slain and dead; and for no sort of
love

Will he so much as kiss me half a kiss.

Were this to do I would not do it again.

Re-enter MURRAY.

What, have you taken order? is it done?

It were impossible to do so soon.

Nay, answer me.

MURRAY.

Madam, I will not do it.

QUEEN.

How did you say? I pray, sir, speak
again:

I know not what you said.

MURRAY.

I say I will not;
I have thought thereof, and have made up
my heart
To have no part in this: look you to it.

QUEEN.

O, for God's sake! you will not have me
shamed?

MURRAY.

I will not dip my hand into your sin.

QUEEN.

It were a good deed to deliver me;
I am out woman, of one blood with you,
A feeble woman; put me not to shame;
I pray you of your pity do me right.
Yea, and no fleck of blood shall cleave to
you
For a just deed.

MURRAY.

I know not: I will none.

QUEEN.

O, you will never let him speak to them
To put me in such shame? why, I should
die
Out of pure shame and mine own burning
blood;
Yea, my face feels the shame lay hold on
it,
I am half burnt already in my thought;
Take pity of me. Think how shame slays
a man;
How shall I live then? would you have me
dead?
I pray you for our dead dear father's sake,
Let not men mock at me. Nay, if he
speak,
I shall be sung in mine own towns. Have
pity.
What, will you let men stone me in the
ways?

MURRAY.

Madam, I shall take pains the best I may
To save your honor, and what thing lieth
in me
That will I do, but no close manslayings.
I will not have God's judgment gripe my
throat
When I am dead, to hale me into hell
For a man's sake slain on this wise. Take
heed.

See you to that.

[Exit.

QUEEN.

One of you maidens there
Bid my lord hither. Now by Mary's soul,
He shall not die and bring me into shame.
There's treason in you like a fever, hot,
My holy-natured brother, cheek and eye;
You look red through with it: sick, honor-
sick.

Specked with the blain of treason, leper-
like—

A scrupulous fair traitor with clean lips—
If one should sue to hell to do him good
He were as brotherly holpen as I am.
This man must live and say no harm of
me;

I may relieve and cast him forth, yea,
so—

This were the best; or if he die midway—
Yea, anything, so that he die not here.

[To the MARIES within.

Fetch hither Darnley. Nay, ye gape on
me—

What, doth he sleep, or feeds, or plays at
games?

Why, I would see him; I am weary for his
sake;

Bid my lord in.—Nathless he will but
chide;

Nay, fiercer and laugh: what should one say
to him?

There were some word if one could hit on
it;

Some way to close with him: I wot not. —
Sir,

Enter DARNLEY.

Please it your love I have a suit to you.

DARNLEY.

What sort of suit?

QUEEN.

Nay, if you be not friends—
I have no suit towards mine enemies.

DARNLEY.

Eh, do I look now like your enemy?

QUEEN.

You have a way of peering under brow
I do not like. If you see anything
In me that irks you I will painfully
Labor to lose it; do but show me favor,
And as I am your faithful humble wife
This foolishness shall be removed in me.

DARNLEY.

Why do you laugh and mock me with stretched hands?

Faith, I see no such thing.

QUEEN.

That is well seen.

Come, I will take my heart between my lips,

Use it not hardly. Sir, my suit begins;

That you would please to make me that I am,

(In sooth I think I am) mistress and queen Of mine own people.

DARNLEY.

Why, this is no suit;

This is a simple matter, and your own.

QUEEN.

It was, before God made you king of me.

DARNLEY.

No king, by God's grace; were I such a king

I'd sell my kingdom for six roods of rye.

QUEEN.

You are too sharp upon my words; I would Have leave of you to free a man condemned.

DARNLEY.

What man is that, sweet?

QUEEN.

Such a mad poor man

As God desires us use not cruelly.

DARNLEY.

Is there no name a man may call him by?

QUEEN.

Nay, my fair master, what fair game is this? Why, you do know him, it is Chastelard.

DARNLEY.

Ay, is it soothly?

QUEEN.

By my life, it is;

Sweet, as you tender me, so pardon him.

DARNLEY.

As he doth tender you, so pardon me; For if it were the mean to save my life He should not live a day.

QUEEN.

Nay, shall not he?

DARNLEY.

Look what an evil wit Old Fortune hath: Why, I came here to get his time cut off.

This second fault is meat for lewd men's mouth's;

You were best have him slain at once: 'tis hot.

QUEEN.

Give me the warrant, and sit down, my lord.

Why, I will sign it; what, I understand How this must be. Should not my name stand here?

DARNLEY.

Vea, there, and here the seal.

QUEEN.

Ay, so you say.

Shall I say too what I am thinking of?

DARNLEY.

Do, if you will.

QUEEN.

I do not like your suit.

DARNLEY.

'Tis of no Frenchman fashion.

QUEEN.

No, God wot;

'Tis nowise great men's fashion' in French land

To clap a headsman's taberd on their backs.

DARNLEY.

No, madam?

QUEEN.

No; I never wist of that.

Is it a month gone I did call you lord?

I chose you by no straying stroke of sight, But with my heart to love you heartily.

Did I wrong then? did my eye draw my heart?

I know not; sir, it may be I did wrong:

And yet to see you I should call it right

Even yet to love you; and would choose again,

Again to choose you.

DARNLEY.

There, I love you too;

Take that for sooth, and let me take this hence.

QUEEN.

O, do you think I hold you off with words?
Why, take it then; there is my handwriting,
And here the hand that you shall slay him
with.

'Tis a fair hand, a maiden-colored one:
I doubt yet it has never slain a man.
You never fought yet save for game, I wis.
Nay, thank me not, but have it from my
sight;

Go and make haste for fear he be got forth;
It may be such a man is dangerous;
Who knows what friends he hath? and by
my faith

I doubt he hath seen some fighting, I do
fear

He hath fought and shed men's blood; ye
are wise men

That will not leave such dangerous things
alive;

'Twere well he died the sooner for your
sakes.

Pray you make haste; it is not fit he live.

DARNLEY.

What, will you let him die so easily?

QUEEN.

Why, God have mercy! what way should
one take

To please such people? there is some
cunning way,

Something I miss, out of my simple soul.

What, must one say "Beseech you do no
harm,"

Or, "for my love, sweet cousins, be not
hard,"

Or "let him live but till the vane
come round"—

Will such things please you? well, then,
have your way;

Sir, I desire you, kneeling down with tears,
With sighs and tears, fair sir, require of
you,

Considering of my love I bear this man,
Just for my love's sake let him not be
hanged

Before the sundown; do thus much for me,
To have a queen's prayers follow after you.

DARNLEY.

I know no need for you to gibe at me.

QUEEN.

Alack, what heart then shall I have to jest?
There is no woman jests in such a wise—

*For the shame's sake I pray you hang him
not,*

*Seeing how I love him, save indeed in silk,
Sweet twisted silk of my sad handiwork.*

Nay, and you will not do so much for me;
You vex your lip, biting the blood and all:
Were this so hard, and you compassionate?
I am in sore case then, and will weep in-
deed.

DARNLEY.

What do you mean to cast such gibes at
me?

QUEEN.

Woe's me, and will you turn my tears to
thorns?

Nay, set your eyes a little in my face;
See, do I weep? what will you make of
me?

Will you not swear I love this prisoner?
Ye are wise, and ye will have it; yet for me
I wist not of it. We are but feeble fools,
And love may catch us when we lie asleep
And yet God knows we know not this a
whit.

Come, look on me, swear you believe it not:
It may be I will take your word for that.

DARNLEY.

Do you not love him? nay, but verily?

QUEEN.

Now then, make answer to me verily,
Which of us twain is wiser? for my part
I will not swear I love not, if you will;
Ye be wise men and many men, my lords,
And ye will have me love him, ye will
swear

That I do love him; who shall say ye lie?
Look on your paper, maybe I have wept:
Doubtless I love your hanged man in my
heart.

What, is the writing smutched or gone
away?

Or blurred—ay, surely so much—with one
tear,

One little sharp tear strayed on it by
chance?

Come, come, the man is deadly dangerous;
Let him die presently.

DARNLEY.

You do not love him;
Well, yet he need not die; it were right
hard
To hang the fool because you love him not,

QUEEN.

You have keen wits and thereto courtesy
To catch me with. No, let this man not
die;

It were no such perpetual praise to you
To be his doomsman and in despite were
Bite his brief life in twain.

DARNLEY.

Truly it were not.

QUEEN.

Then for your honor and my love of you
(Oh, I do love you! but you know not,
sweet,
You shall see how much), think you for
their sake
He may go free?

DARNLEY.

How freely, forth of us?

But yet he loves you, and being mad with
love
Makes matter for base mouths to chew
upon:

'Twere best he live not yet.

QUEEN.

Will you say that?

DARNLEY.

Why should he live to breed you bad re-
ports?
Let him die first.

QUEEN.

Sweet, for your sake, not so.

DARNLEY.

Fret not yourself to pity; let him die.

QUEEN.

Come, let him live a little; it shall be
A grace to us.

DARNLEY.

By God he dies at once.

QUEEN.

Now, by God's mother if I respite him,
Though you were all the race of you in one
And had more tongues than hairs to cry
on me
He should not lose a hair.

DARNLEY.

This is mere mercy—

But you thank God you love him not a
whit?

QUEEN.

It shall be what it please; and if I please
It shall be anything. Give me the warrant.

DARNLEY.

Nay, for your sake and love of you, not I,
To make it dangerous.

QUEEN.

O, God's pity, sir!

You are tender of me; will you serve me so,
Against mine own will, shew me so much
love,

Do me good service that I loath being
done,

Out of pure pity?

DARNLEY.

Nay, your word shall stand.

QUEEN.

What makes you gape so beastlike after
blood?

Were you not breu up on some hangman's
hire

And dieted with fleshmeats at his hand
And fed into a fool? Give me that paper.

DARNLEY.

Now for that word I will not.

QUEEN.

Nay, sweet love,
For your own sake be just a little wise;
Come, I beseech you.

DARNLEY.

Pluck not at my hands.

QUEEN.

No, that I will not: I am brain-broken,
mad;

Pity my madness for sweet marriage-sake
And my great love's; I love you to say this:
I would not have you cross me out of love.
But for true love should I not chafe indeed?
And now I do not.

DARNLEY.

Yea, and late you chid,

You chafed and jested and blew soft and
hard—

No, for that "fool" ye shall not fool me
so.

QUEEN.

You are no churl, sweet, will you see me
weep?

Look, I weep now; be friends with my
poor tears.

Think each of them beseeches you of love
And hath some tongue to cry on you for
love

And speak soft things; for that which
loves not you

Is none of mine, not though they grow of
grief

And grief of you; be not too hard with
them.

You would not of your own heart slay a
man;

Nay, if you will, in God's name make me
weep,

I will not hate you; but a heart, sweet lord,
Be not at heart my sweet heart's enemy.

If I had many mighty men to friend
I would not plead too lovingly with you

To have your love.

DARNLEY.

Why, yet you have my love.

QUEEN.

Alas, what shall mine enemies do to me
If I be used so hardly of my friends?

Come, sir, you hate me, yet for all your
hate

You cannot have such heart.

DARNLEY.

What sort of heart?

I have no heart to be used shamefully
If you mean that.

QUEEN.

Would God I loved you not;
You are too hard to be used lovingly.

DARNLEY.

You are moved too much for such a little
love

As you bear me.

QUEEN.

God knows you do me wrong;
God knows the heart, sweet, that I love
you with.

Hark you, fair sir, I'd have all well with
you;

Do you not fear at sick men's time of night
What end may come? are you so sure of
heart?

Is not your spirit surprisable in sleep?

Have you no evil dreams? Nay, look you,
love,

I will not be flung off your heart and
hand,

I am no snake: but tell me for your love

I have you no fancies how these things will
end

In the pit's mouth? how all life-deeds will
look

At the grave's edge that lets men into hell?
For my part, who am weak and woman-

eyed,

It turns my soul to tears; I doubt this
blood

Fallen on our faces when we twain are
dead

Will scar and burn them: yea, for heaven
is sweet,

And loves sweet deeds that smell not of
spilt blood.

Let us not kill: God that made mercy first
Pities the pitiful for their deed's sake.

DARNLEY.

Get you some painting; with a cheek like
this

You'll find no faith in listeners.

QUEEN.

How, fair lord?

DARNLEY.

I say that looking with this face of yours
None shall believe you holy; what, you
tal!

Take mercy in your mouth, eat holiness,
Put God under your tongue and feed on
heaven,

With fear and faith and—faith, I know not
what—

And look as though you stood and saw
men slain

To make you game and laughter: nay, your
eyes

Threaten as unto blood. What will you
do

To make men take your sweet word?
pitiful—

You are pitiful as he that's hired for death
And loves the slaying yet better than the
hire.

QUEEN.

You are wise that live to threat and tell me
so;

Do you love life too much?

DARNLEY.

O, now you are sweet,

Right tender now: you love not blood nor death,
You are too tender.

QUEEN.

Yea, too weak, too soft;
Sweet, do not mock me, for my love's sake; see
How soft a thing I am. Will you be hard?
The heart you have, has it no sort of fear?

DARNLEY.

Take off your hand and let me go my way
And do my deed, and when the doing is past
I will come home and teach you tender things
Out of my love till you forget my wrath.
I will be angry when I see good need,
And will grow gentle after, fear not that;
You shall get no wrong of my wrongdoing.
So I take leave.

QUEEN.

Take what you will; take all;
You have taken half my heart away with words:
Take all I have, and take no leave; I have
No leave to give: yea, shortly shall lack leave,
I think, to live; but I crave none of you;
I would have none: yet for thy love I have,
If I get ever a mean to show it you,
I pray God put you some day in my hand
That you may take that too.

DARNLEY.

Well, as he please;
God keep you in such love; and so fare-
well. *[Exit.]*

QUEEN.

So fare I as your lover, but not well.—
Ah sweet, if God be ever good to me
To put you in my hand! I am come to shame;
Let me think now, and let my wits not go;
God, for dear mercy, let me not forget
Why I should be so angry; the dull blood
Beats at my face and blinds me—I am
chafed to death,
And I am shamed; I shall go mad and die.
Truly I think I did kneel down, did pray,

Yea, weep (who knows?) it may be—all for that.

Yea, if I wept not, this was blood brake forth

And burnt mine eyelids; I will have blood back,

And wash them cool in the hottest of his heart,

Or I will slay myself: I cannot tell:

I have given gold for brass, and to the pay

Cleaves to my fingers: there's no way to mend

While life stays: would God that it were gone!

The fool will feed upon my fame and laugh;

Till one seal up his tongue and lips with blood,

He carries half my honor and good name
Between his teeth. Lord God, mine head will fail!

When have I done thus since I was alive?
And these ill times will deal but ill with me—

My old love slain, and never a new to help,

And my wits gone, and my blithe use of life,

And all the grace was with me. Love—perchance

If I save love I shall well save myself.

I could find heart to bid him take such fellows

And kill them to my hand. I was the fool

To sue to these and shame myself: God knows

I was a queen born, I will hold their heads

Here in my hands for this. Which of you waits?

Enter MARY BEATON and MARY CARMICHAEL.

No maiden of them?—what, no more than this?

MARY CARMICHAEL.

Madam, the lady Seyton is gone forth;
She is ill at heart with watching.

QUEEN.

Ay, at heart—

All girls must have such tender sides to the heart

They break for one night's watching, ache
to death:

For an hour's pity, for a half-hour's love—
Wear out before the watches, die by dawn,
And ride at noon to burial. God's my
pity!

Where's Hamilton? doth she ail too? at
heart,
I warrant her at heart.

MARY BEATON.

I know not, madam.

QUEEN.

What, sick or dead? I am well holpen of
you:

Come hither to me. What pale blood you
have—

Is it for fear you turn such cheeks to me?
Why, if I were so loving, by my hand,
I would have set my head upon the chance,
And loosed him though I died. What
will you do?

Have you no way?

MARY BEATON.

None but your mercy.

QUEEN.

Ay?

Why then the thing is piteous. Think, for
God's sake—

Is there no loving way to fetch him forth?
Nay, what a white thin-blooded thing is
love,

To help no more than this doth! Were I
in love,

I would unbar the ways to-night and then
Laugh death to death to-morrow, mock
him dead;

I think you love well with one half your
heart,

And let fear keep the other. Hark you
now,

You said there was some friend durst break
my bars—

Some Scotch name—faith, as if I wist of it!
Ye have such heavy wits to help one with—

Some man that had some mean to save him
by—

Tush, I must be at pains for you!

MARY BEATON.

Nay, madam,

It were no boot; he will not be let forth.

QUEEN.

I say, the name. O, Robert Erskine—
yea,
A fellow of some heart: what saith he?

MARY BEATON.

Madam,

The thing was sound all through, yea, all
went well,

But for all prayers that we could make to
him

He would not fly: we cannot get him forth.

QUEEN.

Great God! that men should have such
wits as this!

I have a mind to let him die for that;
And yet I wot not. Said he, he loathed
his life?

MARY BEATON.

He says your grace given would scathe
yourself,

And little grace for such a grace as that
Be with the little of his life he kept
To cast off some time more unworthily.

QUEEN.

God help me! what should wise folk do
with him?

These men be weaker-witted than mere
fools

When they fall mad once; yet by Mary's
soul

I am sorrier for him than for men right
wise.

God wot a fool that were more wise than
he

Would love me something worse than
Chastelard,

Ah, and his own soul better. Do you think
(There's no such other sort of fool alive)
That he may live?

MARY BEATON.

Yea, by God's mercy, madam,
To your great praise and honor from all
men

If you should keep him living.

QUEEN.

By God's light,

I have good will to do it. Are you sure,
If I would pack him with a pardon hence,
He would speak well of me—not hint and
halt,

Smile and look back, sigh and say love
runs out,
But time have been—with some loose
laugh cut short,
Bit off at lip—eh?

MARY BEATON.

No, by heaven he would not.

QUEEN.

You know how quickly one may be belied—
Faith, you should know it—I never thought
the worst,
One may touch love and come with clean
hands off—
But you should know it. What, he will
not fly—
Not though I wink myself asleep turn
blind—
Which that I will I say not?

MARY BEATON.

Nay, not he;

We had good hope to bring him well
aboard,
Let him slip safe down by the firths to sea,
Out under Leith by night-setting, and
thence
Take ship for France and serve there out
of sight
In the new wars.

QUEEN.

Ay, in the new French wars—

You wist thereof too, madam, with good
leave—

A goodly bait to catch mine honor with
And let me wake up with my name bit
through.

I had been much bounden to you twain,
methinks,

But for my knight's sake and his love's; by
God,

He shall not die in God's despite nor mine.
Call in our chief lords; bid on; see to it:

Ay, and make haste.

[*Exeunt* MARY BEATON and MARY
CARMICHAEL.]

Now shall I try their teeth:

I have done with fear; now nothing but
pure love

And power and pity shall have part in me;
I will not throw them such a spirit in flesh
To make their pray on. Though he be
mad indeed,

It is the goodliest madness ever smote
Upon man's heart. A kingly knight—in
faith,

It seems my face can yet make faith in
men

And break their brains with beauty: for a
word,

An eyelid's twitch, an eye's turn, tie them
fast

And make their souls cleave to me. God
be thanked,

This air has not yet curdled all the blood
That went to make me fair. An hour
agone,

I thought I had been forgotten of men's
love

More than dead women's faces are forgot
Of after lovers. All men are not of earth,
For all the frost of fools and this cool land
There be some yet catch fever of my face
And burning for mine eyes' sake. I did
think

My time was gone when men would dance
to death

As to a music, and lie laughing down
In the grave and take their funerals for
their feasts,

To get one kiss of me. I have some
strength yet.

Though I lack power on men that lack
men's blood.

Yea, and God wot I will be merciful;
For all the foolish hardness round my heart

That tender women miss of to their praise,
They shall not say but I had grace to give
Even for love's sake. Why, let them take
their way:

What ails it them: though I be soft or hard?
Soft hearts would weep and weep and let
men die

For very mercy and sweet-heartedness:

I that weep little for my pity's sake,

I have the grace to save men. Let fame
go—

I care not much what shall become of
fame,

So I save love and do mine own soul
right;

I'll have my mercy help me to revenge
On all the crew of them. How will he
look,

Having my pardon! I shall have sweet
thanks

And love of good men for my mercy's
love—

Yea, and be quit of these I hate to death,
With one good deed.

Enter the MARIES.

MARY BEATON.

Madam, the lords are here.

QUEEN.

Stand you about me, I will speak to them.
I would the whole world stood up in my
face
And heard what I shall say. Bid them
come in.

*Enter MURRAY, RANDOLPH, MORTON,
LINDSAY, and other Lords.*

Hear you fair lords, I have a word to
you;

There is one thing I would fain under-
stand—

If I be queen or no; for by my life
Methinks I am growing unqueenly. No
man speak?

Pray you take note, sweet lord ambassador,
I am no queen: I never was born queen;
Alack that one should fool us in this
wise!

Take up my crown, sir, I will none of it
Till it hath bells on as a fool's cap hath.
Nay, who will have it! no man take it
up?

Was there none worthy to be shamed
but I?

Here are enow good faces, good to crown;
Will you be king, fair brother? or you, my
lord?

Give me a spinner's curch, a wisp of reed,
Any mean thing; but, God's love, no more
gold,

And no more shame: let boys throw dice
for it,

Or cast it to the grooms for tennis-play,
For I will none.

MURRAY.

What would your highness have?

QUEEN.

Yea, yea, I said I was no majesty;
I shall be shortly fallen out of grace.
What would I have? I would have leave
to live;

Perchance I shall not shortly: nay, for me
That have no leave to respite other lives
To keep mine own life were small praise
enow.

MURRAY.

Your majesty hath power to respite men,
As we well wot; no man saith otherwise.

QUEEN.

What, is this true? 'tis a thing wonder-
ful—

So great I cannot be well sure of it.
Strange that a queen should find such
grace as this
At such lords' hands as ye be, such great
lords;

I pray you let me get assured again,
Lest I take jest for truth and shame
myself

And make you mirth: to make your mirth
of me,

God wot 't were small pains to you, my
lord;

But much less honor. I may send re-
prieve—

With your sweet leaves I may?

MURRAY.

Assuredly.

QUEEN.

Lo, now, what grace is this I have of you!
I had a will to respite Chastelard,
And would not do it for very fear of you:
Look you, I wist not ye were merciful.

MORTON.

Madam

QUEEN.

My lord, you have a word to me?
Doth it displease you such a man should
live?

MORTON.

'Twere a mad mercy in your majesty
To lay no hand upon his second fault
And let him thrice offend you.

QUEEN.

Ay, my lord?

MORTON.

It were well done to muffle lewd men's
mouths
By casting of his head into their laps:
It were much best.

QUEEN.

Yea, truly were it so?

But if I will not, yet I will not, sir,

For all the mouths in Scotland. Now, by heaven,

As I am pleased he shall not die but live,
So shall ye be. There is no man shall die,
Except it please me; and no man shall say,
Except it please me, if I do ill or well.
Which of you now will set his will to mine?
Not you, nor you I think, nor none of you,
Nor no man living that loves living well.
Let one stand forth and smile me with his hand,

Wring my crown off and cast it underfoot,
And he shall get my respite back of me,
And no man else; he shall bid live or die.
And no man else; and he shall be my lord,
And no man else. What, will not one be king?

Will not one here lay hold upon my state?
I am queen of you for all things come and gone.

Nay, my chief lady, and no meaner one,
The chiefest of my maidens, shall bear this

And give it to my prisoner for a grace;
Who shall deny me? who shall do me wrong?

Bear greeting to the lord of Chastelard
And this withal for respite of his life,
For by my head he shall die no such way:
Nay, sweet, no words, but hence and back again.

[Exit MARY BEATON.]

Farewell, dear lords; ye have shown grace to me,
And some time I will thank you as I may;
Till when think well of me and what is done.

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

CHASTELARD.

SCENE I.—*Before Holyrood. A crowd of people; among them Soldiers, Burgesses, a Preacher, &c.*

1ST CITIZEN.

They are not out yet. Have you seen the man?
What manner of man?

2ND CITIZEN.

Shall he be hanged or no?
There was a fellow hanged some three days gone
Wept the whole way: think you this man shall die
In better sort, now?

1ST CITIZEN.

Eh, these shawm-players
That walk before strange women and make songs!
How should they die well?

3RD CITIZEN.

Is it sooth men say
Our dame was wont to kiss him on the face
In lewd folk's sight?

1ST CITIZEN.

Yea, saith one, all day long
He used to sit and jangle words in rhyme
To suit with shakes of faint adulterous sound
Some French lute in men's ears; she made songs too,
Soft things to feed sin's amorous mouth upon—
Delicate sounds for dancing at in hell.

4TH CITIZEN.

Is it priest black that he shall have by him
When they do come?

3RD CITIZEN.

Ah! by God's leave, not so;
If the knave show us his peeled onion's head
And that damned flagging jowl of his—

2ND CITIZEN.

Nay, sirs,
Take heed of words; moreover, please it you,
This man hath no pope's part in him.

3RD CITIZEN.

I say
That if priest whore's friend with the lewd thief's cheek
Show his foul blinking face to shame all ours,
It goes back fouler; well, one day hell's fire
Will burn him black indeed.

A WOMAN.

What kind of man?
 'Tis yet great pity of him if he be
 Goodly enow for this queen's paramour,
 A French lord overseas? what doth he
 here,
 With Scotch folk here?

1ST CITIZEN.

Fair mistress, I think well
 He doth so at some times that I were fain
 To do as well.

THE WOMAN.

Nay, then, he will not die

1ST CITIZEN.

Why, see you, if one eat a piece of bread
 Baked as it were a certain prophet's way,
 Not upon coals, now—you shall apprehend—

If defiled bread be given a man to eat,
 Being thrust into his mouth, why he shall eat,

And with good hap shall eat; but if now,
 say,

One steal this, bread and beastliness and all,

When scarcely for pure hunger flesh and bone

Cleave one to other—why, if he steal to eat,

Be it even the filthiest feeding—though the man

Be famine-flayed of flesh and skin, I say
 He shall be hanged.

3RD CITIZEN.

Nay, stolen said you, sir?
 See, God bade eat abominable bread,
 And freely was it eaten—for a sign
 This, for a sign—and doubtless as did God,
 So may the devil; bid one eat freely and live,
 Not for a sign.

2ND CITIZEN.

Will you think thus of her?
 But wherefore should they get this fellow slain
 If he be clear toward her?

3RD CITIZEN.

Sir, one must see
 The day comes when a woman sheds her sin
 As a bird moults; and she being shifted so,

The old mate of her old feather pecks at her
 To get the right bird back; then she being stronger
 Picks out his eyes—eh?

2ND CITIZEN.

Like enough to be;
 But if it be—Is not one preaching there
 With certain folk about him?

1ST CITIZEN.

Yea, the same
 Who preached a month since from Ezekiel
 Concerning these twain—this our queen
 that is
 And her that was, and is not now so much
 As queen over hell's worm.

3RD CITIZEN.

Ay, said he not,
 This was Aholah, the first one of these,
 Called sisters only for a type—being twain,
 Twain Maries, no whit Nazarene? the first

Bred out of Egypt like the water-worm
 With sides in wet green places baked with shine

And festered flesh that steams against the sun;

A plague among all people, and a type
 Set as a flake upon a leper's fell.

1ST CITIZEN.

Yea, said he, and unto her the men went in,

The men of Pharaoh's, beautiful with red
 And with red gold, fair foreign-footed men,
 The bountiful fair men, the courteous men,
 The delicate men with delicate feet, that went

Curling their small beards agag-fashion,
 yea,

Pruning their mouths to nibble words behind

With pecking at God's skirts—small broken oaths

Fretted to shreds between most dainty lips.
 And underbreath some praise of Ashtaroth
 Sighed laughingly.

2ND CITIZEN.

Was he not under guard
 For the good word?

1ST CITIZEN.

Yea, but now forth again—
 And of the latter said he—there being two,

The first Aholah, which interpreted—

3RD CITIZEN.

But of this latter?

1ST CITIZEN.

Well, of her he said

How she made letters for Chaldean folk
And men that came forth of the wilderness
And all her sister's chosen men; yea, she
Kept not her lip from any sin of hers
But multiplied in whoredoms toward all
these

That hate God mightily; for these, he
saith,

These are the fair French people, and these
her kin

Sought out of England with her love-
letters

To bring them to her kiss of love; and
thus

With a prayer made that God would break
such love

Ended some while; then crying out for
strong wrath

Spake with a great voice after: This is
she,

Yea the lewd woman, yea the same woman
That gat bruised breasts in Egypt, when
strange men

Swart from great suns, foot-burnt with
angry coils

And strewn with sand of gaunt Chaldean
miles,

Poured all their love upon her: she shall
drink

The Lord's cup of derision: that is filled
With drunkenness and sorrow, great of
sides

And deep to drink in till the dreg drips
out:

Yea, and herself with the twain shards
thereof

Pluck off her breasts; so said he.

4TH CITIZEN.

See that stir—

Are not they come?

3RD CITIZEN.

There wants an hour of them.

Draw near and let us hearken; he will
speak

Surely some word of this.

2ND CITIZEN.

What saith he now?

THE PREACHER.

The mercy of a harlot is a sword
And her mouth sharper than a flame of
fire.

SCENE II.—*In Prison.*

CHASTELARD.

So here my time shuts up; and the last
light

Has made the last shade in the world for
me.

The sunbeam that was narrow like a leaf
Has turned a hand, and the hand stretched
to an arm,

And the arm has reached the dust on the
floor, and made

A maze of motes with paddling fingers.
Well,

I knew not that a man so sure to die
Could care so little; a bride-night's lusti-
ness

Leaps in my veins as light fire under a
wind:

As if I felt a kindling beyond death
Of some new joys far outside of me yet;
Sweet sound, sweet smell and touch of
things far out

Sure to come soon. I wonder will death
be

Even all it seems now? or the talk of hell
And wretched changes of the worn-out
soul

Nailed to decaying flesh, shall that be
true?

Or is this like the forethought of deep
sleep

Felt by a tired man? Sleep were good
enough—

Shall sleep be all? But I shall not forget
For any sleep this love bound upon me—

For any sleep or quiet ways of death.
Ah, in my weary dusty space of sight

Her face will float with heavy scents of
hair

And fire of subtle amorous eyes, and lips
More hot than wine, full of sweet wicked
words

Babbled against mine own lips and long
hands

Spread out, and pale bright throat and
pale bright breasts,

Fit to make all men mad. I do believe
This fire shall never burn quite out to the
ash

And leave no heat and flame upon my dust

For witness where a man's heart was
burnt up.
For all Christ's work this Venus is not
quelled,
But reddens at the mouth with blood of
men,
Sucking between small teeth the sap o' the
veins,
Dabbling with death her little tender lips—
A bitter beauty, poisonous-pearled mouth.
I am not fit to live but for love's sake,
So I were best die shortly. Ah, fair love,
Fair fearful Venus made of deadly foam,
I shall escape you somehow with my
death—
Your splendid supple body and mouth on
fire
And Paphian breath that bites the lips with
heat.
I had best die.

Enter MARY BEATON.

What, is my death's time come,
And you the friend to make death kind to
me?
'Tis sweetly done; for I was sick for this.

MARY BEATON

Nay, but see here; nay, for shall not
die:
She has reprieved you; look, her name to
that,
A present respite; I was sure of her:
You are quite safe: here, take it in your
hands:
I am faint with the end of pain. Read
there

CHASTELHARD.

Reprieve?
Wherefore reprieve? Who has done this
to me?

MARY BEATON.

I never feared but God would nave you
live,
Or I knew well God must have punished
me;
But I feared nothing, had no sort of fear.
What makes you stare upon the seal so
hard?
Will you not read now.

CHASTELARD.

A reprieve of life—
Reprieving me from living. Nay, by God,
I count one death a bitter thing enough.

MARY BEATON.

See what she writes; your love; for love of
you;
Out of her love; a word to save your life:
But I knew this too though you love me
not:
She is your love; I knew that: yea, by
heaven.

CHASTELARD.

You knew I had to live and be reprieved:
Say I were bent to die now?

MARY BEATON.

Do not die,
For her sweet love's sake; not for pity of
me,
You would not bear with life for me one
hour;
But for hers only.

CHASTELARD.

Nay, I love you well,
I would not hurt you for more lives than
one.
But for this fair-faced paper of reprieve,
We'll have no riddling to make death shift
sides:
Look, here ends one of us. [*Tearing it.*
For her I love,
She will not anger heaven with slaying
me;
For me, I am well quit of loving her;
For you, I pray you be well comforted,
Seeing in my life no man gat good by me
And by my death no hurt is any man's.

MARY BEATON.

And I that loved you? nay, I loved you;
nay,
Why should your like be pitied when they
love?
Her hard heart is not yet so hard as yours,
Nor God's hard heart I care not if you
die.
These bitter madmen are not fit to live.
I will not have you touch me, speak to
me,
Nor take farewell of you. See you die
well,
Or death will play with shame for you, and
win,
And laugh you out of life. I am right
glad
I never am to see you any more,

For I should come to hate you easily;
I would not have you live.

[Exit.

CHASTELARD.

She has cause enow.

I would this wretched waiting had an end,
For I wax feebler than I was: God knows
I had a mind once to have saved this flesh
And made life one with shame. It marvels
me

This girl that loves me should desire so
much

To have me sleep with shame for bed-
fellow

A whole life's space; she would be glad to
die

To escape such life. It may be too her
love

Is but an amorous quarrel with herself,

Not love of me but her own wilful soul;

Then she will live and be more glad of
this

Than girls of their own will and their
heart's love

Before love mars them: so God go with
her!

For mine own love—I wonder will she
come

Sad at her mouth a little, with drawn
cheeks

And eyelids wrinkled up? or hot and
quick

To lean her head on mine and leave her
lips

Deep in my neck? For surely she must
come;

And I should fare the better to be sure

What she will do. But as it please my
sweet;

For some sweet thing she must do if she
come,

Seeing how I have to die. Now three
years since

This had not seemed so good an end for
me;

But in some wise all things wear round
betimes

And wind up well. Yet doubtless she
might take

A will to come my way and hold my
hands

And kiss me some three kisses, throat,
mouth, eyes,

And say some soft three words to soften
death:

I do not see how this should break her
ease.

Nay, she will come to get her warrant
back:

By this no doubt she is sorely penitent,

Her fit of angry mercy well blown out

And her wits cool again. She must have
chafed

A great while through for anger to become
So like pure pity; they must have fretted
her

Nigh mad for anger: or it may be mistrust,
She is so false; yea, to my death I think

She will not trust me; alas the hard sweet
heart!

As if my lips could hurt her any way

But by too keenly kissing of her own.

Ah false poor sweet fair lips that keep no
faith,

They shall not catch mine false or dangerous;
They must needs kiss me one good time,
albeit

They love me not at all. Lo, here she
comes,

For the blood leaps and catches at my
face;

There go her feet and tread upon my heart;
Now shall I see what way I am to die.

Enter the QUEEN.

QUEEN.

What, is one here? Speak to me for
God's sake:

Where are you lain?

CHASTELARD.

Here, madam, at your hand.

QUEEN.

Sweet lord, what sore pain have I had for
you

And been most patient!—Nay, you are not
bound.

If you be gentle to me, take my hand.

Do you not hold me the worst heart in the
world?

Nay, you must needs; but say not yet you
do.

I am worn so weak I know not how I
live;

Reach me your hand.

CHASTELARD.

Take comfort and good heart;

All will find end; this is some grief to you,

But you shall overlive it. Come, fair love;
Be of fair cheer: I say you have done no wrong.

QUEEN.

I will not be of cheer: I have done a thing
That will turn fire and burn me. Tell me not;
If you will do me comfort, whet your sword.
But if you hate me, tell me of soft things,
For I hate these, and bitterly. Look up;
Am I not mortal to be gazed upon?

CHASTELARD.

Yea, mortal, and not hateful.

QUEEN

O lost heart!
Give me some mean to die by.

CHASTELARD.

Sweet, enough.
You have made no fault; life is not worth a world
That you should weep to take it: would mine were,
And I might give you a world-worthier gift
Than one poor head that love has made a spoil;
Take it for jest, and weep not: let me go.
And think I died of chance or malady.
Nay, I die well; one dies not best abed.

QUEEN.

My warrant to reprieve you—that you saw?
That came between your hands?

CHASTELARD.

Yea, not long since.
It seems you have no will to let me die.

QUEEN.

Alas, you know I wrote it with my heart,
Out of pure love; and since you were in bonds

I have had such grief for love's sake and my heart's—

Yea, by my life I have—I could not choose

But give love way a little. Take my hand;

You know it would have pricked my heart's blood out

To write reprieve with.

CHASTELARD.

Sweet, your hands are kind;
Let them about my neck, upon my face,
And tell me not of writing.

QUEEN.

Nay, by heaven.
I would have given you mine own blood to drink
If that could heal you of your soul-sickness.
Yea, they know that, they curse me for your sake,
Rail at my love—would God their heads were lopped
And we twain left together this side death!
But look you, sweet, if this my warrant hold
You are but dead and shamed; for you must die,
And they will slay you shamefully by force
Even in my sight.

CHASTELARD.

Faith, I think so they will.

QUEEN

Nay, they would slay me too, cast stones at me,
Drag me alive—they have eaten poisonous words,
They are mad and have no shame.

CHASTELARD.

Ay, like enough.

QUEEN.

Would God my heart were greater; but God wot
I have no heart to bear with fear and die.
Yea, and I cannot help you: or I know
I should be nobler, bear a better heart:
But as this stands—I pray you for good love,
As you hold honor a costlier thing than life—

CHASTELARD

Well?

QUEEN.

Nay, I would not be denied for shame;
In brief, I pray you give me that again.

CHASTELARD.

What, my reprieve?

QUEEN.

Even so; deny me not.
 For your sake mainly: yea, by God you
 know
 How fain I were to die in your death's
 stead.
 For your name's sake. This were no need
 to swear,
 Lest we be mocked to death with a re-
 prieve,
 And so both die, being shamed. What,
 shall I swear?
 What, if I kiss you? must I pluck it out?
 You do not love me: no, nor honor.
 Come,
 I know you: have it about you: give it
 me.

CHASTELARD.

I cannot yield you such a thing again;
 Not as I had it.

QUEEN.

A coward? what shift now?
 Do such men make such cravens?

CHASTELARD.

Chide me not:
 Pity me that I cannot help my heart.

QUEEN.

Heaven mend mine eyes that took you for
 a man!
 What, is it sewn into your flesh? take
 heed—
 Nay, but for shame—what have you done
 with it?

CHASTELARD.

Why, there it lies, torn up.

QUEEN.

God help me, sir!
 Have you done this?

CHASTELARD.

Yea, sweet; what should I do?
 Did I not know you to the bone, my sweet?
 God speed you well? you have a goodly
 lord.

QUEEN.

My love, sweet love, you are more fair than
 he,
 Yea, fairer many times: I love you much,
 Sir, know you that?

CHASTELARD.

I think I know that well.
 Sit here a little till I feel you through
 In all my breath and blood for some sweet
 while.
 O gracious body that mine arms have had,
 And hair my face has felt on it! grave
 eyes
 And low thick lids that keep since years
 agone
 In the blue sweet of each particular vein
 Some special print of me! I am right glad
 That I must never feel a bitterer thing
 Than your soft curled-up shoulder and
 amorous arms
 From this time forth; nothing can hap to
 me
 Less good than this for all my whole life
 through.
 I would not have some new pain after
 this
 Come spoil the savor. O, your round bird's
 throat,
 More soft than sleep hanging; your calm
 cheeks,
 Turned bright, turned wan with kisses hard
 and hot;
 The beautiful color of your deep curved
 hands,
 Made of a red rose that had changed to
 white;
 That mouth mine own holds the sweet-
 ness of,
 Yea, my heart holds the sweetness of it,
 whence
 My life began in me; mine that ends here
 Because you have no mercy, nay you know
 You never could have mercy. My fair
 love,
 Kiss me again, God loves you not the less;
 Why should one woman have all goodly
 things?
 You have all beauty; let mean women's
 lips
 Be pitiful and speak truth: they will not be
 Such perfect things as yours. Be not
 ashamed
 That hands not made like these that snare
 men's souls
 Should do men good, give alms, relieve
 men's pain;
 You have the better, being more fair than
 they,
 They are half foul, being rather good than
 fair;

You are quite fair: to be quite fair is best.
Why, two nights hence I dreamed that I
could see

In through your bosom under the left
flower,

And there was a round hollow, and at
heart

A little red snake sitting, without spot,
That bit—like this, and sucked up sweet—
like this,

And curled its lithe body right and left,
And quivered like a woman in act to love.

Then there was some low fluttered talk i'
the lips,

Faint sound of soft fierce words caressing
them—

Like a fair woman's when her love gets
way.

Ah, your old kiss—I know the ways of it:
Let the lips cling a little. Take them off,
And speak some word or I go mad with
love.

QUEEN.

Will you not have my chaplain come to
you?

CHASTELARD.

Some better thing of yours—some hand-
kerchief,

Some fringe of scarf to make confession
to—

You had some book about you that fell
out—

QUEEN.

A little written book of Ronsard's rhymes,
His gift, I wear in there for love of him—
See, here between our feet.

CHASTELARD.

Ay, my old lord's—

The sweet chief poet, my dear friend long
since?

Give me the book. Lo you, this verse of
his:

*With coming lilies in late April came
Her body, fashioned whiter for their shame;
And roses, touched with blood since Adon
bled,*

*From her fair color filled their lips with
red:*

A goodly praise: I could not praise you so.
I read that while your marriage-feast went
on.

Leave me this book, I pray you: I would
read

The hymn of death ere over ere I die;
I shall know soon how much he knew of
death

When that was written. One thing I
know now,

I shall not die with half a heart at least,
Nor shift my face, nor weep my fault
alive,

Nor swear if I might live and do new
deeds

I would do better. Let me keep the book.

QUEEN.

Yea, keep it: as would God you had kept
your life

Out of mine eyes and hands. I am wrung
to the heart:

This hour feels dry and bitter in my mouth,
As if its sorrow were my body's food

More than my soul's. There are bad
thoughts in me—

Most bitter fancies biting me like birds
That tear each other. Suppose you need
not die?

CHASTELARD.

You know I cannot live for two hours
more.

Our fate was made thus ere our days were
made:

Will you fight fortune for so small a grief?
But for one thing I were full fain of death.

QUEEN.

What thing is that?

CHASTELARD.

None need to name the thing.

Why, what can death do with me fit to
fear?

For if I sleep I shall not weep awake;
Or if their saying be true of things to
come,

Though hell be sharp, in the worst ache
of it

I shall be eased so God will give me back
Sometimes one golden gracious sight of
you—

The aureole woven flowerlike through
your hair,

And in your lips the little laugh as red
As when it came upon a kiss and ceased,

Touching my mouth.

QUEEN.

As I do now, this way,
With my heart after: would I could shed
tears,
Tears should not fail when the heart
shudders so.
But your bad thought ?

CHASTELARD.

Well, such a thought as this:
It may be, long time after I am dead,
For all you are, you may see bitter days;
God may forget you or be wroth with you:
Then shall you lack a little help of me,
And I shall feel your sorrow touching you,
A happy sorrow, though I may not touch:
I that would fain be turned to flesh again,
Fain get back life to give up life for
you,
To shed my blood for help, that long ago
You shed and were not holpen: and your
heart
Will ache for help and comfort, yea, for
love,
And find less love than mine—for I do
think
You never will be loved thus in your life.

QUEEN.

It may be man will never love me more;
For I am sure I shall not love man twice.

CHASTELARD.

I know not: men must love you in life's
spite
For you will always kill them; man by
man
Your lips will bite them dead; yea, though
you would,
You shall not spare one; all will die of you;
I cannot tell what love shall do with these,
But I for all my love shall have no might
To help you more, mine arms and hands
no power
To fasten on you more. This cleaves my
heart,
That they shall never touch your body
more.
But for your grief—you will not have to
grieve;
For being in such poor eyes so beautiful
It must needs be as God is more than I
So much more love he hath of you than
mine;
Yea, God shall not be bitter with my love,
Seeing she is so sweet.

QUEEN.

Ah my sweet fool,
Think you when God will ruin me for sin
My face of color shall prevail so much
With him, so soften the toothed iron's
edge
To save my throat a scar ? nay, I am sure
I shall die somehow sadly.

CHASTELARD.

This is pure grief;
The shadow of your pity for my death,
Mere foolishness of pity: all sweet moods
Throw out such little shadows of them-
selves,
Leave such light fears behind. You, die
like me?
Stretch your throat out that I may kiss all
round
Where mine shall be cut through: suppose
my mouth
The axe-edge to bite so sweet a throat in
twain
With bitter iron, should not it turn soft
As lip is soft to lip ?

QUEEN.

I am quite sure
I shall die sadly some day, Chastelard;
I am quite certain.

CHASTELARD.

Do not think such things;
Lest all my next world's memories of you
be
As heavy as this thought.

QUEEN.

I will not grieve you;
Forgive me that my thoughts were sick
with grief.
What can I do to give you ease at heart ?
Shall I kiss now ? I pray you have no
fear
But that I love you.

CHASTELARD.

Turn your face to me;
I do not grudge your face this death of
mine;
It is too fair—by God, you are too fair.
What noise is that ?

QUEEN.

Can the hour be through so soon ?
I bade them give me but a little hour.

Ah! I do love you! such brief space for love!

I am yours all through, do all your will with me;

What if we lay and let them take us fast,
Lips grasping lips? I dare do anything.

CHASTELARD.

Show better cheer: let no man see you mazed;

Make haste and kiss me; cover up your throat

Lest one see tumbled lace and prate of it.

Enter the Guard: MURRAY, DARNLEY,
MARY HAMILTON, MARY BEATON,
and others with them.

DARNLEY.

Sirs, do your charge; let him not have much time.

MARY HAMILTON.

Peace, lest you chafe the queen: look, her brows bend.

CHASTELARD.

Lords, and all you come hither for my sake,

If while my life was with me like a friend
That I must now forget the friendship of,
I have done a wrong to any man of you,
As it may be by fault of mine I have;
Of such an one I crave for courtesy
He will now cast it from his mind and heed

Like a dead thing; considering my dead fault

Worth no remembrance further than my death.

This for his gentle honor and goodwill
I do beseech him, doubting not to find
Such kindness if he be nobly made
And of his birth a courteous race of man.
You, my lord James, if you have ought
toward me—

Or you, Lord Darnley—I dare fear no jot,

Whate'er this be wherein you were aggrieved,

But you will pardon all for gentleness.

DARNLEY.

For my part—yea, well, if the thing stand thus,

As you must die—one would not hear folk hard—

And if the rest shall hold it honorable,
Why, I do pardon you.

MURRAY.

Sir, in all things

We find no cause to speak of you but well:
For all I see, save this your deadly fault,
I hold you for a noble perfect man.

CHASTELARD.

I thank you, fair lord, for your nobleness.
You likewise, for the courtesy you have
I give you thanks, sir; and to all these lords

That have not heart to load me at my death.

Last, I beseech of the best queen of men
And royallest fair lady in the world
To pardon me my grievous mortal sin
Done in such great offence of her: for,
sirs,

If ever since I came between her eyes
She hath beheld me other than I am
Or shown her honor other than it is,
Or, save in royal faultless courtesies,
Used me with favor; if by speech or face,
By salutation or by tender eyes,
She hath made a way for my desire to live,

Given ear to me or holdness to my breath;
I pray God cast me forth before day cease
Even to the heaviest place there is in hell.

Yea, if she be not stainless toward all men,
I pray this axe that I shall die upon
May cut me off body and soul from heaven.
Now for my soul's sake I dare pray to
you—

Forgive me, madam.

QUEEN.

Yea, I do, fair sir:

With all my heart in all I pardon you.

CHASTELARD.

God! thank you for great mercies. Lords,
set hence;

I am right loth to hold your patience here;

I must not hold much longer any man's.
Bring me my way and bid me fare well
forth.

[As they pass out the QUEEN stays MARY
BEATON.

QUEEN.

Hark hither, sweet. Get back to Holy-
 rood
 And take Carmichael with you: go both
 up
 In some chief window whence the squares
 lie clear—
 Seem not to know what I shall do—mark
 that—
 And watch how things fare under. Have
 good cheer;
 You do not think now I can let him die?
 Nay, this were shameful madness if you
 did,
 And I should hate you.

MARY BEATON.

Pray you love me, madam,
 And swear you love me and will let me
 live,
 That I may die the quicker.

QUEEN.

Nay, sweet, see,
 Nay, you shall see, this must not seem de-
 vised;
 I will take any man with me, and go;
 Yea, for pure hate of them that hate him:
 yea,
 Lay hold upon the headsman and bid
 strike
 Here on my neck; if they will have him
 die,
 Why, I will die too: queens have died this
 way
 For less things than his love is. Nay, I
 know
 They want no blood; I will bring swords
 to boot
 'Tis love's rescue though half earth
 be slain;
 'Tis should men do with blood? Stand
 fast at watch;
 I will be his ransom if I die.

[Exeunt]

SCENE III.—*The Upper Chamber in Holy-
 rood.*MARY BEATON seated: MARY CARMICHAEL
 at a window.

MARY BEATON.

Do you see nothing?

MARY CARMICHAEL.

Nay, but swarms of men
 And talking women gathered in small
 space,
 Flapping their gowns and gaping with
 fools' eyes:
 And a thin ring round one that seems to
 speak,
 Holding his hands out eagerly; no more:

MARY BEATON.

Why, I hear more, I hear men shout *The
 queen.*

MARY CARMICHAEL.

Nay, no cries yet.

MARY BEATON.

Ah, they will cry out soon
 When she comes forth; they should cry out
 on her;
 I hear their crying in my heart. Nay,
 sweet,
 Do not you hate her? all men, if God
 please,
 Shall hate her one day; yea, one day no
 doubt
 I shall worse hate her.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

Pray you, be at peace;
 You hurt yourself: she will be merciful;
 What, could you see a true man slain for
 you?
 I think I could not; it is not like our
 hearts
 To have such hard sides to them.

MARY BEATON.

O, not you,
 And I could nowise; there's some blood in
 her
 That does not run to mercy as ours doth:
 That fair face and the cursed heart in her
 Made keener than a knife for manslaying
 Can bear strange things.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

Peace, for the people come.
 Ah—Murray, hooded over half his face
 With plucked-down hat, few folk about
 him, eyes
 Like a man angered; Darnley after him,
 Holding our Hamilton above her wrist,

His mouth put near her hair to whisper
with—

And she laughs softly, looking at his feet.

MARY BEATON.

She will not live long; God hath given her
Few days and evil, full of hate and love,
I see well now.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

Hark, there's their cry—*The queen!*
Fair life and long, and good days to the
queen.

MARY BEATON.

Yea, but God knows. I feel such patience
here

As I were sure in a brief while to die.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

She bends and laughs a little, graciously,
And turns half, talking to I know not
whom—

A big man with great shoulders; ah, the
face,

You get his face now—wide and duskish,
yea

The youth burnt out of it. A goodly
man,

Thewed mightily and sunburnt to the
bone;

Doubtless he was away in banishment
Or kept some march far off.

MARY BEATON.

Still you see nothing?

MARY CARMICHAEL.

Yea, now they bring him forth with a
great noise,

The folk all shouting and men thrust
about

Each way from him.

MARY BEATON.

Ah, Lord God, bear with me,
Help me to bear a little with my love
For thine own love, or give me some quick
death.

Do not come down; I shall get strength
again,

Only my breath fails. Looks he sad or
blithe?

Not sad I doubt yet.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

Nay, not sad a whit,
But like a man who losing gold or
lands

Should lose a heavy sorrow; his face
set,

The eyes not curious to the right or
left,

And reading in a book, his hands un-
bound.

With short fleet smiles. The whole place
catches breath,

Looking at him; she seems at point to
speak:

Now she lies back, and laughs, with her
brows drawn

And her lips drawn too. Now they read
his crime—

I see the laughter tightening her chin:

Why do you bend your body and draw
breath?

They will not slay him in her sight: I am
sure

She will not have him slain.

MARY BEATON.

Forth, and fear not:

I was just praying to myself—one word,
A prayer I have to say for her to God
If he will mind it.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

Now he looks her side;

Something he says, if one could hear thus
far:

She leans out, lengthening her throat to
hear

And her eyes shining.

MARY BEATON.

Ah, I had no hope:

Yea thou God knowest that I had no
hope.

Let it end quickly.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

Now his eyes are wide

And his smile great; and like another
smile

The blood fills all his face. Her check
and neck

Work fast and hard; she must have par-
doned him,

He looks so merrily. Now he comes
forth

Out of that ring of people and kneels
down;

Ah, how the helve and edge of the great
axe—

Turn in the sunlight as the man shifts hands—

It must be for a show : because she sits
And hardly moves her head this way—I see

Her chin and lifted lips. Now she stands up,

Puts out her hand, and they fall muttering ;

Ah !

MARY BEATON.

It is done now ?

MARY CARMICHAEL.

For God's love, stay there ;

Do not look out. Nay, he is dead by this ;

But gather up yourself from off the floor ;
Will she die too ? I shut mine eyes and heard—

Sweet, do not beat your face upon the ground.

Nay, he is dead and slain.

MARY BEATON.

What, slain indeed ?

I knew he would be slain. Ay, through the neck :

I knew one must be smitten through the neck

To die so quick ; if one were stabbed to the heart,

He would die slower.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

Will you behold him dead ?

MARY BEATON.

Yea : must a dead man not be looked upon

That living one was fain off ? give me way.

Lo you, what sort of hair this fellow had ;

The doomsman gathers it into his hand

To grasp the head by for all men to see ;

I never did that.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

For God's love, let me go.

MARY BEATON.

I think sometimes she must have held it so,

Holding his head back, see you, by the hair

To kiss his face, still lying in his arms.

Ay, go and weep : it must be pitiful

If one could see it. What is this they say ?

So perish the queen's traitors ! Yea, but so

Perish the queen ! God, do thus much to her

For his sake only : yea, for pity's sake

Do thus much with her.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

Prithce come in with me :

Nay, come at once.

MARY BEATON.

If I should meet with her

And spit upon her at her coming in——

But if I live then shall I see one day

When God will smite her lying harlot's mouth—

Surely I shall. Come, I will go with you ;

We will sit down together face to face

Now, and keep silence ; for this life is hard,

And the end of it is quietness at last.

Come, let us go : here is no word to say.

AN USHER.

Make way there for the lord of Bothwell ; room—

Place for my lord of Bothwell next the queen.

EXPLICIT.

BOTHWELL.

DEDICATION.

À VICTOR HUGO.

*Comme un fleur qui donne à l'océan son âme,
J'apporte au lien sacré d'où le vers tonne et luit
Mon drame épique et plein de tumulte et de flamme,
Où vièvre un siècle éteint, où flotte un jour qui suit.*

*Un bruyère qui rugit sous les pieds d'une femme
Passe, et son souffle emplit d'aube et d'ombre et de bruit
Un ciel âpre et guerrier qui luit comme une lame
Sur l'avenir debout, sur le passé détruit.*

*Au fond des cieux hagards, par l'orage battue,
Une figure d'ombre et d'étoiles vêtue
Pleure et menace et brille en s'évanouissant;*

*Éclair d'amour qui blesse et de haine qui tue,
Fleur éclose au sommet du siècle éblouissant,
Rose à tige épineuse et que ronge le sang.*

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MARY STUART.
MARY BEATON.
MARY SEYTON.
MARY CARMICHAEL.
JANE GORDON, Countess of Bothwell.
JANET STUART, Countess of Argyle.
MARGARET LADY DOUGLAS of Lochleven.
LADY RERES.
HENRY LORD DARNLEY, King Consort.
JAMES HEPBURN, Earl of Bothwell.
JAMES STUART, Earl of Murray.
JAMES DOUGLAS, Earl of Morton.
WILLIAM MAITLAND of Lethington, Secretary of State.
JOHN KNOX.
DAVID RIZZIO.
The Earls of HUNTLEY, ARGYLE, CAITHNESS, ROTHES,
CASSILIS, ATHOL, and MAR.
Lords HERRIES, LINDSAY, RUTHVEN, FLEMING.
SEYTON, BOYD, OCHILTREE, HUME, ARBROATH,
and MAXWELL.
The Younger RUTHVEN.
THE MASTER OF OCHILTREE, son to Lord Ochiltree.
THE MASTER OF MAXWELL, son to Lord Herries.
SIR JAMES MELVILLE.
SIR ROBERT MELVILLE.

SIR GEORGE DOUGLAS, uncle to Darnley.
SIR WILLIAM DOUGLAS of Lochleven.
GEORGE DOUGLAS, his brother.
SIR WILLIAM KIRKALDY of Grange.
LORD ROBERT STUART, Abbot of St. Cross.
DU CROC, Ambassador from France.
SIR NICHOLAS THERGOMORTON, Ambassador from
England.
JOHN HAMILTON, Archbishop of St. Andrew's.
JOHN LESLIE, Bishop of Ross.
ARTHUR ERSKINE, Captain of the Guard.
ANTHONY STANDEN and STUART OF TRAQUAIR,
Equerries.
JOHN ERSKINE of Dun.
ANDREW KER of Fouldonside.
HENRY DRUMMOND of Riccarton.
ARCHIBALD BEATON.
JOHN HEPBURN of Belton, ORMISTON, HAY, of Talla,
Conspirators with Bothwell.
CRAWFORD, NELSON, TAYLOR, servants to Darnley.
NICHOLAS HUBERT, surnamed PARIS, servant to Both-
well.
THE PROVOST OF EDINBURGH.
ROBERT CUNNINGHAM, steward to the Earl of Lennox.
Page and Girl attending on Lady Lochleven.

Burgesses, Citizens, Soldiers, Attendants, &c.

TIME—MARCH 9, 1566, TO MAY 16, 1568.

BOTHWELL:

A TRAGEDY.

ACT. I.

SCENE I.—HOLYROOD.

Enter DARNLEY and MARY CARMICHAEL.

Darnley. But you will not believe me though you hear ;
You have no faith : you steer by sight, and see
This fellow gilt and garnished with her grace
Sit covered by the queen where lords stand bare

And jet before them lordlier ; and the sight
Makes firm your faith that in his hand and eye
This land is but a harp to play upon,
Whose strings may turn to serpents or to swords
To maim his hand or charm his eye to death.
You have no faith to see this, or to read
The sentence that ensuing shall write me king,
And worth men's fears or faiths : lo, now you laugh,

As though my hope were braggart, and myself
A fool and mouthpeice of its foolish vaunt :
You have no faith.

Mary Carmichael. I have no wit nor will
To choose between St. David for my lord
And sweet St. Henry.

Darnley. Nay, King David now,
King David psalmist ; but for all his song
I doubt he hath lost the old trick of touch he had
Once in the sword-play.

Mary Carmichael. See you play not Saul,
Who are something of his stature in our eyes,
Much of his mighty presence ; be it not said
He hath snipt your skirts already.

Darnley. Who said that ?
Who speaks of me so, lies to the blood and bone,
To the heart and soul lies. I am no king mayhap—

I do not say yet I shall die no king—
God knows that, and is wise—but man I am,
Look else, who love you—

Mary Carmichael. Sir, be king for me,
It shall content my will to youward, seeing

I take you to be royal, and myself
Honest.

Darnley. Why honest ? what a gibe is this !
What make you of me ?

Mary Carmichael. Yea, what should I make ?
'Tis time I were on service.

Darnley. O, the queen's ?
She gets good service, excellent service done,
And worthy servants hath she—a liberal queen.
Well, if you will.

[Exit MARY CARMICHAEL.]

I would the month were out.
If earth were easier by just one less knave,
I might sleep well and laugh and walk at ease,
With none to mate me.

Enter MORTON.

Ah, my good lord and friend,
I had somewhat I would say—but let words be.
The man you know of—I would you had made
him safe ;

I would have told you this much.

Morton. Sir, the earl
Murray being with us in the main thing here,
Though he keep hand from the red handiwork,
Shall enough help us.

Darnley. Let him know it not then :
Let him stand by : he must not know it. Why,
well,

It is the more our honor : yet would God
He, being not with us, were not anywhere,
But dead, sir, dead. I say, who hath eyes to
see

May see him dangerous to us, and manifest.
Ye have no eyes who see not : for my part,
I noted him at once. Sir, by this light,
When I first saw him—and I have eyes to
see—

I knew what manner of meaning in his face
Lay privy and folded up and sealed and signed.
I would you lords had sight and heart like mine,
He should not long live dangerous ; yet, God
wot,

For my poor personal peril I would match
This body against his better.

Morton. There's no need
Of iron words and matches here of men,
Save this we meet upon ; which being played
out

Leaves our hands full and henceforth peaceable.
For the earl, he makes no part of men's designs,
Nor would I have you keen to strive with him
Who lies yet still and is well liked of men
That are well-willers to this common state
And the open peace of the people. Let him be ;
Keep your heart here.

Darnley. Here is it fixed and set
With roots of iron. 'Tis more honor to us,
Being so more perilous, to have no help
Of popular hands and common friendliness,
But our hearts helpful only. I am sure of her,
That she suspects not—I do surely think :
But yet she is subtle and secret-souled and wise,
Wise woman-fashion ; look you be not caught
Through too much trust in what of her is weak,
In her light mind and mutability,
For subtlety lies close in her light wit,
And wisdom wantons in her wantonness :
I know her, I know her ; I have seen ere now,
and am

Not all to learn in women.

Morton. I believe
Your grace hath grace with women as with men,
And skill of sense alike in those and these,
I doubt not ; which is well and profitable.
For this, how shall she know it, except you slip
And let her wring the truth out from your hand,
Or kiss the truth out, hanging mouth on mouth ?
But if no pressure press from hand or lip
The unripe truth, the fruit so soon so red,
What can she to us, though doubting, help or
harm

How, if she know not surely ?

Darnley. So I say.
And we that do it, we do it for all men's good,
For the main people's love, thankworthily—
And this is matter of law we take in hand,
Is it not, lawful ? for the man is judged,
Doomed dead and damned by sentence, in
good deed,

Though not my scruple and show of trial and
test,

By clearer cause and purer policy—
We cannot stand toward any accountable
As for a slaughter, a treasonable shame,
To mark us red in the world's eyes ? no man
Can say our fame is blotted with his blood,
No man, albeit he hate us, bring in doubt—

Woman or man—our right, our absolute law,
Giving us leave—nay, bidding us do so ?

So that we stand after the deed as now,
In no more danger or fear ?

Morton. In less fear, you,
And much more honor ; now it might please
you fear,

Being overborne of woman and fast bound
With feminine shame and weakness ; the man's
strength,

The sinew and nerve and spirit of royalty,
Hers, and all power to use her power on you
Hers, and all honor and pleasure of high place
That should make sweet your lips and bright
your brows

Hers, and the mockery of mismarried men
Yours.

Darnley. Nay, by God I said so ; why,
I knew it ;

I told you thus aforetime, did I not ?

Morton. Truly and wisely ; if this content
you thus,

He is even our king.

Darnley. Methinks he should be king,
And I, God wot, content. Here came a man
Some few days back, a goodly, a gentleman,
An honorable, that for king knave's behoof
Was stript out of the better of all his lands
As I of what was best part of my wife,
My place, and honor that grows up with hers—
For of her love small fruit was left to strip,
Few leaves for winter weather—but of these,
These good things, am I stript as bare as
shame,

Even beggared as was this man. By God's
light,

It seems this is but justice, doth it not,
And I so gentle and temperate—as, by God,
I was not nor I will not.

Morton. There's more need
That you seem resolutely temperate than
And temperately be resolute, I say,
Till the hour to cast off temperance and put on
Plain passion for the habit of your heart
Which now it wears in darkness, and by day
The cloak and hood of temperance. But these
fits

And gusts and starts of will and will not, these
Blow you this side and that side till men see
Too much, and trust too little.

Darnley. O sir, you are wise,
You are honorable, and a counsellor, and my
friend,

And I too light, too light—yet by this light
I think I am worth more than your counsel is

If I be worth this work here to be done—
I think I am so much.

Morton. It may well be, sir,
And you much wiser; yet forbear your wrath
If you would have it ready to your hand.

Darnley. I will forbear nothing—nor nothing
bear—

Nor live by no man's bidding. This year
through

I have even been surfeited with wise men's
breath

And winds of wordy weather round mine ears—
Do this, spare that, walk thus, look otherwise,
Hold your head kingly, or wisely bow your
neck—

A man might come to doubt himself no man,
Being so long childlike handled. Now, look
you,

Look she, look God to it if I be not man!
Now is my way swept, and my foot shod now,
My wallet full now for the travelling day
That I fare forth and forward, arrow straight,
Girt for the goal, red battle-ripe at need—
As need there is—you are sure—and utter need?

Morton. Is my lord not sure?

Darnley. Ay, as sure as you—
Surer maybe—the need is more of mine—
This grazes your bare hand that grates my
heart:

Your queen it is wrongs you, and me my wife.

Morton. You see that sure, too? sharp
sight, have you not?

Darnley. I saw it, I first—I knew her—
who knew her but I,

That swore—at least I swore to mine own soul,
Would not for shame's sake swear out wide to
the world,

But in myself swore with my heart to hear—
There was more in it, in all their commerce,
more

Than the mere music—he is warped, worn
through,

Bow-bent, uncomely in wholesome eyes that see
Straight, seeing him crooked—but she seeing
awry

Sees the man straight enough for paramour.

This I saw, this I swore to—silently,

Not loud but sure, till time should be to speak
Sword's language, no fool's jargon like his
tongue,

But plain broad steel speech and intelligible,
Though not to the ear, Italian's be it or Scot's,

But to the very life intelligible,
To the loosed soul, to the shed blood—for
blood

There must be—one must slay him—you are
sure—as I am?

For I was sure of it always—while you said,
All you, 'twas council-stuff, state handicraft,
Cunning of card-play between here and there,
I knew 'twas this and more, sir, I kept sight,
Kept heed of her, what thing she was, what
wife,

What manner of stateswoman and governess—
More than all you saw—did you see it or I?

Morton. You saw first surely, and some one
spoke first out—

You had eyes, he tongue—and both bear wit-
ness now

If this must be or not be.

Darnley. Death, is that?

I must kill—bid you kill him?

Morton. Nowise, sir;

As little need of one as the other is here;

As little of either as no need at all.

Darnley. You doubt or hand or tongue
then, sir, of mine?

I would not strike, if need were, or bid strike?

Morton. Neither we doubt, nor neither do
we need—

Having you with us.

Darnley. 'Twas but so you meant?

I had else been angry—nay, half wroth I was—
Not as I took it—I had else been wroth indeed.

Morton. That had been grievous to me and
perilous,

This time of all times.

Darnley. Ay, you need me, ay,

I am somewhat now then, somewhat more than
wont,

Who thus long have been nothing—but will be?
Well, so, I am with you. Shall he die—how
soon?

To-day I had said, but haply not to-day—

There might fall somewhat, something slip
awry,

In such swift work, ha? Then, what day?

Perchance

'Twere better he died abed—or were there
charms,

Spells—it himself though be not witch, drug-
proof

'Tis like, and devil-witted, being a knave

Born poisonous and bred sorcerous like his
kind—

We have heard what manner of plague his south
land spawns,

What sort of kith and kin to hell and him,

How subtle in starry riddles and earth's roots

The dog-leeches that kill your soul in you,

Or only body, or both, as Catherine please,
Mother that was to our Mary—have we not?
We must look to it, and closely look.

Morton. My lord,
Of so much being so sure, of this be too;
That surely and soon in some wise very sure
We are quit of him with God's help or without.

Darnley. Why, that were well. I hold you
resolute;

I pray you stay so, and all is well enough.
We have talked our time out—you had all to
say—

All the thing's carriage—and my mind to take,
Which with plain heart I have made you un-
stand.

My mind is, he must die then: keep you there.
[*Exit.*]

Morton. Had God but plagued Egypt with
fools for flies,
His Jews had sped the quicker.

Enter MARY BEATON.

Is the queen risen,

Lady?

Mary Beaton. Not yet. Was not the king
with you?

I heard him high and shrill.

Morton. Ay, he was here,
If anywhere the king be. You are sad.

Mary Beaton. I am not blithe of bearing,
I wot well,

But the word sad is sadder than I am.

Is he not vexed?

Morton. I have never seen him else,
Save when light-heartedness and loose-hung
brain

Have made him prond and drunken: as of late
He has been but seldom. There's one sad at
least;

If it be sad to hang the head apart,
Walk with brows drawn and eyes disquieted,
Speak sullen under breath, and shrug and swear,
If any move him, and then again fall dumb;
He has changed his fresher manner, and put off
What little grace made his ungracious youth
Fair in men's eyes a little: if this last,
He will not long last in men's lordship here,
Except by love and favor shown of the queen.

Mary Beaton. There he sits strong in surety:
yet men say

He is discontent, disheartened, for distaste
Of the like love and favor shown of her
(Or not the like, yet too much near the like)
Toward Rizzio; but such men, seeing visionary

Run wide in talk, and sleep with speech awake
And sight shut fast: are you not of my mind?

Morton. I am most of theirs whose mind is
most toward hers,

As whose should be most noble; but in truth
Mine own is moved to hear her gracious heart
Mismade of, her clear courtesies misread,
Misliked her liking, her goodwill maligne'd,
Even of his mouth who owes life, breath, and
place,

Honor and title, even to that clear goodwill
To that her grace, liking, and courtesy.

Mary Beaton. You mean our lord and hers
and king of Scots?

Morton. As kingly a king as masterful a
lord,

And no less hers than ours; as strong each way.

Mary Beaton. And he misreads so much the
queen's pure heart

As to mistake aloud her manner of life,
And teach the world's broad open popular ear
His graceless commentary on her mere grace
And simple favor shown a simple knave,
Her chamber-child, her varlet? a poor man,
Stranger, skilled little in great men's policies
—Which is strange too, seeing he hath had
some chance

To learn some tricks of courts and embassies,
Being therein bred, and not so very a fool
But one might teach him—yet no doubt a man,
Save for such teaching, simple and innocent;
Only what heart, what spirit and wit he has,
Being hot and close as fire on the old faith's
side

And the French party's—if his wit were great,
It might do more than simple service soon,
Having her heart as 'twere by the ear which
leans

Still toward his saying or singing; but ye know
There is no peril in him, and the king
More fool than he a knave.

Morton. Well, I know not;
My skill is small in tunes, yet I can tell
Discord between kings' ear and people's tongue
Which hearing as in spirit I forhear
Harsh future music in a state mistuned,
If such men lay but hand upon the keys,
Touch ne'er so slight a string of policy
With ne'er so light a finger: I would the queen,
For the dear faith I bear her, saw but this,
Or that the lords were heavier-eyed to see.

Mary Beaton. Are they so keen of soul as
of their sight,

To slay wrong as to see wrong?

Morton.

'Faith, with us

The hand is matched against the eye for speed ;
And these no slower in stroke of sight and sword

Than their sharp-sighted swift-souled fore-fathers.

I say not this that you should gather fear
Out of my saying to sow in the ear of the queen ;

But for truth's sake ; and truly I do not fear
That I have put fear in you, for you seem
Not lightly fearful to me.

Mary Beaton. I would not be,
Where I might keep good heart and open eye
Nor blind nor fevered with foolhardiness,
As here meseems I may keep ; for I see
No hurt yet nor hurt's danger steer in sight,
Save the mere daily danger of high-raised heads

To be misspoken and misseen of men,
Which is not for high-seated hearts to fear.

Morton. Her heart is high enough, and yours as hers ;

You shall do well to hold your courage fast,
Keeping your wits awake ; whereof myself
I make no doubt, howbeit men fear the queen,
Having our bitter folk and faith to fight,
Out of sharp spirit and high-heartedness
May do such things for love's sake or for wrath's

As fools for fear's sake : which were no less harm

(Turning her wit and heart against herself)
Than to be coward or witless. Fare you well ;

I will not doubt but she is well advised. *[Exit.]*

Mary Beaton. He is but dead by this then.
I did know it ;

And yet it strikes upon me sudden and sharp,
As a thing unthought on. It is strange
To have one's foot as mine is on the verge,
The narrowing threshold of a thing so great,
To have within one's eyeshot the whole way,
The perfect reach of fate from end to end,
From life to life replying and death to death.
This is the first hour of the night, and I
The watcher of the first watch, by whose lamp
The starless sky that grows toward of stars

And the unlit earth and obscure air are seen
Pale as the lamp's self yet not well alight,
Yet by the light of my heart's fire, and mind
Kindled, I see what fires of storm, what flaws,
What windy meteors and cross-counteracting stars,
Shall be through all the watches to the dawn
And bloodlike sunrise of the fire-eyed day.

I am half content already ; and yet I would
This watch were through.

Enter the QUEEN, RIZZIO, and MARY SEYTON.

Queen. Nay, it is later, sure :
I am idle, I am idle, and flattered ; you say wrong,

To find my sloth some pardonable plea,
Which is not pardonable ; a perfect sin,
One writ among the sorest seven of all ;
Enough to load the soul past penitence.
Am I not late indeed ? speak truth and say.

Rizzio. To watchers the sun rises ever late
Though he keep time with summer ; but your grace

Keeps earlier than the sun's time.

Queen. 'Tis but March,
And a scant spring, a sharp and starveling year.

How bitter black the day grows ! one would swear

The weather and earth were of this people's faith,

And their heaven colored as their thoughts of heaven,

Their light made of their love.

Rizzio. If it might please you
Look out and lift up heart to summer-ward,
There might be sun enough for seeing and sense,

To light men's eyes at and warm hands withal.

Queen. I doubt the winter's white is deeper dyed

And closer worn than I thought like to be ;

This land of mine hath folded itself round

With snow-cold, white, and leprous misbelief,
Till even the spirit is bitten, the blood pinched,
And the heart winter-wounded ; these starved slaves

That feed on frost and suck the snows for drink,
Hating the light for the heat's sake, love the cold :

We want some hotter fire than summer or sun
To burn their dead blood through and change their veins.

Rizzio. Madam, those fires are all but ashen dust :

'Tis by the sun we have now to walk warm.

If I had leave to give good counsel tongue

And wisdom words to work with, I would say
Rather by favor and seasonable grace

Shall your sweet light of summer-speaking looks

Melt the hard mould of earth a heart, and
 put
 Spring into spirits of snow. Your husband
 here,
 Who was my friend before your lord, being
 grown
 Doubtful, and evil-eyed against himself,
 With a thwart wit crossing all counsel, turns
 From usward to their close fierce intimacy
 Who are bitterest of the faction against faith.
 And through their violent friendship ha-
 come
 His own and very enemy, being moved
 Of mere loose heart to vex you. No there
 stands
 On the other hand, in no wise bound to him,
 But as your rebel and his enemy
 Cast forth condemned, one that called home
 again
 Might be a bond between the time and you,
 Tying the wild world tamer to your hand,
 And in your husband's hot and unreined mouth
 As bit and bridle against his wandering will.
Queen. What name is his who shall so
 strengthen me?
Rizzio. Your father gave him half a brother's
 name.
Queen. I have no brother; a bloodless
 traitor he is
 Who was my father's bastard born. By heaven,
 I had rather have his head loose at my foot
 Than his tongue's counsel rounded in mine ear.
Rizzio. I would you had called him out of
 banishment.
Queen. Thou art mad, thou art mad; prate
 me no more of him.
Rizzio. He is wise, and we need wisdom;
 penitent,
 And God they say loves most his penitents;
 Stout-hearted and well-minded toward your
 grace,
 As you shall work him, and beguileable
 Now at your need if you but will he be;
 And God he knows if there be need of such.
Queen. No need, no need; I am crowned
 of mine own heart
 And of mine own will weaponed; am I queen
 To have need of traitor's leave to live by, and
 reign
 By the God's grace of these? I will not have it;
 Toward God I swear there shall be no such
 need.
Rizzio. Yet if there were no need, less harm
 it were
 To have him easily on your royal side

While the time serves that he may serve you in-
 Less harm than none, and profit more than less.
Queen. He is a misborn traitor and heretic;
 And of his own side baffled, a flat fool,
 Who thought to have comfort of Elizabeth,
 Large furtherance of my sweet-souled sister's
 love,
 Grace and sure aid of her good plighted word,
 Her honorable and precious plighted word,
 And secret seal to help him; as she durst not,
 Yet she would fain and durst not.
Rizzio. Please you note —
Queen. It shall not please me; I say she
 hath made him kneel,
 (And this does please me indeed) he secret
 him down
 And he spurned him kneeling from her
 foot,
 As my own traitor and subject. David, nay,
 But hath thy careful love not made thee mad,
 Whose counsel was my sword against him
 once?
 Why, thou wast sworn his slayer, and all that
 while
 He held up head against in thy one word
 Bade strike him dead of all men. What, hast
 thou
 Fairly forgot his purpose, were I taken,
 To speed thee out of life? his secret bond,
 Sealed with himself in spirit, shouldst die?
 Wast thou not troth-plight with that soulless boy,
 Ere he might thee, to rid him out of life?
 Nay, and thou knowest how dear a cause I
 have,
 And thou, to slay him when the good chance
 comes,
 Which God make speedy toward us; by my
 hand,
 Too little an light to hold up his dead head
 It was my hope to up it in his life
 Made me ride iron-mailed, a soldieress,
 All those days through we strove them here and
 there,
 Eastward from Fife, and thence her and forth again,
 And broken to the border — yea, all day
 I thought how worth his life it were to ride
 Within the shot-length of my saddlebow
 And try my poor and maiden soldieryship.
 And now I am bidden, and you it is bid me,
 Reach my hand forth forgivingly and meek
 To strike with his for love and policy?
 He is beaten and broke without help of hope,
 Who was mine enemy — er, and ever I knew
 How much he was mine enemy — and now
 maimed,

Wounded, unseated from his power of place,
Shall I raise up again and strengthen him
Warmed and bind up his cold and mangled wounds
With piteous counsels? nay, but when
May he have strength to weaken his
And I be flung under his feet to best
He was your mocking-stock this short while
since.

You swore, men tell me, Did not tell him,
Your ghastly man of counsel—why, so he
He says, you were the bastards' soul
bide

With you in Scotland it made great at y
Put passion in his words when you h
That you should thus be kinglike. He
loved you

To change your heart and face toward him
once.

Or do you mock, or treachery mad in de
That now you turn and cry he is a knave,
Make much of him that he is a knave?

Rizzio. For madam, not
mad,

It were well to see He is a
Well-loved and counsellor and thus fast in
faith,

Yet howsoever in strong opinion
Not much overladen of his own mind
As to be no man or faith's sake;
No fire kindled in his nor wild-acted knave,
But skilled and bred in state soldieryship.
What with it will you to mistle of me?
Say it is so that he is so here
That lead his part before I am his
And not your servant, and you
Made and again unmade his truth,
He hath given me gifts and counsels to

And have the, and here plead his part,
My life hangs upon your life, and yours,
In full and and for mate
For fear and fears and friends, must

And bound to you.
Have the will, having so mighty a match,
On the turn of time,
The stakes of and of a lewd boy.

And thanks to the game
play privily and secret hands.
I will not let his hand upon my
part,

Though it were safe to sweep up gold and all.
Rizzio. But till our side be strong; then
cast him off,
When he hath served to strengthen you so
much

You have no need of any strength of his.
Bear with him but till time and we touch
The heart of the hour that brings our chance
to catch

Hope by the flying hair, and our wheel
Bind fortune and wind-wavering majesty,
To shift no more in the air of any change,
But hang a steady star; then, when the faith
Sits crowned that serve her, and you hold
The triple-treasured kingdom in your lap,
That shall bid you set a sudden foot

Where please you, on their hearts or
head

That in their season were found serviceable,
And now a stone of stumbling? Time takes

And he may to you, or else out
And handle his sharp point of time,
To the way or that;

And a state, why, having served,
Seasonal tript out of these
And you would do the friend a courtesy

Who has still been found secret and Catholic,
Lantern's eye of counsel in close dark,

While he did blind man's service; but till then
Let him keep land and name, and all he will,

And blindly serve to the blind end in trust,
To make a naked fool. That this may be

I am firm in faith, may it be but with will.
Queen. He will not help us to own
faith down;

He is no hawk to seel and then
Fly at strange fowl and pluck back to

Rizzio. Beshink you, madam, he
his kind

Stood out against men hotter in heresy,
Spoke down their speeches, overbore

Knox,
Broke with his cardinal's college of shrewd
saints,

In your free faith's defence, that would have
barred you

From custom of religion; and I wot,
Save for his help, small help had found my queen

From Huntley or Hamilton, her faith-fellows,
Or any their co-worshippers with her.

Queen. Thou art ever saying them wrong;
they are stout and sure,

Even they that strove for honor's sake with us:
Their one least fault I am minded to forgive;

True friends in faith, my dear own blood and
kin,

No birthless bastards nor mistitled men.
It pleased me bid him into banishment.

And shall not lightly please me bid him back.

Rizzio. Yet some men banished for no less
a cause

It has been known you have loosed from
banishment.

I tell you for true heart.

Queen. Nay, I well know it ;
You are good and faithful to us, God quit it you,
And well of us loved back ; how much, you
know,

But more than is our fear of men's missaying.
For me, I find no such foul faultiness
In the lord Bothwell but might well be purged
After long trial of English prison-bands
And proof of loyal lips and close true heart
Whereout no gaoler could pluck dangerous
speech,

And then with overpassing to and fro
The strait sea wide enough to wash him white
Twixt France and us : and all this jarring year
You have seen with what a service, in full field,
Oft in our need he hath served us ; nor was it
Such matter of treason and nowise pardonable
To mix his wits with Arran's broken brain
In their device to entrap mine hand with his
For high state's sake and strong-winged policy,
When he was matched with me in most men's
mouths

And found not yet for changeling or for fool.
But howsoever, it pleased me pardon him ;
And a stout spear for warden have I won.
I have help myself in help of him, who now
Hath with good works undone his dead mis-
deeds,

And left their memory drowned in the under sea
That swept them out and washed him in again,
A man remade ; and fail me whoso fails,
Him I hold fast my friend ; but those cast out
That rose up right between my will and me
To make me thrall and bondslave to their own,
Giving me prison and them swift banishment
Whom I gave honor, and cast the crown away
And break the old natural heart of royalty,
For foul faith's sake or craft of their miscreed ;
That smote with sword or speech against all
state,

Not through blind heat or stumbling hardihood,
But hate of holiness and height of mind,
Hateful to kingly truth, haters of kings ;
Them though I pardon I would not take to
trust,

Nor bind up their loose faith with my belief,
For all assurances of all men borrr.

Besides, I hate him, singly.

Rizzio. I have said, and say ;
Do you as time will turn it ; time turns all.

Queen. I do believe there is no man's estate
So miserable, so very a helpless thing,
So trodden under and overborne as mine.

For first the man that I set up for lord,
For master of mine and mate of only me,
Have I perforce put forth of my shamed bed
And broken on his brows the kingless crown,
Finding nor head for gold nor hand for steel
Worth name of king or husband, but the throne
Lordless, the heart of marriage husbandless,
Through his foul follies ; then in the utter
world,

In the extreme range and race of my whole life
Through all changed times and places of its
change,

Having one friend, I find a foe of him
To my true sense and soul and spirit of thought
That keeps in peace the things of its own peace,
Secret and surely ; in faith, this frets my faith,
Distunes me into discord with myself,
That you should counsel me against my scul.
I pray you do not.

Rizzio. Nay, I will no more.
But if you take not Murray again to trust
At least in short sweet seeming for some while,
So to subdue him as with his own right hand
And all chief with him of his creed and crew,
Then, cleaving to the old counsel, suddenly
Have him attainted, and being so brought in
By summons as your traitor, with good speed
Have off his head ; let him not live to turn ;
Choose you sure tongues to doom him, hands
to rid,

And be his slaying his sentence ; for the rest,
Make to your friends Argyle and Chatelherault
And such more temperate of their faction found
As may be servants to your pardoning hand
If they be separable ; but anyway
In pardoning these forgive not half his fault
With half their pardon ; cut no branch of his
But the root only ; strike not but at heart
When you strike him ; he hath done and borne
too much

To live 'twixt that and this unreconciled,
Having on this hand his conspiracy,
On that your proclamation ; his head priced,
His life coursed after with hot hound and horn,
His wife thrust forth hard on her travelling
time

With body soft from pangs and delicate
To roam in winter-bound and roofless woods ;
These things not wholly with your grace wiped
off

And washed with favor and fair-faced love away
Must work within him deadly and desperate.

Queen.

I find your counsel in you, no strange tongue,
But the old stout speech and sure; and this
same day

Will I set hand to it. I have chosen the lords
That shall attain in council these men fled
Of mortal treason; and some two hours hence
My tongue through their strange lips shall speak
him dead

Who is only my heart's hated among men.
I am gay of heart, light as a spring south-wind,
To feed my soul with his foretasted death.
You know the reason I have, you know the
right

And he the danger of it, being no fool,
For fool he is not; I would he were but fool.
O, I feel dancing motions in my feet,
And laughter moving merrily at my lips,
Only to think him dead and hearsed, or
hanged—

That were the better. I could dance down
his life,
Sing my steps through, treading on his dead
neck,

For love of his dead body and cast-out soul.
He shall talk of me to the worm of hell,
Prate in death's ear and with a speechless
tongue

Of my dead doings in days gone out. Sweet
lord,

David, my good friend and my chancellor,
I thank you for your counsel.

Rizzio.

May it be
Prosperously mine! but howsoever, I think
It were not well, when this man is put down,
Though Lethington be wily or Melville wise,
To make your stay of any other man.

Queen. I would I had no state to need no
stay;

God witness me, I had rather be reborn
And born a poor mean woman, and live low
With harmless habit and poor purity
Down to my dull death-day, a shepherd's wife,
Than a queen clothed and crowned with force
and fear.

Rizzio. Are you so weary of crowns, and
would not be
Soon wearier waxen of sheepfolds?

Queen.

'Faith who knows?
But I would not be weary, let that be
Part of my wish. I could be glad and good
Living so low, with little labors set
And little sleeps and watches, night and day
Falling and flowing as small waves in low sea
From shine to shadow and back, and out and in

Now

Among the firths and reaches of low life:

I would I were away and well. No more,
For dear love talk no more of policy.

Let France and faith and envy and England be,
And kingdom go and people; I had rather
rest

Quiet for all my simple space of life,
With few friend's loves closing my life-days in
And few things known and grace of humble
ways—

A loving little life of sweet small works.

Good faith, I was not made for other life;

Nay, do you think it? I will not hear thereof;

Let me hear music rather, as simple a song,

If you have any, as these low thoughts of mine,

Some lowly and old-world song of quiet men.

Rizzio. Then is the time for love-songs when
the lip

Has no more leave to counsel; even so be it;

I will sing simply, and no more counsel you.

Queen. Be not unfriends; I have made you
wroth indeed,

Unknowning, and pray you even for my no fault

Forgive and give me music; I am athirst

For sweet-tongued pardon only.

Rizzio. If this be harsh,
The pardon be for fault enforced of mine.

Love with shut wings, a little ungrown love,
A blind lost love, alit on my shut heart,

As on an unblown rose an unfledged dove;

Feeble the flight as yet, feeble the flower.

And I said, show me if sleep or love thou art,

Or death or sorrow or some obscurer power;

Show me thyself, if thou be some such power,

If thou be god or spirit, sorrow or love,

That I may praise thee for the thing thou art.

And saying, I felt my soul a sudden flower

Full-fledged of petals, and thereon a dove

Sitting full-feathered, singing at my heart.

Yet the song's burden heavier on my heart
Than a man's burden laid on a child's power

Surely most bitter of all sweet things thou art,

And sweetest thou of all things bitter, love;

And if a poppy or if a rose thy flower

We know not, nor if thou be kite or dove.

But nightingale is none nor any dove
That sings so long nor is so hot of heart

For love of sorrow or sorrow of any love;

Nor all thy pain hath any or all thy power,

Nor any knows thee if bird or god thou art,

Or whether a thorn to think thee or whether a flower.

But surely will I hold thee a glorious flower,

And thy tongue surely sweeter than the dove

Muttering in mid leaves from a fervent heart

Something divine of some exceeding love.

If thou being god out of a great god's power

Wilt make me also the glad thing thou art.

Will no man's mercy show me where thou art,
That I may bring thee of all my fruit and flower,
That with loud lips and with a molten heart
I may sing all thy praises, till the dove
That I desire to have within my power
Fly at thy bidding to my bosom, love?

Clothed as with power of pinions, O my heart,
Fly like a dove, and seek one sovereign flower,
Whose thrall thou art, and sing for love of love.

Queen. It sings too southerly for this harsh
north ;

This were a song for summer-sleeping ears,
One to move dancing measures in men's feet
Red-shod with reek o' the vintage. Who went
there?

What, hear you not?

Mary Seyton. My lord of Bothwell's foot :
His tread rings iron, as to battle-ward.

Queen. Not his, it was not. See if it be
indeed.

'Twas a good song. Something he had with
me—

I thank you for your song—I know not what.
Let him come in. Sir, be with us to-night—
I knew it was late indeed—at supper-time.

Rizzio. Madam, till night I take my loyal
leave.

God give you good of all things. [*Exit.*]

Queen. Dost he mock me?
I care not neither ; I know not. Stay with us.

Enter BOTHWELL.

Good morrow, sir : we bade you, did we not?
Be with us after noon ; 'tis not noon near.
And you are truer than your own word ; and
that,

'Tis a true man's and trusty.

Bothwell. True it should be,
Madam, if truth be true, and I your thrall
And truth's for your sake.

Queen. I would know of you—
I know not what—something there was to
know.

I would you were not warden—as in truth
I think to unmake you—of the marches there.
'Tis a fierce office. You have a royal sword,
At least a knightly ; I would not see it hacked
rough

In brawling border dangers.

Bothwell. Anywhere
Hand, hilt, and edge are yours, to turn and
take,

Use or throw by, you know it.

Queen.

I know it indeed.

I have not many hearts with me, and hold
Precious the hearts I have and the good hands.
Ladies, we have somewhat with our servant
here

That needs no counsel and no ear of yours,
So gives you leave. [*Ereunt MARIES.*]

I know not why they are gone ;
I have nothing with you secret.

Bothwell. Yea, one thing ;
You cannot help it ; your face and speech and
look

Are secret with me in my secret heart.

Queen. I know not that ; I would I did
know that.

'Tis yet not twelve days since I saw you wed
To my dear friend, and with what eye you
know

Who would not, for all love that I might make
And suit to you, give ear to me and be
In mine own chapel at the holy mass
Made one with her ; for all the feast we kept,
No jewel of mine bequeathed your wife might
buy

Consent of you to take her wedded hand
After the church-rite of her faith and mine ;
And how much love went with your policy
I cannot tell ; yet was my will content
That you should wed her name and house, to
bring

The race of Gordon on our side again,
And have its ruin rebuild'd and its might
Restored to do us service ; so you said,
And so I thought I knew your mind to stand ;
Being so fast bound to me, I need not doubt
She could but hold you by the hand, and I
That had you by the heart need grudge not
that,

While time gave order, and expediency
Required of us allowance ; but in faith
I know not whether there be faith or no
Save in my heart wherein I know too sure
How little wisdom is to trust in man.

So comes it, as you see, for all my show,
I am ill at heart and tired.

Bothwell. 'Tis your own blame.

Queen. Yea, now, what would you have me ?

I am yours to do it :

But you say nothing ; yet you say too much.
My blame it is, my weary waste of breath.
My wretched hours and empty bloodless life,
My sleepy vigils and my starting sleeps,
All by my fault—if it be fault to be
More than all men loving, all women true,
To hunger with the foodless heart of grief
And wither with the tearless thirst of eyes,

To wander in weak thought through unsown fields

Past unrequited sheaves of vision ; to be blind,
Weak, sick and lame of spirit and poor of soul,
And to live loveless for love's bitter sake
And have to food loathing, and shame for drink,
And see no cease or breach in my long life
Where these might end or die ; my fault it is,
And I will kill my fault : for I that loved
Will live to love no living thing again.

Bothwell. As you will, then.

Queen. Nay, do not tread on me ;

I am lying a worm out of your way, and you
Turn back to bruise me. I am stricken sore
enough ;

Do not worse wound me ; I am hurt to the
heart.

You change and shift quicker than all good
things,

That all change quickly : I am fast, and can-
not change.

If you do hold me so, fast in your heart,

You should not surely mock me.

Bothwell.

I mock you not.

You are looser and lighter-tempered than the
wind,

And say I mock you : 'tis you mock yourself,
And much more me that wot not of your mind,
What would you have and would not.

Queen.

Nothing, I,

Nothing but peace, and shall not. By my faith,
I think no man ever loved woman well.

You laugh and thrust your lips up, but 'tis
truth,

This that I think, not your light lewd man's
thought,

But in my meaning it is bitter true.

By heaven, I have no heart for any on earth,

Any man else, nor any matter of man's,

But love of one man ; nay, and never had.

Bothwell. I do believe it, by myself I do,

Who am even the self-same natured ; so I
know it.

Queen. What heart you have to hurt me ?

I am no fool

To hate you for your heat of natural heart.

I know you have loved and love not all alike,

But somewhat all I hate you not for that.

When have I heard of it ? sought out
times

To wrangle with. I crossed you with my-
self ?

What have I said, what done, by saying or
deed

To vex you for my love's sake ? and have been

For my part faithful beyond reach of faith,
Kingdomless queen and wife unknighted,
Till in you reigning I might reign and rest.
I have kept my body, yea from wedded bed,
And kept mine hand, yea from my sceptre's
weight,

That you might have me and my kingdom
whole ;

What have these done to take you, what to
keep,

Worth one day's doing of mine yet ? Ah, you
know,

For all the shape and show of things without,
For all the marriage and the bodily bond
And fleshly figure of community,

I have loved no man, man never hath had me
whole,

I am virgin toward you : O my love, love, love,

This that is not yours in me I abhor,

I pray God for your sake it may be false,

Foolish and foul : I would not have it man,

Not manlike, and not mine, it shall not be,

Being none of love's, and rootless in my soul,

Not growing of my spirit but my blood ;

I hate myself till it be born.

Bothwell.

Ay, sweet,

You talk now loud of love, but ten days since

Was I not bid love well your friend, and be

True husband to her ? what sweet-tongued
preacher then

Taught me how faith should best be kept by
change

Of passionate fear and pleasure and bright pain

And all their strange sharp sweet solitudes

For such good gifts as wisdom gives and takes

From hand to married hand of them that wed ?

Whose counsel was this wisdom ? whose com-
mand

This that set sorrow and silence as one seal

On the shut lips of foolishness and love ?

Queen.

I bade you not be wise ; or if I bade,

It was to be obeyed not.

Bothwell.

Then indeed

I did obey not, who did foolishly

To do your bidding.

Queen.

Mine ? did I say, go ?

Did I say, love her ? did I say, hate me ?

As you must hate to love her. Yea, perchance

I said all this ; I know not if I said ;

But all this have you done ; I know that well.

Bothwell.

Indeed I have done all this if
aught I have,

And loved at all or loathed, save what mine
eye

Hath ever loathed or loved since first it saw

That face which taught it faith and made it
first

Think scorn to turn and look on change, or
see

How hateful in my love's sight are their eyes
That give love's light to others.

Queen.

Tell her so,
Not me ; I care not though you love your wife
So well that all strange women's eyes and mine
Are hateful to you. O, what heart have I,
That jest and wrangle ? but indeed I thought
You should do well to love her not, but wed,
And make you strong and get us friends—but,
nay,

God knows I know not what I thought, or why,
When you should wed her : now I think but
this,

That if one love not she does well to die,
And if one love she does not well to live.
I pray you, go ; not for my love who pray,
But that for love's sake we thought well to part,
And if we loved not it was well indeed.
Go.

Bothwell. To what end ? and whither ?
whencesoe'er,
I must come back.

Queen. Not to my feet, not mine ;
Where should his end be for a married man
To lie down lightly with all care cast off
And sleep more sound than in love's lap ? for
sleep

Between the two fair fiery breasts of love
Will rest his head not oft, nor oft shut eyes,
They say, that love's have looked on.

Bothwell. By that law
Mine eyes must wake for ever.

Queen. Nay, for shame,
Let not the fire in them that feeds on mine
Strike fire upon my cheeks ; turn off their
heat,

It takes my breath like flame and smothers me.
What, when I bid ?

Bothwell. You have bid me do before
What you have chid me doing, but never yet
A thing so past all nature hard, nor now
Shall chide me for obedience.

Queen. Well—ah me !—
I lack the heart to chide ; I have borne too
much

And haply too much loved. Alas, and now
I am fain too much to show it ; but he that
made

Made me no liar, nor gave me craft with power
To choose what I might hide at will or show.
I am simple-souled and sudden in my speech,

Too swift and hot of heart to guard my lips
Or else lie lightly : wherefore while I may,
Till my time come to speak of hate or love,
I will be dumb, patient as pity's self
Gazing from Godward down on things of the
earth

And dumb till the time be : would I were God,
Time should be quicker to lend help and hand
To men that wait on him. I will not wait,
Lest I wait over long, no more than need,
By my long love I will not. Were I a man,
I had been by this a free man.

Bothwell.

Be content.

If I have any wit of soldiership,
'Tis not far off from this to the iron day
That sets on the edge of battle, the bare blow,
All that we fight or fret for. 'Tis not like
Men will bear long with their own lingering
hopes

And hearts immitigable and fiery fears
That burn above dead ashes of things quenched
Hotter for danger, and light men forth to fight,
And from between the breaking ranks of war
The flower must grow of all their fears and
hopes,

Hopes of high promise, fears made quick by
faith,

Angers, ambitions ; which to gather and wear
Must be our toil and garland.

Queen.

My heart's lord,

I put my heart and hands into your hand
To hold and help ; do you what thing in the
world

Shall seem well to you with them, they content
Live with your love or die. For my one part,
I would I had done with need of forging words
That I might keep truth pure upon my lips.
I am weary of lying, and would not speak
word more

To mock my heart with and win faith from men
But for the truth's sake of my love, which lies
To save the true life in me.

Bothwell.

It may be

You shall not long need to dress love in lies ;
This plighted plague of yours hath few men
friends

To put their bodies between death and his.

Queen. Nay, I think not ; and we shall
shape us friends

Out of the stuff of their close enmities
Wherewith he walks enwoven and wound about
To the edge and end of peril ; yet God knows
If I for all my cause would seek his death,
Whose lips have stained me with report as foul
As seem to mine their kisses that like brands

Sear my shamed face with fire to think on them;
Yet would I rather let him live, would God
Without mine honor or my conscience hurt
Divide from mine his star or bid it set
And on my life lift up that light in heaven
That is my day of the heart, my sun of soul,
To shine till night shut up those loving eyes
That death could turn not from it though the
fire

Were quenched at heart that fed them. Nay,
no more :

Let me go hence and weep not. [Exit.

Bothwell. Fire, in faith,
Enough to light him down the way of the
worm

And leave me warmer. She went suddenly ;
Doth she doubt yet ? I think by God's light
no --

I hold her over fast by body and soul,
Flesh holds not spirit closer. Now what way
To shift him over the edge and end of life
She laughs and talks of, yet keep fast my foot
On the strait verge of smooth-worn stony
things

That we stand still or slide on ? 'Tis a shoal
Whereon the goodliest galleon of man's hope
That had no burning beacon such as mine
Lit of her love to steer by, could not choose
But run to wreck.

Re-enter MARY BEATON.

Mary Beaton. Pray you, my lord, a word.
If you know aught of any new thing here
You will not be about the court to-night ;
It not, of my good will I counsel you,
Make hence in speed and secret, and have
hope

Till the next day lighten your days to come.

Bothwell. I had rather the close moon and
stars anight

Lit me to love-bed : what warm game is here
That I must keep mine hand out ?

Mary Beaton. Such a game
As you shall win and play not, or my wit
Is fallen in sickness from me. Sir, you know
I am your friend, I have your hap at heart,
Glad of your good and in your crosses crossed ;
I pray you trust me, and be close and wise,
For love of your own luck.

Bothwell. Tell me one thing,
What hand herein shall Master David hold ?

Mary Beaton. I think he will not hold the
like alive.

[Exit.

SCENE II.—THE HIGH STREET.

BURGESSES and PEOPLE.

First Citizen. Was it not shown long since
when she came in
If God were glad of her ? Two days and
nights

Ere she brought strife among us, and again
Two nights and days when first we saw her
face,

We saw not once by day the sun's in heaven,
The moon's by night, or any space of stars,
But thick sick mist corrupting the moist air
With drench of darkness, so that scarce at noon
Might man spy man a bow-shot's length away ;
And in man's memory on that day of the year
Was never a more dolorous face of heaven
Seen so to scowl on summer, as to speak
What comfort should come with her to this
land ;

But then were most eyes blind.

Second Citizen. These five years since
Has God filled full of signs that they might see,
And sent his plagues to open them ; and most
This year or twain what portents of his hand
Have writ us down in heaven and trembling
earth

For fearful flatterers and for faithless friends
Whose fear and friendship have no part in him.
Who knows not or can read not ? famine, fros
Storms of stars crossing, and strange fires in
the air,

Have these no tongues to chide with ?

Third Citizen. Why, at first
A man that was no seer might see what end
Should come on us that saw the mass come in
And held our hand when man by man fell off
And heart by heart was cooled of all its heat
By sprinkled holy-water of the court
In five days' space, tempering the fervent edge
That had been fiercest on God's side ; Lord
James,

Whose heart should weep now for it, or burn
again

With shame to think how he made strong their
hands

Who have cast him out among the banished
lords

That lack their life in England, kept himself
The chapel-door, that none who loved God's
law

Might slay the idolatrous and whorish priest
In his mid sin ; and after mass was said

Lord Robert and Lord John of Coldingham,

Who then had put not off our cause, but sat
With faithful men as fellows at God's board,
Conveyed him to his chamber : there began
The curse that yet constrains us, and must fall
On more than these ; of whom ye know this
John

Is now before the face o' the fire of God,
And ere he died in desperate penitence,
Men say, sent warning to his sister queen
To turn her feet from those unquiet ways
Wherein they tread behind the Pope's to hell.

First Citizen. His life was like his brother's
of St. Cross,

As foul as need or friar's or abbot's be
That had no shameful part in a king's race,
And made such end as he that lives may make,
Whose bastard blood is proud yet, and insults
As might a prince's or a priest's indeed,
Being truly neither, yet with either name
Signed as in scorn ; these are our lords, whose
lust

Breaks down men's doors to fetch their daughters forth,

Even as his townsmen vexed the doors of Lot
Till God sent on them fire, who spares but
these

For our shame's sake, because we spare, being
men,

And let our hands hang swordless, and the
wrath

Faith in our hearts, that though God send none
down

Should be made fire to make a fire of them.

Third Citizen. These fools and foul that
with them draw the king
To shame and riotous insolence which turns
Past hope and love to loathing—these, though
vile,

Have in them less of poison than men's tongues
Who for the queen's love boast in what brief
while

They will pluck down God and plant Antichrist,
And pull out Knox by the ears : thus Bothwell
did,

And yet stands higher than any head save his
Who in disdain of danger fills his hands
As full of gold as are his faithless lips
Of lies and bloody counsels, and requires
No less than part in all their forfeit lands
That live in exile, so to turn his name
From loon to lord, from stranger into Scot,
And next the Pope's exalt it : while this king
Sets all his heart to fleshly foolishness,
The beastlike body that eats up the soul
As a bird snared and eaten : and in fear

Of God and Rimmon, with a supple soul,
Crooks his lithe knee for craft and bows his
back

In either's house, yet seeks no prophet's leave,
Nor hears his saying that God shall spew the
like

Out of his mouth.

Second Citizen. Yet this good grows in him,
That he has fallen in anger with the queen
For her knave's sake that was his closest friend,
Chief craftsman and main builder of the match ;
Yea, half his heart, brother and bedfellow,
Sworn secret on his side.

Third Citizen. There are who think
They have changed beds in very and shameful
deed,

And halved more than their own hearts.

First Citizen. He came here
On the Pope's party, against our kindly lords,
Against the duke, our first more natural head,
Against the good will of all godliness ;
And hath he now cast their cords from him ?
nay,

This is the stormy sickness of ill blood
Swelling the veins of sin in violent youth
That makes them wrangle, but at home and
heart,

Whatever strife there seem of hands abroad,
They are single-minded in the hate of God.
Did he not break forth into bitterness,
Being warned by Knox of youth and empty
heart,

Yea, rail aloud as one made mad with wine ?
Did he not lay devices with this knave
That now ye say defiles him in his wife
To rid the noble Murray from their way
That they might ride with hotter spurs for hell ?
Second Citizen. God hath set strife betwixt
them that their feet

Should not be long time out of their own snares.
Here be the men we look for comfort from,
Men that have God's mark sharp upon the soul ;
Stout Ochiltree, and our main stay John Knox.

Enter JOHN KNOX and OCHILTREE.

Ochiltree. Have you yet hope that for his
people's sake
God will leave off to harden her hard heart,
That you will yet plead with her ?

John Knox. Nay, I know not ;
But what I may by word or witness borne,
That will I do, being bidden : yet indeed
I think not to bring down her height of mind
By counsel or admonishment. Her soul

Is as a flame of fire, insatiable,
And subtle as thin water ; with her craft
Is passion mingled so inseparably
That each gets strength from other, her swift
wit

By passion being enkindled and made hot,
And by her wit her keen and passionate heart
So tempered that it burn itself not out,
Consuming to no end. Never, I think,
Hath God brought up against the people of
God

To try their force or feebleness of faith
A foe than this more dangerous, nor of mood
More resolute against him.

Ochiltree. So long since
You prophesied of her when new come in :
What then avails it that you counsel her
To be not this born danger that she is,
But friends with God she hates and with his
folk

She would root out and ruin ?

John Knox. Yet this time
I am not bidden of him to cast her off ;
I will speak once ; for here even in our eyes
His enemies grow great and cast off shame.
We are haled up out of hell to heaven, and
now

They would fain pluck us backward by the
skirt.

And these men call me bitter-tongued and
hard

Who am not bitter ; but their work and they
Who gather garlands from the red pit-side
To make foul fragrance in adulterous hair,
And lift white hands to hide the fires of God,
Their sweetness and their whiteness shall he
turn

Bitter and black. I have no hate of her,
That I should spare ; I will not spare to strive
That the strong God may spare her, and not
man.

Ochiltree. Yea, both, so be we have our
lost lords home,
And the Pope's back-bowed changeling clean
cast out

And of a knave made carrion.

John Knox. For your first,
It grows as fruit out of your second wish ;
Come but the day that looks in his dead face,
And these that hate him as he hates all good
Shall have their friends home and their honor
high

Which the continuance of his life keeps low.

Ochiltree. Surely, for that, my hand or any's
else

Were hot enough to help him to his end.

Yet when this thing is through and this plague
purged

There stands a thorn yet in our way to prick—
The loose weak-witted half-souled boy called
king.

John Knox. It is of him I am bidden speak
with her,

Having but now rebuked him backsliding
In God's sight and his name. It may be yet,
Whether by foolishness and envious heart
Or by some nobler touch left in his blood,
Some pulse of spirit that beats to a tune more
high

Than base men set their hearts by, he will turn
Helpful to Godward, serviceable in soul
To good men's ends in hate of that they hate :
I cannot say ; howbeit I fear not much
Her love of him will keep him fast to her ;
If he be drawn in bonds after her wheels,
It will be but of subtle soul and craft
The cords are woven that hold him. But, for
me,

Love they or hate, my way is clear with them ;
Not for her sake nor his sake shall our Lord
Change counsel and turn backward ; and save
his

What will or wit I have to speak or live
He knows who made it little for myself,
But for him great ; and be you well assured
Love of their love nor doubt of their dislike
Hath upon me more power than upon God.
For now I have seen him strive these divers
years

With spirits of men and minds exorbitant,
Souls made as iron and their face as a flame
Full hard and hot against him, and their wits
Most serpent-strong and swift, sudden of
thought

And overflowing of counsel, and their hands
Full of their fortune, and their hearts made
large

To hold increase of all prosperities ;
And all these are not, and I poor man am,
Because he hath taken and set me on his side
And not where these were ; I am content alone
To keep mine own heart in his secret sight
Naked and clean, well knowing that no man
born

Shall do me scathe but he hath bidden him do,
Nor I speak word but as he hath set it me.

First Citizen. Goes he to Holyrood ?

Second Citizen. Ay, sir, by noon.

First Citizen. There is a kindling trouble
in the air ;

The sun is halting toward the top of day :
It will be shine or rain before he come.

Ochiltree. What ails this folk to hover at our heel

And hang their eyes on you so heedfully ?

John Knox. They should be naturally disquieted

Seeing what new wind makes white the wave
o' the time

We ride on out of harbor. Sirs, ye have heard
News of your scathe and of shame done to God,
And the displeasure bites you by the heart,
I doubt not, if your hearts be godly given ;
Make your souls strong in patience ; let your
wrath

Be rather as iron than as fuel in fire,
Tempered and not consumed ; heat that burns
out

Leaves the hearth chillier for the flameless ash
Than ere the wood was kindled.

First Citizen. Master Knox,
You know us whereto we would and by what
way ;

This too much patience burns our cheeks with
shame

That our hands are not redder than our face
With slaying of manslaughterers who spill blood of
faith

And pierce the heart of naked holiness ;
It is far gone in rumor how the queen
Will set on high and feed on gold that man
Who was a scourge laid long since on the saints,
The archbishop of St. Andrew's, and perforce,
Dyed as he stands in grain with innocent blood,
Will make him mightier for our scathe and
shame

Than ere the kindly people of the word
Had made him bare of bad authority.

Second Citizen. Likewise she hath given
her seal imperial

To a lewd man and a stranger, her own knave,
Vile, and a papist ; that with heart and song
Makes her way smoother toward the pit of hell.

John Knox. What needs us count and cast
offences up

That all we know of, how all these have one
head,

The hateful head of unstanch'd misbelief ?
For sins are sin-begotten, and their seed
Bred of itself and singly procreative ;
Nor is God served with setting fire to this
For evil evidence of several shame,
That one may say, Lo now, so many are they ;
But it one seeing with God-illumined eyes
On his full face the encountering face of sin

Smite once the one high-fronted head and slay,
His will we call good service. For myself,
If ye will make a counsellor of me,
I bid you set your heart against one thing
To burn it up, and keep your hearts on fire,
Not seeking here a sign and there a sign,
Nor curious of all casual sufferances,
But steadfast to the undoing of that thing done
Whereof you know the being, however it be,
And all the doing abominable of God.
Who questions with a snake if the snake sting ?
Who reasons of the lightning if it burn ?
While these things are, deadly will these things
be ;

And so the curse that comes of cursed faith.

First Citizen. It is well said.

Second Citizen. Ay, and well done were
well.

Third Citizen. We have borne too long for
God, we that are men,

Who hath time to bear with evil if he would,
Having for life's length even eternity ;
But we that have but half our life to live,
Whose half of days is swallowed of their nights,
We take on us this lame long-suffering,
To sit more still and patienter than God,
As though we had space to doubt in, and long
time

For temperate, quiet, and questionable pause.

First Citizen. Let the time come—

Second Citizen. Nay, we must make the
time,
Bid the day bring forth to us the fruit we would
Or else fare fruitless forth.

Third Citizen. It is high noon ;
There will be shine and rain and shine ere
night.

SCENE III.—HOLYROOD.

*The QUEEN and RIZZIO ; MARY SEYTON and
MARY CARMICHAEL in attendance.*

Queen. Is he so tender-tongued ? it is his
fear

That plucks the fang out from his hate, and
makes

A stingless snake of his malignant heart ;
He hath a mind, or had he a mind at all,
Would have a mind to mischief ; but his will
Is a dumb devil.

Rizzio. Why, fear then and no love
Will make faith in him out of falsehood's self,
And keep him constant through unstableness.

Queen. Fear that makes faith may break
 faith; and a fool
 Is but in folly stable. I cannot tell
 If he indeed fear these men more than me ;
 Or if he slip their collar, whether or no
 He will be firm on my side, as you say,
 Through very lightness ; but I think not of
 him,
 Steadfast or slippery. Would I had been that
 day
 Handless, when I made one his hand with
 mine !
 Yet it seemed best. I am spirit-sick and faint
 With shame of his foul follies and touched life,
 Which hath no part but lewdness of a man,
 Nor lath of soul nor several quality,
 Dividing men from men, and man from beast,
 By working heart or complement of brain—
 None, very none. I will not see him to-night.
 I have given command to ensure our privacy.
 Is it past noon ?

Enter DARNLEY and MARY BEATON.

Darnley. You say she hath asked for me ?
Mary Beaton. Ay, and complainingly, as
 though her love
 Were struck at by your absence.
Darnley. Love ! her love !
 It were a cunning stroke should print a wound
 In that which hath no substance, and no spirit
 To feel the hurt. Well, I will speak to her.
Queen. How like a chidden bondman of
 his lord
 Looks my lord now ! Come you from penance,
 sir ?
 Has the kirk put you to no private shame
 Besides the public tongue of broad rebuke ?
 We are blessed in your penitence ; it is
 A gracious promise for you.

Darnley. Penitence ?

Queen. You have a tender faith and quick
 remorse
 That will bear buffets easily ; pray God
 It pluck you absolution from their hands
 Who are godly sparing of it. We have heard
 A priest of theirs cast for incontinence
 Hardly with thrice purgation of his shame
 Redeemed himself to kirkward.

Darnley. I hear nought.

Queen. Nay, but you hear when these re-
 buke you of sin
 In the full face and popular ear of men ;
 You hear them surely, and patiently you hear,
 And it shows in you godliness and grace

Praiseworthy from them ; for myself, my lord,
 I have some foolish petulances in me
 And stings of pride that shut me out from grace
 So sought and bought of such men ; but your
 course

May teach me timelier humble-mindedness
 And patience to get favor : which till now
 I have never needed beg, and now should prove
 A very witless beggar. Teach me words,
 Pray you, to move men's minds with ; such
 great men's

As your submission purchases to be
 Good friends and patrons to you ; for I fear
 Your Knox is not my friend yet.

Darnley.

So I think.

Madam, I know not what you make of me,
 Nor if your jest be seasonable or no ;
 I am no fool nor implement of theirs,
 Nor patienter of their irreverences
 Than the queen's self ; if you endure such
 tongues,

Why, I may bear them.

Queen.

Well and patiently ;
 I praise your manhood's temper for it, and am
 The happier for your royalty of spirit
 That will not feel wrong done of baser men
 To be at all wrong done you.

Darnley.

Will you think it ?

Well then, I am so, I am just your thought,
 You read me right, and this our friend reads
 too,

For I am plain and easy to read right.

Queen.

Have you made time to say so ?

Darnley.

Ay, and this,
 That it mislikes me—it gives me discontent
 That men should—

Queen.

Ay ? that men should—anything—
 Bear themselves manlike, or that men should
 be,

It is offence done openly to you ?

Darnley.

Nay, not offence, nor open ;
 nought it is,
 Or to me nought.

Queen.

Nought as I think indeed.
 You were about to chide us ? well it is
 You have so humble a wife of us and true,
 To make your chidings fruitful, that your words
 Bear and bring forth good seed of bettering
 change.

I pray you, when you chide me, that you make
 Your stripes the gentler for my humbleness.

Darnley.

I have no mind to jest and jape
 and will—

And will not wrangle with you.

Queen.

Will, and will not ?

They say a woman's will is made like that.
But your will yet is wilfuller than ours.

Darnley. Not as I think.

Queen. God better the king's thought,
And mind more tyrannous than is his place!

Darnley. If I be king—

Queen. And I be kingdomless,
And place be no place, and distinction die
Between the crown and curch—Well, on, our
lord.

Darnley. Why am I out of counsel with
you? Whence

Am I made show of for a titular fool
And have no hand in enterprise of yours,
Nor tongue, nor presence? Not alone my
name

That is rubbed out and grated off your gold,
But myself plucked out of your register,
Made light account of, held as nothingness,
Might move me—

Queen. Whither?

Darnley. To some show of wrath
More than complaint, if I were minded ill.
Here is a breach made with the English queen,
Our cousin of England, a wide-open breach,
A great-grown quarrel, and I no part of it,
Not named or known of.

Queen. You are the happier man
Heavenward, if blessed be the peaceable.

Darnley. The happier heavenward, being
the worldlier shamed;

The less I like it. You have suddenly cast
forth

A man her servant and ambassador,
With graceless haste and instance, from the
realm,

On barren charge of bare complicity
With men now banished and in English bounds,
But not attain of treason toward us yet
Nor deadly doomed of justice.

Queen. Not attain?
Give not your spirit trouble for that; the act
Is drawn by this against them, and the estates
Need but give warrant to their forfeiture
Now it has passed the lords of the articles;
Take no care for it; though it be sweet in you
And gracious, to show care of your worst foes
You have on earth; that would have driven
you forth

A shameful rebel to your cousin queen
And naked of our foreign favor here
That clothed you with unnatural royalty
And not your proper purple. Forth; you say
I have done this wrong?

Darnley. I do not say you have done

Wise work nor unwise; but howbeit, I say
I had no part in aught of it, nor knew
With what a spur's prick you provoked her
spleen

Who is not stingless to requite it you,
Nor with what scant of reason.

Queen. 'Tis sad truth,
She shows no less disquiet mind than yours
Nor a less loud displeasure; she was kind,
She says, well-willed to meward, but my sins,
Unkindliness, and soul's obduracy,
Have made her soft heart hard; and for this
fault

She will not ever counsel me again,
Nor cease to comfort my dear brother's need
With gold and good compassion: and I have
Even such a sister as brother of her as him,
And love alike and am like loved of them.
He wills me well, she swears, as she herself,
And, I'll re-swear it, she wills as well as he.

Darnley. Ay, we know whence this well-
spring of your will

Takes head and current; who must have brave
wars

We know, fair field, broad booty to sweep up,
Space to win spurs in; and what English
gold

Must after battle gild his heels with them,
When he shall stand up in my father's stead
Lieutenant-general for you of the realm:
And who must have your brother's lands we
know,

Investiture must have, and chancellorship,
And masterdom in council. Here he stands,
A worthy witness to it; do you look on me?
Is it not you must be the golden sir,
The counsel-keeper, the sole tongue of the
head,

The general man, the goodly? Did you send
Lord Bothwell hard at heel of him cast forth
To make his wrong sweet with sweet-spoken
words,

And temper the sharp taste of outrage done
And heat in him of anger, with false breath?
Why made you not your own tongue tunable
Who are native to soft speaking, and who hate
With as good heart as any Scot that hates
England? or is her messenger your fool
To take blows from you and good words alike
As it shall chance him cross your morning
mood

Angry or kindly?

Queen. Sir, our chanoellor,
We charge you that you answer not the duke.

Darnley. Duke?

Queen. Ay, the duke of Rothsay ; whom
we pray

... elsewhere some seemlier talking-stock
... blash his hot and feverish wit upon.

Darnley. Your chancellor ? why went not
such a man

With you before the lords of the articles
Now, an hour back, and yet but half day
through,

To help you speak the banished lords to death ?
Is't not the heart of the office to see law
Punish law's traitors, as you bid them be
In the proof's teeth, who are honestest than
some

You bid be law's justiciaries of them ?

Why went he not ? 'twere no more shame nor
praise

Than here to swell in state beside your own.

Queen. Must we crave leave to hid you
twice take leave,

Or twice to ask what would you ?

Darnley. Truly this,

A mere mean thing, an insignificance,

If you will once more hear—oh, nowise me,

But just the man whose name you take in
mouth

To smite me on my face with—Master Knox.

Queen. Are you his usher going before his
grace

No less than servant to his master-word ?

Or is it penitence and submission makes you

In the holy way of honor and recompense

So high in office with him ? Say, this time

For the usher's sake I'll speak with the usher's
lord :

Yet if I mind 'twas I bade send for him

To speak of you his servant : for I hear

You did not at first stripe submit yourself

Nor take all penance with all patience, being

Brought hardly in time to harsh humility

Such as we see now ; which thing craves ex-
cuse

To make you gracious in your master's eyes,

If it be true—I would not think it were—

You brake in anger forth from the High Kirk,

Being there rebuked, and would not sit at meat,

But past away to hawking in pure rage

After an hour or twain of high discourse

Heard with plain show of sharp unthankful-
ness ;

Which that you now repent and would redeem

I will bear witness for you to your lord

To make your penitential peace with him.

Let him come in.

Darnley.

I am no messenger.

.. AA

Queen. Where is my chamberlain ? bid
Marnock here—

Let the man in and one man only more,

Whosoever it be ; we'll see him privily.

Our chancellor, and our no messenger,

We have no need of to dispute with him.

Darnley. If I go hence—

Queen. Why then you stay not here.

Darnley. But if I go at bidding—

Queen. Why, you go :

With the more speed, the less of tarriance
made.

Let me not hold you half-way back : farewell.

[*Exeunt DARNLEY and RIZZIO.*]

I have not begun so luckily, nor set

So good a face on the first half of day,

Now to keep terms with mere tongue-traitors
more.

*Enter JOHN KNOX and JOHN ERSKINE OF
DUN.*

So once we are met again, sir, you and I.

Set him before us.

John Knox. I am before your grace

Without man's haling or compulsive word :

Nor at these divers times you have sent for me

Have you found need to use me forcefully.

Queen. Well, let that be ; as verily meseems

'Tis I find forceful usage at your hands,

And handling such as never prince has borne

Since first kings were ; yet have I borne with it,

Who am your natural princess, and sat by

To hear your rigorous manner of speaking
through

As loud against my kinsfolk as myself ;

Yea, I have sought your favor diligently

And friendship of my natural subject born

And reconciliation by all possible means ;

I have offered you at your own choice and time

Whenso it pleased you ever admonish me

Presence and audience ; yea, have shamed
myself

With reasonless submission ; have endured

The naked edge of your sharp speech, and ye:

Cannot be quit of you ; but here to God

I make my vow I will be once revenged.

Give me my handkerchief. I should take
shame

That he can shame me with these tears, to make
Mine eyes his vassals.

John Knox.

Madam, true it is

There have been divers seasons of dispute

Between your grace and me, wherein I have
never

Found you offended : neither now would find
The offence I sought not ; yea, I knew the
well,

If it shall please God break your prison-house
And lighten on your disimprisoned soul,
That my tongue's freedom shall offend you not.
For surely being outside the preaching-place
I think myself no breeder of offence
Nor one that gives man cause of wrath and
wrong ;

And being therein, I speak not of myself
But as God bids who bids me, speaking plain,
Flatter no flesh on earth. Lo, here I stand,
A single soul and naked in his eye,
Constrained of him, to do what thing he will,
And dare and can none other. Hath he sent
me

To speak soft words of acceptable things
In ladies' chambers or kings' courts, to make
Their ways seem gracious to them ? I wot, no.
I am to bring God's gospel in men's ears,
And faith therein, and penitence, which are
The twain parts of it ; but the chief of the land
And all the main of your nobility
Give God no heed nor them that speak for God
Through flattering fear and ill respect of you :
And seeing if one preach penitence to me
He must needs note the sin he bids repeat,
How should not I note these men's sin who
choose

To serve affections in you and wild will
Rather than truth in God ? This were lost
breath,

To chide the general wrong-doing of the world
And not the very present sin that burns
Here in our eyes offensive ; bid serve God,
And say not with what service.

Queen. Nay, but so
What is it to you or any saving me
How this man married to me bears himself ?
With what sign-manual has God warranted
Your inquisition of us ? What am I
That my most seeret sanctuaries of life
And private passages of hours should be
Food for men's eyes or pavement for men's feet
To peer and pasture, track and tread upon,
Insult with instance ? Am I only bound
To let the common mouth communicate
In my life's sweet or bitter sacrament,
The wine poured, the bread broken every day ?
To walk before men bare that they may judge
If I were born with any spot or no,
And praise my naked nature ? to subject
Mine unsubmitted soul subordinate
To popular sight and sentence ? What am I

That I should be alone debarred, deposed,
From the possession of poor men, who may live
Some hours remain unchallenged of the day
And make to no man answer what they do
As I to mine must render ? who is this
That takes in hand such hard things and such
high ?

Or, what man are you that I need account
For this word said or that, or such things done,
Only to you or mainly, of myself ?

Yea, what are you within this commonwealth ?
John Knox. A man within it and a subject
born,

Madam : and howsoever no great man
Earl, lord, nor baron to bear rule therein,
Yet has God made me a profitable man,
How abject I seem even in your eyes,
No member of the same unmeritable.
Yea, madam, this pertains not less to me
Than any of all your noble-nurtured men,
To warn men of what things may hurt the same,
So as I see them dangerous : and herein
My conscience and mine office with one tongue
Crave plainness of me : wherefore to yourself
I say the thing I speak in public place,
That what great men soever at any time
Shall be consenting to your lord's unfaith
Or flattering furtherance of unfaith in you,
They do what in them lieth to cast out Christ,
Banish his truth, betray his liberty
And free right of this realm, and in the end
Shall haply do small comfort to yourself.
And for him too, your husband, it may be
That as he spares not to dishonor God
For your delight, by service of the mass,
God will not spare to smite him by your hand
That faithlessly he fawns on to his loss.

Queen. When was there queen so handled
in the world ?

I would I could not weep ; for being thus used
I needs must never or now. Is this light day ?
Am I asleep, or mad, or in a trance,
That have such words to beat about mine ears
And in mine eyes his present face who speaks ?

Erskine of Dun. Madam, I pray your grace
contain your mood,

And keep your noble temperance of yourself,
For your high sake and honor, who are held
For excellence of spirit and natural soul
As sovereign born as for your face and place,
Kingdom and kingly beauty ; to whose might
The worthiest of the world, all Europe's chief,
Her choice of crowns, might gladly bow them-
selves

To find your favor. I beseech you think

That here is no disloyalty designed
Nor thing dishonourable ; for were men mad
Whose wits are whole, and false whose faiths
are sound, [sense,

The very mouth of madness would speak
The very tongue of treason would speak
truth,

For love and service of your royalty ;
Blind curses bless, and red rebellion bow.
That came to burn and threaten. Do not
dream

That a man faithful Godward and well loved
Can be to youward evil-willed, who have
Power on your natural and your born un-
friends

To bind their goodwill to you.

Queen.

Words, all words :

I am weary of words : I have heard words
enough [build,

To build and break, if breath could break or
Centuries of men. What would they with
me, sir ? [death,

These my liege folk that love me to the
their death or mine, no matter—my fast
friends

Whose comfortable balms so bruise my head
It cannot hold the crown up—these good
hands [the staff

That wring my waist round to wrench out
Or I set into mine own—these loving lips

That take my name upon them as to kiss
And leave it rank with foam of hateful
speech ?

Must I be dead deposed, or must I live
empt shameless, naked to the very name,

A crestless creature and dis-plumed, that feeds
On charities and chances ? will they give

Me, their queen born, me, bread or dust to eat,

With a mouth water-moisted or a dry,
Beggared or buried ? shall I hold my head

In shameful fief and tenantry of these

For their least wind of any wrath that blows

To storm it off my shoulders ? What were I

That being so born should be born such a

thing

As bondsmen might bemock the bondage of

And slaves condemn for slavery ? Nay, no

words :

A word may wound and no word heal again,

As none can me—whom all men's words may

wound—

Who am liable to all buffets of men's tongues,

All stripes of all their scandals—and was born

To no such fear—and have nor tongue nor wit

To plead and gather favour—no such grace

As may get grace, no piteous skillfulness—

Only my truth and tears—and would to God

My tears and truth for you were wind and fire

To burn and blow corruption from the world,
And leave pure peace to breed where you
plant war

And make the furrows fat with pestilence
And the grain swell with treason—but, too
sure,

They too can hurt and heal not. I am soul-
sick [will,

With shame and bitter weakness ; yet, God's
I may take strength about me to put off

some part of shame. Sir, you that make me
weep, [them

By these my tears and my sharp shame of
I swear you will not laugh to see me laugh,

When my time comes : you shall not ; I will
have

Time to my friend yet—I shall see you, sir,
If you can weep or no, that with dry eyes

Have seen mine wet—I will try that—look
to it [of God,

John Knox. Madam, I speak in very eye
I never took delight in any tears [sake,

Shed of God's creatures ; yea, for my self-
I can but very hardly abide the tears [love

Of mine own boys whom mine own hand and
Chastens, and much less can take any joy

In this the weeping of your majesty. [cause

But seeing I have given you no offensive
Nor just occasion, but have spoken truth

After mine life as mine own place craves

Lest I, who am, be mansworn to God's

truth.

I must serve you unwillingly,

Rather than be a man of your majesty

Than bleed with mine own conscience stabbed
to death

Or through my silence of my commonwealths

By my dumb treason wounded.

Queen. A fair word—

I thought it was forgotten of men's mouths

And only lived in the inner heat of the heart

Too sure to want the spelling of their speech.

Sir, you shall find me many very tears.

This blood you take for of your common-
wealth,

And in the hurts of mine authority [help,

The wounds it lies abed with ; what, God

Can the head bleed and not the body faint ?

Or wherein should the kingdom feel such

maim

As in the kingship stricken ? then, are you,

If you be true man, and each true man born

Subject and circled with the bond of rule,

Hurt to the heart. But heartless things are

words ;

Henceforth I will not mix my speech with

words

In the way of disputation evermore,

Nor set against your tongue the plea of mine
To reason as its equal. Wait you here,
Here in the chamber : you, sir, come with me
To counsel in my cabinet somewhile ;
We will return his answer.

[*Exeunt* QUEEN and ERSKINE OF DUN.
Mary Carmichael. She wept sore ;
I never saw her spirit, so chafed, so melt
And thaw to such mere passion ; this one time
He is sure attained.

Mary Beaton. Ay, she fain would dare
Upon the spur of the hour attain him ; yet
What none dare else she durst not ; they will
put

Force of fair words as bridle in the mouth
Of her wild will and reinless.

Mary Seyton. She is wise,
And fights not wisdom, but being counselled
well

Takes truce with time and tongueless policy.
What, will the man speak to us ? he looks so
hard

With such fast eyes and sad—I had not thought
His face so great, nor presence.

John Knox. Ah, fair ladies,
How fair were this your life and pleasurable
If this might ever abide, and so in the end
With all this gay gear we might pass to heaven :
But fie upon that knave, Death, that will come
Whether we will or will not : and being come,
When he has laid on his assured arrest,
The foul worms will be busy with this flesh,
Be it never so fair and tender ; and the soul,
The silly soul shall be so feeble, I fear,
It can bear with it neither gold nor pearl,
Painting of face, garnish, nor precious stones.

Mary Beaton. Sir, for myself, small joy
this were to me
That this life should live ever : nor would I
Care much by praying to stretch my days of
life

Into more length, or much to take with me
Garnish or gold ; but one thing I would fain
Have to grow gravewards with me and keep it
safe,

That you have cast no word or warning on,
And yet women, whose hearts are worldly worn
And by no creed of yours consolable
Nor gladness of your gospel, love its name
As dear as God's ; and its name is but rest.

John Knox. Rest has no other name but
only God's.

Mary Beaton. But God has many another
name than rest :

His name is life, and life is weariness.

John Knox. Ay, but not his ; that life has
lost his name ;

Peace is his name, and justice.

Mary Beaton. Ah, sir, sec,
Can these two names be one name ? or on earth
Can two keep house together that have name
Justice and peace ? where is that man i' the
world

Who hath found peace in the arms of justice lain
Or justice at the breast of peace asleep ?

Is not God's justice painted like as ours,
A strong man armed, a swordsman red as fire,
Whose hands are hard, and his feet washed in
blood ?

It were an iron peace should sleep with him,
And rest were unrest that should kiss his lips.
What man would look on justice here and live,
Peace has no more part in him.

John Knox. Lady, nay,
The only peace indeed which is of God
Hath in the just man not a part but all,
But the whole righteous life and heart in him
Still peacefully possesses ; who hath not
Or loves not justice, he can love not peace,
For peace is just ; and that thing is not peace
That such men love, but full of strife and lies,
A thing of thorns and treasons. This were even
As if a man loving a harlot should
Praise her for maiden and himself for pure
To love such maidenhood, when any says
That he loves peace who loves not himself,
For peace is holy. Yea, and if one seek
He shall find peace where bitterest justice is,
In the full fire and middle might of wrath,
Rather than where sloth sucks the lips of shame
Or fear with her foul brother unbelief
Lives in adultery ; strife is that which springs,
As a winged worm and poisonous, of their
sheets ;

And in the slumberless and storm-strewn bed
That very war's self spreads for righteousness
Peace as a babe is born.

Mary Beaton. Would God it were,
For 'tis a bitter childbed : these long years
We look for fruit and none comes forth of it,
But yet more iron travail ; and ourselves,
Desiring justice, quite lose hold of peace,
And are distracted with our own fierce want
And hungry with need of right unreachable.
Yet it may come, and then shall peace indeed

John Knox. You talk against your habit.

Re-enter ERSKINE OF DUN.

Erskine of Dun.

Master Knox

The queen will no more hear you at this time,
But with good will and gracious mind will
weigh

Your worth and worthy meaning in your words.

John Knox. It may be she will never hear
me more.

Farewell, fair ladies ; may God look on you,
And give you chiefly comfort, which is grace.

[*Exeunt JOHN KNOX and ERSKINE OF DUN.*]

Mary Seyton. Why did you prate so
preacher-like with him ?

Mary Beaton. I cannot tell by asking of
myself

Nor answer for your asking. Which of you
shall wait at supper on the queen to-night ?

Mary Carmichael. None but her counsel of
close hours, Argyle.

Mary Beaton. She sups with them—and in
attendance there

Some two or three I heard of—one of these
No man of arms.

Mary Seyton. What should they do with
arms ?

More need of lips to sing with.

Mary Beaton. Ay, to sing—
It is no matter of state they meet upon ?

Mary Seyton. Are your wits lost indeed,
or do you jest ?

Mary Beaton. True, it should be for no
affairs of state

They sup at nightfall in the lesser room—

They three, and three to make the music up.

Mary Seyton. What ails you at it ?

Mary Beaton. Nothing ; I aill nought.

I did but think what music he should make
After this preacher. Let us to the queen.

SCENE IV.—DARNLEY'S LODGING.

DARNLEY and SIR GEORGE DOUGLAS.

Darnley. I think our friend of Morton had
grown slack

But for my spurring, uncle.

Sir George Douglas. Nay, he is firm ;

You do him less right than you do yourself

To think he should need quickening.

Darnley. O, I know not,

What should I know ? what wit have I to
know ?

I am a fool and have no forethought ! Why,

But for my resolute instance at this need—

I said to him, be resolute—and since then,

Some six or eight hours gone, I have heard
such things

As would put sense and passion in dead
bones—

By God I have ; it shall be seen I have.

But are you sure it should be done to-night ?

Sir George Douglas. Ay, surely.

Darnley. Well, I see no surety in it—

Methinks now every day we let him live

Blows hot the popular wrath of all the land

And makes us surer when we strike indeed

That all men's hearts will stab him with our
hands.

Sir George Douglas. By which account he
might live long and die

An old white death and woundless. Is not
this

The man whereof you told me some while since
How at close midnight, your wife's doors being
locked,

You burst them open, and gat hold of him

Hidden in a closet of her bedchamber,

Save for furred gown and shirt about the knave

Naked ? and must you take him so again

And he so twice get clear of you and laugh ?

You swore me that—what need to tell or swear,
If he must live still ? weeping, with clenched
hands,

You swore it, praying me for our shame's sake
send

Word to your uncle Ruthven ; but what need.
If there were no shame in the thing at all

Or but so little, as now so little it seems,

There is no haste to slay him ?

Darnley. Nay, you carp—

'Tis thus men ever catch at my good words

To turn them on their tongues and spit them
out

Changed and discoloured. He shall die to-
night.

Sir George Douglas. Assuredly.

Darnley. I say so—mark, I say it,

I that have cause—how else could it be sure ?

But sure it is—I say he shall not live.

Let us go seek Lord Morton out again

And tell him it is sworn we strike to-night.

How many of us have hands in it with me,

Who cannot with mine own hand as I would

Strike—it were shameful to me—were it not ?

For mine own hand's sake.

Sir George Douglas. There are hands enough

Without the shame done to your highness' hand ;

Sufficieth us we have it set to the bond

That signs him dead ; nor need we sum their
names

Whose hands will strike, not spare, for their
own sakes.

Durnley. Well, let us go to make my lord's
faith sure
That it shall be no later than to-night.

SCENE V.—THE QUEEN'S CABINET.

*The QUEEN, RIZZIO, COUNTESS OF ARGYLE,
LORD ROBERT STUART, ARTHUR
ERSKINE, in attendance.*

Queen. Have I not done a queenlike work
to-day?

I have made attaint my traitors of myself,
With no man at my hand to strengthen me
Have gone before the lords of the articles
And set my will upon them like a seal,
And they for their part set on their old friends
The bloody seal of treason signed of death
And countersigned of burning ignominy.
You were half fearful, you, lord chancellor,
You my good servant; but I knew their necks
Were made to take the impression of my foot,
Their wills and souls the likeness of mine own,
And I have used them for the things they are.

Countess of Argyle. You have been right
royal, madam, and your lovers
Have joyful cause to praise you.

Queen. Will you say it,
Who bear as much part in his blood as I
Of our dead father's giving? then I think
No other tongue for love of Murray slain
Shall sting me though mine own speak off his
head,

Once caught up out of England; nay, I think
We shall get vantage of your lord's friend Knox
Ere many days be.

Countess of Argyle. Speed your majesty!
The cord were hallowed that should silence
him.

Queen. Ay, though mine own hands twist
it. To spin hemp
For such a throat, so loud and eloquent,
Should better please me and seem a queenlier
thing

Than to weave silk and flower it with fine gold.
He hath a tongue to tame a tiger with,
Fright into fierce and violent reverence
The fearfulest earth's monsters. I do think
I like him better than his creed-fellows
Whose lips are softer toward me; 'tis some
sport

To set my wit to his, and match with mine
The shrewd and fiery temper of his spirit
For trial of true mastery; yet to-day
He made me weep, weep mightily—by faith,

If there be faith in any lips of earth,
I think to live and laugh at his tears yet.

Robert Stuart. I would the hand were on
him that might make

His eyes weep red and drop out of their rings,
Looking on death. What reason gives him
leave,

What right makes room for him to take his way
So past men's patience grown so masterful?

Had I one half word's warrant of your grace
His tongue should not be long inside his lips.

Queen. I am no wife of Antony, to try
My needle's point against his tongue's edge;
yet

I have cause as good as Fulvia's, though his
speech

Ring somewhat short of Roman. Here is one
That has that southern honey on his lips
Frozen as it seems up with this galling air
And not a note left golden, but his tongue
Nipt with the chill to death as with a knife
That cuts us short of music.

Countess of Argyle. Yea, my lord,
Why will you so discomfort the good hour
With tongueless sadness? we have cause to
chide

That having cause to sing find song to seek
And thought to find it ready.

Rizzio. I have been sad
These two hours back; I know not what it was
So struck me out of mirth, for I was merry,
And knew not why.

Queen. Nay, if you love me, sir,
You had reason to be merry with my mirth
Who am blithe to be found queen over my
foes;

I have been glad all this good day thereof
Save some few minutes that my subject-saint
Vexed even to mere intemperance; but few
tears

Wept out that little bitter part of day
And left it sweet. Have you not heard men say
This heaviness without a root of fear
Goes off before some good? now should there
be

Some new thing hard upon us that will make
All good hearts glad. Have you no song to
mock

The doubt away that mocks you?

Rizzio. At your will.
I am something yet in tune for such a song
As joy makes out of sorrow, when the thought
Plays with false grief for joy's sake. Please
you hear it

With such light audience as its worth is light?

Queen. Ay, such a note shuld fit me for
this time ;
After the tuneless toil of talking day
A light song lightly brings ill thoughts asleep.

RIZZIO (sings).

Lord Love went Maying
Where Time was playing,
In light hands weighing
Light hearts with sad ;
Crowned king with peasant,
Pale past with present,
Harsh hours with pleasant,
Good hopes with bad ;
Nor dream'd how fleet
Than Time's swift metre,
O'er all things sweeter
How cloth'd with power,
The murder-maiden
Mistrust walks laden
With red fruit ruined and dead
white flower.

How close behind him
Ere man's faith find him,
How strong to bind him
With fears for bands,
Lest once beholden
Of man the golden
God's face embolden
All hearts and hands ;
For if doubt were not,
Whose sore shafts spare not,
Large life would care not
For death's poor hour,
Seeing all life's season
By love's sweet reason
Made wise would seem in his
eyes a flower.

Countess of Argyle. Did you hear that ?

Robert Stuart. What ?

Queen. Nothing but sweet words.

Countess of Argyle. I heard a cry i' the
wind as of one hurt.

Arthur Erskine. There is no wind up,
madam.

Queen. Peace. I pray ;

It was your own sense mocked you. Hear it
through ;

There should be more, and sadder.

Countess of Argyle. Nay, I heard.

RIZZIO (sings).

By Love's side flying
As Time went crying
Glad news and lying
In all men's ears,
With blind feet gliding
She came deriding
Their joyous tiding
That ends in tears ;

From Time's side falling
As Love sank quailing,
Her strong wings sailing
Made all heads cower,
Her wings untethered,
With fleet thoughts feathered,
Made weak the summer and
bleak the flower.

Hope found no cover
Wherein to hover,
And Love no lover,
And Joy no place ;
Till when Time creeping
Had left him sleeping,
Love knelt down weeping
Before her face,
And lay'd, soul-stricken,
One flower night quick,
Though spring should sic ken
And storm devour ;
She from her bosom
Flung one sere blossom,
Then passed him dead on the
last dead flower.

Robert Stuart. Hark ! some one laughed
there.

Queen. What does

death i' the song ?

Can they not let love live, but must needs make
His grave with singing ? 'Tis the trick of song
That finds no way to end else.

Rizzio. An old trick ;

Your merrier songs are more fuller sometimes
Than very tears are.

Queen. Do you hear noises still ?

Enter DARNLEY.

Who sent you to us ?

Darnley. My love to my sweet lady.

[*Kisses her.*]

Queen. What feet are theirs behind you ?

Who stands there ?

Darnley. Nay, nothing, nay, sweet, noth-
ing.

Queen. I should know—

Judas ! [*Seeing RUTHVEN in the doorway.*]

Darnley. I tell you—

Ruthven. Let that man come forth ;

He hath been here too long.

Queen. What hath he done ?

Ruthven. So please your highness, how he
hath done you wrong

To offend the honor of your majesty

I dare not boldly say ; but this I dare,

He hath done the king your husband's honor
wrong

In this past all the rest, to hinder him

Of the crown matrimonial, which your grace
Made his by promise ; other wrongs than this
Are more than I need speak of ; for the lords,
He hath caused you banish a great part of
them

And the most chief, and at this parliament
Forefault them as for treason, that himself
Who jets here in his cap and damask gown
Might of your grace be made a lord, and tread
On men more noble : wherefore with good
cause

For very love I pray your majesty
Make not yourself his buckler who lacks heart
Save to pluck forth his hanger and not strike,
But cower behind and clasp your gown for
shield.

Stand from before the window, lest perforce
I hale him hence by the hair.

Queen. Help us, our friends !
Thrust out this death-faced traitor.

Arthur Erskine. Sir, give way.

Robert Stuart. Out of this presence !

Ruthven. Lay no hands on me ;
[*Draws.*

Stand ; I will not be handled.

*Enter FAULDONSIDE and SIR GEORGE
DOUGLAS.*

Queen. Out with him !

Rizzio. Save, save me, madam !

Queen. You are within my ward.
Stand from him, sirs ; what ! treason !

Fauldonside. Nay, then thus.
[*Putting a pistol to her breast.*

Queen. Do him no wrong ; ye dare not
murder me :

If he have sinned let justice pass on him.

Fauldonside. This cord shall justify him.

Rizzio. Help me ! help !

Sir George Douglas. Let go the queen.

Rizzio. Help me, my mistress !

Fauldonside. Out !

Queen. Have mercy !

Rizzio. Mercy ! nay, I am innocent !
Save me, sweet lady !

Queen. Will ye slay me too ?

Fauldonside. Drag him away ; pluck his
hands off her.

Rizzio. Help !

[*They force him out.*

Queen. Why does that sheath sit empty on
your side ?

Where is the dagger ?

Darnley. Why, I know not where.

Queen. It will be known hereafter ; it shall be
Dear blood to some of you if David's here

Be spilt, my faithful servant's ; but may God,
My poor true friend, have mercy on your soul !

Ruthven. Here, take your wife into your
arms, my lord,

And bid her fear not. Madam, have no fear ;
We had sooner spend the blood of our own
hearts

Than you should suffer harm ; and what we do
Is but your husband's bidding. Let them pass :
He shall be kept for this time safe enough
In my lord's chamber here.

Darnley. Ay shall he, safe—

In that same chamber where you used of old
Before this fellow grew so in your grace

To come and seek me ; but since he so fell
In credit with you and familiar use,

Even if I come to yours I find of late
Small entertainment of you, save so far

As David may sit third with us, and set
To cards with you even till an hour or twain

Be gone past midnight.
Queen. I have heard not said

It was a duteous gentlewoman's part
To seek her husband's chamber, but the man's

To seek the wife when he would aught with her.
Darnley. Why came you to my chamber

then at first,
And ever till these few months back that he

Became familiar with you ? or am I
In any part now of my body failed,

To fall out of your grace ? or what disdain
Have you of me ? or what offence of mine

Makes you not use me at all times alike,
Seeing I am willing to do all good things

That may become a husband to his wife ?
Queen. My lord, of all the shame here done

to me
You have the fault : for which sake I hence-

forth
Shall never be your wife nor lie with you,

Nor ever shall have liking of my life
Till I may make you bear as sore a heart

As I bear now.
Ruthven. Madam, for honor's sake,

Be reasonably and timely reconciled
To your wed lord ; and with him take advice

Of such good friends as love you. Give me
leave :

I am faint, and cannot stand to plead with you.
[*Sits.*

Bring me to drink, for God's sake.
Darnley. Give my lord

A cup of wine.

Queen. Is this your malady?
If ye shall slay me or my six months' child
By this night's force and fear, my friends yet
To wreak me of Lord Ruthven.

Ruthven. Be content.
Queen. When word goes forth how I am
handled here—

What, am I kinless, think you, without help?
Mine uncles and my brother king of France,
All lords of all lands living, all heads crowned,
Shall be one storm to shake you from the world;
And the Pope with me, and the Catholic king,
And all that live or of my faith or blood,
Shall all make way upon you.

Ruthven. I am too mean
That these so many and mighty should take aim
At one such poor man here as I am. See,
If you will weigh it worthily yourself,
This is no treason; never till this night
Was so good service done you. For myself,
I will make answer to God's charge and man's
How I have served you in it.

Queen. What have I done?
What thing am I that you should use me thus?
O miserable and desertless that I am,
Unkingdomed of mine honor! I that had
Lordship of land and natural rule of men
And poorer here than any landless man
Am weaker than all women. Pity you, sir,
By what law's sentence am I made man's thrall?
What lord have I offended that can bid
My face for shame be covered in your sight?
Whom have I wronged? or who hath power
on me,

What thing soever I be, to do me wrong?
Who hath given forth judgment on me? what
man's right

Calls me his servant? Nay, there is no slave
Men strike without a sentence; and ye strike
Your own right in me and your name to death
With one self-ruinous violence.

Ruthven. Be at peace;
We strike but your own sickness off yourself
Who cut off him to save you: the disease
That dies of the physician leaves no cause
That you should curse but thank him.

Queen. Thank? ay, thank—
God give me grace to give you thanks! be sure
Ye shall not lack my memory to it, nor will
To make me worthy of you. What, no more?

[*Exit RUTHVEN.*]
I thought his wrath was large enough for me
To find a murderous part in where to die
And share it with my servant. Must I live?

Sir, you that make death warm between your
lips,

And, silent, let fall murder from your mouth,
Have you no kiss to kill me? no love left
To give me poison? Why is he gone forth?
Hath the hot falsehood eaten through your
tongue?

Speak.

Darnley. Why, I bade him look to those
your friends

That might have risen upon us; hear you that!
[*Noise outside.*]

There is a clamor of them in the courts.
But nought to help or hurt now. He is gone
To read our will out in the general ear,
And by proclaiming of my share with them
In this their new-born justice to make sure
Men's hearts that hearken; and lest fear shake
our friends,

Or illwill toward us and goodwill toward you
Make our foes strong in malice of design,
To warn them of your brother's present speed,
Who must be here with morning: my device,
My trick to win all faiths that hang on him
And tie them to my service with his hand.

So have we all souls instant on our side,
And you no way to wound us: for by this,
Even with the hearing of my name given forth
As parcel of the bond that writes him dead,
Which is now cancelled with his bloodshedding,
This your good town is with us, and your lords
That stood for you with this man fled or dead,
If they dare strike or stand yet. What shift
now?

What wit? what craft?

Queen. My friends driven forth the court?
No help upon my side? The town raised too?

Darnley. We had no heart nor wit to work
with, ha?

We were your fools, and heartless?

Queen. (*at the window.*) Help, all friends!
All good men help your queen here! Ho, my
lord,

My lord the Provost!

Darnley. He is raised indeed.

Queen. Help for the queen! help, Provost!

Darnley. Peace, I say;
You may fare worse: these are wild hours.

Voice without. Sit down;
You shall be hewn in pieces if you stir
And flung into the Nor'-Loch.

Darnley. Nay, be wise;
Pluck not their madness on you.

Queen. O, your love!
It shows now kindly in you.

Re-enter RUTHVEN.

Ruthven. All is sped ;
The lords of the adverse party being roused up
And hearing with what large applause of men
The reading of our sentence in the bond
And names subscribed, and proclamation made
Of Murray even at heel of the act returned,
Was of all mouths made welcome, in fierce
haste

Forth of their lodging fled confusedly
With no more tarriance than to bring their lives
Clear of the press and cry of peril at hand,
And their folk round them in a beaten rank
Hurled all together ; so no man being left,
The earls of Huntley and of Bothwell gone,
To lift a hand against the general peace,
The townsmen, of their surety satisfied,
Brake up with acclamation of content
For the good comfort done them in this deed.

Queen. What have ye made my servant ?

Ruthven. A dead dog.
His turn is done of service.

Darnley. Yea, stark dead ?

Ruthven. They stabbed him through and
through with edge on edge
Till all their points met in him ; there he lies,
Cast forth in the outer lodge, a piteous knave
And poor enough to look on.

Queen. I am content.
Now must I study how to be revenged.

Darnley. Nay, think not that way : make
it not so much ;
Be warned, and wiser.

Queen. Must I not, my lord ?
You have taught me worthier wisdom than of
words ;
And I will lay it up against my heart.

ACT II.

Time, from March 10, 1566, to February 9, 1567.

SCENE I.—THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER.

*Enter DARNLEY and ARTHUR ERSKINE,
severally.*

Darnley. Is the queen risen ?

Arthur Erskine. She has not slept,
my lord.

They say she is in some peril of mishap
Through the sore handling of this violent night ;
Mortal mishap it may be.

Darnley. Ay ! who say it ?

What should be mortal to her ? she was not
sick

Nor near enough her danger.

Arthur Erskine. I am no leech ;
Haply the fright of murderous menaces
And noise of swords is held medicinal ;
The savor of a slain friend comfortable
And his blood balm : if these be healthful
things,

You have given her weakness physick.

Enter the QUEEN.

Queen. Ah, our lord !
Comes he with death about him ? I could
take it

As readily as condemned men take reprieve,
For of a life much deadlier than itself
Death would reprieve me.

Darnley. I am come to bring you help.

Queen. You are ever helpful, even at all
needs good,

For stroke or speech, good always. I am weak ;
Let me have execution swift or soft ;
Here is no strength to suffer.

Darnley. Sit, and rest.

Queen. Nay, I can stand ; or should I kneel,
my plight

Were one with my new fortune. You may go ;
I have but private penitence to do,
And privy grace to get me ; for indeed
I were stark mad to hope by any mean
For public pardon ; I am condemned, and have
No hope but of such pity as dead men gain
Who living found no grace in the great world.

[*Exit ARTHUR ERSKINE.*]

Now, what death, sir ?

Darnley. You think not as you speak ;
Your thought has other business than your
tongue,

And death has no part in it.

Queen. I am assured

I must not live.

Darnley. Whose doom has passed on
you ?

Not mine ; I would not have you go in fear ;
You may be safe as I am.

Queen. As you, my lord ?
I think I may, and yet may chance but find
A little day of surety.

Darnley. By mine honor,
My word and place of sovereignty is pledged
For your fair usage ; they that unseat you
Shall find no king in me.

Queen. Nay, I think not.

Darnley. As they would have me friend
and firm to them,
I told them, they should use you royally,
No state or privilege plucked off you ; nay,
I have no thought by stolen strength of yours
To increase myself out of your weakness ;
only

I would have royalty remade in you,
And in your honor an honorable part ;
See the state in you and the name shine fair,
And in your praise mine own praise perfected
As parcel of it, and in your good fame
Mine own fame stablished ; as from your repute
Shaken or sullied, my name too takes soil,
And in your insufficiency I wax weak,
So would I have the grace I gain and strength
Redound to youward ; who being queen in-
deed,

I cannot seem unkingly.

Queen.

'Tis well thought.

It was my curse to know not in good time
How high a sense and royal of itself
I had in you so near me.

Darnley.

That your thought,

Misdeeming me worth no more weight with
you,
Hath brought us to this breach. Now lies it
in you

To make all whole ; these lords that in my
name

And for mine ends and with my leave rose up
To rid out peril and scandal from us all,
And make red-handed witness of themselves
Against the shame and scathe of royalty,
Are not the traitors of your thought, but keep
Faith flawless toward the personal empire here
And spirit of rule, dishonoring not the law
By forceful chastisement of secret breach
That did it bloodless violence ; this blood shed
Must heal indeed the privy hurt of law
And all but death of kingship, in such pass
Wasted and wounded ; but no hand of theirs
Would stab through you your holy majesty,
Cut off all life of law with yours, and make
Authority die with you one visible death ;
No thought put out your office, though yourself
Were found come short thereof, to leave this
land

A kingless kingdom ; wherefore with good will
I counsel you make peace with their designs
And friends with mine intent, which for us
both

Is but all power and honor.

Queen.

So you see it ;

But were your eyes no flatterers of themselves

The sight were other : yet for my poor part
I cannot care though power be out of sight,
Save that mine honor visibly is marred
By wreck in you of either ; for indeed
Nor power nor honor shall hang on to you
If you must wear them but at will of men
And by strange leave of chance authority
Reign or not reign ; but all concerns me not ;
Rule as you may, be lord of that you can,
I can contend not with your lords or you,
Their master-servant. Pardon me ; I am
weak,

A feeble simple woman, without sta-
And witless of your worth ; yet I might fear
Their policies were no good friends of yours,
Could we see all ; men's hearts are manifold,
Not made of glass like women's such as mine,
At once transpicuous and perceptible
To eyes like yours that look their faults
through ; yet

Perchance you see more faults than lie there,
spots

That are not natural to us ; or make too much
Of our light thoughts and weakness ; yet, your
pardon :

You have reason in it, being more wise than we
And stronger in your regency of soul ;
It may be you do well to bear me hard,
And I do ill who think to counsel you ;
'Tis no great matter ; for in no great while
My weakness will be medicine to itself
And end as I do : no default of mine
But must by dying be curable ; and God knows
I little think to live.

Darnley.

Why, have no fear ;

You see I stand 'twixt you and all such threat.

Queen. Nay, I see not ; but though you be
my friend,

How far soever you stand out for me,
There is one threat that no man's help in the
world

Can bring to nothing ; here it speaks in me
Mortal ; I know the word inevitable
That without breath or sound has called me
dead ;

I would not plead against it.

Darnley.

Nay, you dream ;

You jest or dream.

Queen.

I do not ; I am dead ;

What, have you slain in jest, or in a dream
Have I seen death and felt him in my flesh,
Felt my blood turn and my veins fill with
death

And the pang pass and leave me as I am,
Dead ? for my state is pangless, and my pain

Perished ; I have no life to bring forth pain,
Or painful fruit of life ; I think in pity
God willed one stroke of sheer mortality
Should kill all possible pain and tear in me,
All after chance of ill ; I cannot die
Twice, and can live not with my dead self here
Violently slain ; I am sure I have no child ;
I would but pray, if I had breath to pray,
For mere shame's sake and pity's, I might have
My women with me ; and was not born to want
What our most poor bare natural womanhood
Seeks not in vain of meanest people ; more
I seek of no man's mercy.

Darnley. You shall have it ;
But this is fear and shaken heart in you—
I trust not very danger.

Queen. I that know
Must bear the peril and the sense alike
And patiently can bear, so but I have
Hope of your heart made soft towards me ;
sir,

Howe'er I have been untoward and confident
In my blind state and sovereign folly, now
God knows me if I have not need of love
Who have so much of pardon.

Darnley. Is this sure,
Such instant and such perilous press of time—
Or hut your thought it may be ?

Queen. Nay, my thought !
Is it my thought I am stricken to my death ?
Is it my thought you have no pity of me ?
Is it my thought I had looked at other time
For other joy of childbed, and such pang:
As bring glad women honor ? not this death
That sunders me from fruit of mine own years
And youth and comfort, and mere natural hope,
And love that looks on many a worse than me ?
Is it my thought that for small fault of mine,
And little lack of love and dutiousness,
I am brought to shame and mortal chastise-
ment ?

Is it my thought love is not dead in me
For all this chastening ? and my penitence
Wherewith I weep on my least wrong-doings
past,

And faith wherewith I look for pardon yet,
For grace of you—is all this but my thought ?

Darnley. By heaven, I will not have you
wronged of them.

You shall live safe and honorably.

Queen. My lord,
Who lives in such times honorably or safe,
When change of will and violence mutable
Makes all state loose and rootless ? Think you,
men

Who have dipped their hands in this red act
with you

Will, as they wash them, so wash off their
hearts

The burning spot of raw malignity
And fire and hunger of ambition made
So proud and full of meat, so rank in strength,
So grossly fed and fattened with fresh blood ?
Is it for love of your name more than mine
These men that fought against my love of you,
And made rebellious wars on my free choice,
Smite now my very head and crown of state
In this night's hot and present stroke ? Be
sure

It is the throne, the name, the power in us
That here is stabbed and bleeds from such a
wound

And draws out life of you no less than me
If you be part of majesty indeed.
Yea, howsoever you be now borne in hand,
They will but use you as an axe to smite,
A brand to set on fire the house of state
And in the doing be burnt up of itself.
Why, do but think with now more temperate
blood

What are they that have helped you to this
deed ?

What friendsto you ? what faith toward royalty,
And what goodwill and surety of sound mind,
Have you found in them ? or how put in proof ?
What bond have their loves given you to confirm
Their hearts toward you stable ? Nay, if this
Be all my pledge for honor and safe life,
They slide upon a slippery ground indeed.

Darnley. The pledge is mine, not theirs ;
you have my word ;

No warrant of their giving, but of me ;
What ails you to go yet in fear of them ?

Queen. Alas, I know not whom I need yet
fear.

What men were they who helped you to this
deed ?

Yet it avails not me to know. I think
The fierce first root of violence was not set
Of you nor of your uncles, though I know
They of your mother's kinship love me not ;
But though their hearts, albeit one blood with
yours,

Be bitter toward me, yet being of your blood
I would fain think them not so hard ; and yet
It was no gentle sight I had of them,
Nor usage ; I can see their eyes burn still,
And their brows meet against me. Such a sight
Again might wind all suffering up in me
And give it full release.

Darnley.

It was their plot ;
That is, for love of me they felt the offence
Eat at their hearts ; I did not set them on ;
But wrath and shaine's suspicion for my sake
Edged and envenomed ; then your policies too,
And injuries done the popular weal, the state
So far mishandled ; this was all men's talk,
Mine uncle's chiefly, Ruthven's, and his word
Was hot in the ear of Maitland and Argyie,
Showing the wrong done and the further fear,
More wide in issue and large in likelihood
Than all wrong done already ; nay, and plain ;
You would have given the state up to strange
hands,

And for strange ends ; no dreaming doubt of
mine,

But very vision, proof ; they held it so ;

And, by my faith, I with them.

Queen.

Morton too ?

Was not his wit part of your wisdom ?

Darnley.

Ay ;

Why, all heads highest, all subtlest, could not
choose

But be one judgment and one counsel here,

I such a biting need ; yea, common fools,

Poor senseless knaves might see it.

Queen.

Yea, visibly.

The sharpest wits and hands put armor on

To go forth strong against me ; little doubt

But fools and ignorance and the common mouth,

The very best o' the street, the dross of man,

Must needs take fire with force of such wind

And stir at such men's passage : their mere
feet

Moving would raise me up such enemies

From the bare ground. Ruthven—you said
his breath

Was first to heat men's hearing with strange
words

And set their hearts on edge—and at his touch

The quick-eyed Maitland and loose-souled
Argyle,

Keen to catch fire or fear from other men's—

And the full-counselled Morton—by my life,

(That's but a little oath now) I think strange

To be at all alive, and have such men

So sore unfriends and secret, and their wits

So sharp to set upon so slight a thing.

How grew this up amongst you ?

Darnley.

Why, you see it ;

No need to set men on ; their swords were
made

Of your own follies ; yet have comfort ; I,

That was so little made of, so less worth,

In your late judgment, will alone be guard

And huckler of you ; come what counsel may,
It shall not hold against you with my will,
And cannot work without.

Queen.

Nay, that were hard.

I thank you ; but what counsel will they take,
Think you, which way to deal with me ? my
soul

Is womanly distempered and distract

With doubts of them—no fear of you good mind,

Of your firm love and fruitful—but, alas,

I am no strong man as you my guard, and ache

With new faint fear of their fresh angers ; then,

This watch on me, my ways and rooms barred
up,

No help nor issue, shakes and sickens me

With pangs for every stroke in the hour, that
says

I am so much more time prisoner.

Darnley.

For your guard,

It must be later taken off ; the rest

I will find mean of help for. They are now

In council with your brother, new brought home

With seal from me of pardon to reverse

Your fresh and rash attainder, in my name

Now cancelled and made strengthless ; and I
think

There must three judgments be debated of ;

Whether for hurt done to the common state

And treason to succession you must bear

Penance of death or life's imprisonment,

Which fear not I will have them put in form

Nor see it pass upon you ; the third mean

Is for some season that you be in ward

In Stirling Castle, till your warrant given

And free consent to this late justice done,

And to the new faith established in the realm

By right and rule of law, religiously,

And to mine own investiture as king.

Now for no fear at all or doubt of them

But very love and good desire toward you

I will go plead your part and take them sign

Of seasonable submission ; with which word

I doubt not hut to reconcile their thoughts

And bring their loves back bounden to your
feet.

Queen.

Neither do I doubt. Let them draw

this bond,

I will set hand to what they will of me ;

To seal you king needs now no grace of mine,

Hardly my leave ; and for their faith, it has

Too firm a foot for my poor power to shake,

Had I the will now molten in me strong

As ere the fire of fierce necessity

Had made it soft and edgeless ; for their deed,

Say, if they hold my word of pardon worth

More than mere scorn, I am bound to thank
them, being

Masters of me and of my wrath or will,
And needing show me no such courtesy ;
And if it please them take mine oath and hand
To sign them safe and mark them from all
charge

Sackless and scatheless, let them take it ; alas,
I thought well they might rather take my life.
And yet I think well they would take indeed
But for your safeguard of me ; would they not
Slay me ? nay, hy your honor tell me—nay.
I know they would, had no guard in you,
Slay me defenceless.

Darnley. Have no fear : I have sworn
They shall not touch you roughly.

Queen. Swear again,
That I may quite rest content ; and yet
Swear not ; I would not seem to hold you fast
To your own peril ; better were I dead
Than you fell in their danger for my sake.
Ah, and I know not, I may hardly think
I have you surely on my side.

Darnley. By heaven,
You shall want nothing of my help or love.

Queen. How had you heart to go so near
my death ?

Darnley. I had no mind to hurt you.

Queen. None ? well, none—
I will not think it ; yet I was nigh dead.
You saw my very death here at my breast
Where your child is not yet—I did not think
To feel instead there murder's iron lips
For his soft suckling mouth.

Darnley. Come, think not of it.

Queen. I had not time to think of it indeed.
But I think now you will have hardly power
To match your will to save me, if their will
Shall yet be mortal to me ; then I saw
You had not power or had not will ; and now
I know not which you have yet.

Darnley. They shall find
I have power enough and will to turn them.

Queen. Well—
I lean then on your hand. If you were mine,
Though they were subtler and more strong
in hate,

They should not hold me here in peril.

Darnley. How ?

Queen. No matter, so their guard were less
on me.

Darnley. You would take flight then ?

Queen. Ay, with you for wing
To lift me out of prison.

Darnley. Whither ?

Queen.

Nay,
I am but the fool of your keen flattering wit.
Who let you see my little hope that lives
To see my some day sunnier : yet God knows
Without light of you it were lustreless.
I can look forth not or heave up my hand
But with your help to stay me

Darnley.

Surely no,
As you stand now you cannot ; and I were
A faithless fool of mine own fortune, if
I loosened you out of sight for wantonness,
Who have you now in hand : but for all this
It may be flight were no such unwise mean
To assure our free and mutual power on them
And show them simply subject ; as it is,
They have some show of hold on us which
makes

Our reign and freedom questionable and slight
I see some reason in it.

Queen.

Why, do you think
That you being here their gaoler in their eye
Can be their king too, or not rather they
Lords both of gaol and warder ? they will hold
you

But as the minister of their power on me,
Of no more office than a door-keeper
Nor honor than their headman : but fled
hence

You are very King indeed, by your own hand,
Lord of the life you give and majesty,
By no man's furtherance and no grant of theirs
Made pensioner and proxy for their reign
Who should bear rule and you the semblance,
worn

As mask of all their faces, glove of hands,
And hollow trumpet blown of all their mouths,
But mine and all their free and sovereign king.

Darnley. Why, so I say ; they must be
borne in hand ;

Look you, we must not set their fears on edge,
They shall suspect not : I will take them word,
And bring them to you for your bond.

Queen.

Meantime,
I will but walk an hour here hand in hand
With my good brother ; let me speak to him
While they shall draw the schedule.

Darnley.

I will bid him
Attend you, and your women ; but be sure
You take him not to counsel : he is wise,
And full of malice : let him not be part
Of our new mind.

Queen.

He shall not.
Darnley. But you smile—
What should he do to know it ?

Queen.

He shall not know.

Darnley. Well, you shall see him, and they
take off your guard :

I will make sure : but when and by what means
Think you to fly ?

Queen. To-night.

Darnley. God help your wit !
To-night ?

Queen. Before the change of watch ; I have
said ;

Weak as I stand, and burdened, and soul-spent,
I will be hence. Mistrust me not for strength ;
My soul shall make my body like itself,
A servant armed to wait upon my thought
And page my purpose as its minister
Till the end be held in hand. This guard re-
moved,

I will find ways out to win forth to-night,
Fear not, and servants. Go now to the lords
With all submissive mild report of me,
And bring them to receive my word and hand
To confirmation of what bond they please
For pardon and possession of their will ;
And for your kingship—sir, assure yourself
That in few hours it shall be seen and sure
You shall need never seek their loves again
Or hands to help you to it or tongues to cry,
Nor be called king by will of any man
Nor lord by choice of any friend on earth.

Darnley. Nay, I would need no voices.

Queen. And be sure
You shall not build your power on loves of
theirs

Nor live by their election. Go, and thrive :
Think how my faith and hope and love in you
Find all their rest and stronghold, and on them
Set up your trust and standard of your strength.

[*Exit DARNLEY.*]

No much is done ; go thou then first to death ;
For from this hour I have thee. Heav'n, lie
still,

Till I may make those mightier traitors mine
That shall be swords for me to smite him with,
And then be free as fire.

Enter MARY BEATON.

Hast thou no news ?

Mary Beaton. The lord of Bothwell lies
at secret ward
To bear you forth of peril here by force ;
He has gathered up his men beyond the walls
To break this guard upon you when you will,
If at your suit it shall not be withdrawn ;
Here is his token brought me privily
For your own hand.

Queen.

No, in my heart it is,
My love and lord, thy token ; this poor heart
That ere mine ear is smitten with thy name
Hears it and turns to springing fire. What
thanks

Would I not rather pay than these of words
For this thy loving speed ? Yet send him these,
And bid him, I would fain say come, but wait
Till I have tried my traitors ; if my tongue
Win them to slack their hold on me to-night,
We may speed surer ; if their hands hold
fast,

Then let him smite and slay and set me free.
I would have all their heads here in my lap,
Tell him, not one or two slain suddenly,
That their blood shed may seem not spilt by
chance

Nor lost and won in hazard of affray
But sacrificed by judgment, and their names
Who would have made royalty in me
Ruin, and marred the general name of king,
Shall with their lives be perfectly put out,
Royally ruined ; wherefore if I may
I will steal forth with subtle help of words,
Not break their bonds with violence ; in which
hope

Bid him watch close. [*Exit MARY BEATON.*]

And when his watch is done
It will be morning, and the sun shall break
As fire for them that had their hour by night
And light for wrath to see them and to slay.

*Re-enter ARTHUR ERSKINE, introducing
MURRAY.*

Arthur Erskine. Madam, my lord of Mur-
ray.

Queen. Ah, my brother,
Had you been here they had not used me thus.

Murray. I am sorry, madam, such things
should be done

As even the strain of sharp necessity
Can make but fierce and bitter.

Queen. Is this all ?

Nay, it was necessary then and just,
Or I must seem and strive to think it was,
If you say so. But in my present sight,
Now when a feather's or a flower's weight
borne

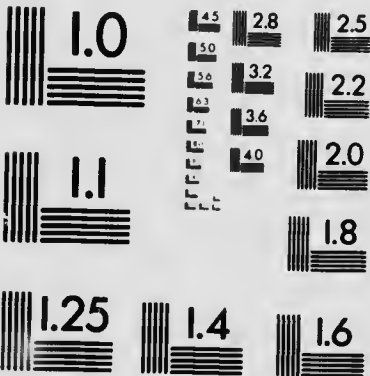
Might make life stoop within me, sense break
down,

All strong capacities of nature fail ;
Now when the hardest heart with iron bound
Might turn to very mercy for my sake,
Here in mine eye to do my friend to death—



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For howsoe'er ye hold him, yet being dead
 I will not say but he was friend of mine
 Who lies now dead and slaughtered—nay, by
 heaven,
 I will not cast that name of friend away
 Because the man my friend is slain for me—
 I say, to kill him at my knee, to stain
 An unborn child's brow with his murdered
 blood,
 To affray with sanguine hands, shake with
 sheer blows,
 The weak and holy warders of the womb,
 The reverence and remembrance of us all
 For that which bare as hidden before birth
 And after was called mother—O, this deed,
 This, though all law were cast out of the world,
 All grace forgotten—this, you will not say
 But they did ill who did it. What, you weep?
 These tears are made of our dear father's blood,
 Who left in each of us such part of him
 As must yearn each toward other, and divide
 At need their mutual suffering; I knew well
 I need not fear to find not in your heart
 Some natural seed of comfort.

Murray.

That I weep

I take no shame, to see you; but mine eyes
 Receive more comfort than their tears can
 give

To see, for all this rash and ruthless night,
 Yet you stand up unwounded, and your heart
 Is left you to put spirit in your speech
 Not like a sick man's; if you have no hurt,
 No hurt is done though they did violently:
 For this man's life was as a present death
 To the well-being and peace of all your state,
 Which by the force of justice done on him
 Stand now in surety. I would pray you make
 Your profit of your pain herein, being wise,
 As you well may; for this was not the man
 That you saw slain, but the man's policy,
 Stabbed through with all their daggers; and
 you see

How it lies dead and outcast. I beseech you,
 For your own love and honor of high rule,
 Set not your heart toward it to raise it up
 That men would bury, lest the graveyard reek
 Of dead men's craft and strange men's creeds
 brought back

Prove poison to you.

Queen.

I will do what men will.

I must not die then?

Murray.

There are those would have it,
 For scandal and offence cast on the realm
 By shame done to the popular commonwealth
 In majesty made shameful; as they say

Through you it hath been, and your dealing
 known

With this dead friend; some that would tear
 you life

Spake of life spent in sharp imprisonment
 Unto your death's day; but by mine award
 You are quit of either danger; you must live
 But under guard till you by word approve
 This man's despatch for necessary and just,
 Submit yourself to call your husband king,
 And own the true faith rooted in this realm
 For lawful and for sovereign here of rule.
 So much you shall.

Queen.

Nay, I will more than th
 I will seal now what you will have me seal,
 What bond soever: let them come to me
 Who wrought this murderous matter but I
 night

That I may sign their pardon with my tongue
 Ere they can crave or threaten. Let them come
 So shall my perfect purpose be more plain
 Freely in all things to submit myself—
 I have your word already—to their will:
 Ay, even with all my new submissive heart,
 As else I cannot choose; for what am I
 That I should think much to submit myself?

Murray.

You shall do wisely to keep fa
 with them

And make your word your action's measure;
 Shall hearts now loosened from you be made fast
 And love reclaimed wait on you loyally
 Through all your land's length. See the lo
 are come.

Enter DARNLEY, MORTON, and RUTHVEN

Queen.

Good morrow, sirs; ye gave me
 good night,

Yet are you welcome even as life or death
 Were welcome to me, coming with your will
 For without love of my good lords my life
 Were scarce worth holding out against th
 will,

But if it please them I should die not yet,
 For their love's sake I give it welcome. Sit
 I have heard what terms ye lay upon mine head
 And bow beneath them willingly, being sure
 It is but meet I should submit myself,
 It is but fit mere majesty how down
 To take the burden by good men and wise
 Imposed upon it; nor shall this be hard;
 For what ye did so suddenly and swift,
 If there be power of pardon in me, here
 With as good heart even as ye did the deed
 Do I forgive it; nay, I should give you than

your dealings

would leave

prisonment
mine award
ou must live
d approve
y and just,
band king,
a this realm
e of rule.

more than this.
ve me seal,
me to me
matter but last

with my tongue
et them come;
more plain
myself—
eir will :
ssive heart,
at am I
omit myself?
y to keep faith

's measure ; so
ou be made fast
loyally
See the lords

RUTHVEN.

ye gave me no
e or death
with your will ;
ds my life
t against their

e not yet,
elcome. Sirs,
oon mine head,
r, being sure
yself,
own
n and wise
be hard ;
l swift,
ne, here
id the deed
ive you thanks

That ye vouchsafe of me to be forgiven ;
For what am I among you? Let the bond
Be drawn between us presently to sign,
While for an hour's space I will walk and wait
Here with my noble brother, hand in hand,
And heart reposed on heart, eyes answering
eyes, [world
With pure plain faith ; for what now in the
Should lies or dumb dissembling profit me
Though I were natural liar? as I do trust
Ye shall not find me but most faithful ; yet,
If I were falser than the foam of the sea
And wilfuller than wind, what should I do,
Being yours, to mock you and myself, and lie
Against mine own life? for ye see me, sir,
How I stand bare between you, without
strength,

At your mere mercy, with no friend on earth
If ye will be mine unfriends ; and I think
To live but by your grace and leave, who
might

If ye were minded speak me out of life
Or sign me dead with smiling ; I were mad
To play with lies, who feel your hands on me
So heavy as they are, and have no hope
Save to be pitied and believed of you.
I pray you then have faith in me, who live
In your faith only, and if it fail me here
Must die the lowliest death in all the world,
And no man's hand to help me.

Darnley. She says truth ;
There is no hanc.

Merton. Madam, though faith stand fast,
Yet fear hath something here to say of you,
And wisdom to remember ; we must think
That what is done in service of yourself
You cannot hold good service when it comes
So masked in blood, so vizarded like death,
As this of ours doth ; and that yet in time
You may find mean to wreak your wrath on us
For having strangely served you, and perforce
Given desperation and the dangerous time
So desperate a deliverance from despair.

We have saved you in this service done the
state,
Who must have else been broken in the
breach

Of the state's order and the popular law
By this man living violently misused ;
But cannot hope yet for such thanks of you
As even the deed deserves whose fierce des-
patch

Has shaken you with thunder, and its flame
Still makes your eyes blind to the good work
done

And sharp need felt of it ; so must this be,
And so must we take heed lest being yet blind
We give you scope and mean to hurt yourself.

Queen. I did not think the thing was yet
alive

That could fear me.

Darnley. Nay, look you, she says right ;
We have no room to fear her.

Queen. Lo, my lords,
How dangerous and how strong a thing it is
That threatens here your state and safety ;
see,

It is no less than woman, and unarmed,
Half dead, unfriended, hard on childbearing,
Naked of arms or means ; it were not wise
To leave unguarded, without spies or swords
About her path, so great a danger ; yea,
Wise men would rather fear her force too
much [wills ;

Than good men show compassion. Do your
I am well content to know you wise, and so
To bear what hard or lighter weight ye please ;
How sore soever, God knows, I believe
It shall not long afflict me.

Murray. In my mind,
It now shall less distract the general eye
With apprehension of strange times and strife
To see the ways again made clear, and gates
Not crowded up with guard.

Darnley. Why so I said.

Ruthven. So I say not. Bear with me
though I seem

Less confident or free of heart than men,
Whose minds are gentle as their names,
should be [come
In things of common care ; what hurt may
By fault of us we know not, but we know
It is no private peril ; if we err,
Not we nor ours must only ache for it,
But the whole popular heart of this great land
Must bleed and break for our false friendship
shown

And confident remission of our cause
And very duty toward her, through mere wish
To be called gentle toward her enemies.

Queen. I am her enemy then : where lies
my strength ? [make war,

What field? what weapon? how shall we
Take truce and break it, with what equal face
Stand brow to brow for battle! By this hand,
I knew not yet how strong it was, nor worth
How many hands of swordsmen ; were this
true,

I might wax proud to be so terrible, [fear
Seeing in such great men's eyes so great a

And only mine own fearful face therein
As in a mirror shadowed.

Darnley. 'Tis mere truth ;
We should be shamed to seem in fear of her,
Yea, made a mockery in men's eyes and mouths
For base and blind misgivings.

Ruthven. You, my lords
And equals with me in the proof of years,
In the age of counsel and experience borne
Of common service done our natural state,
Shall best pass judgment if in hate or fear
I speak for mine own ends or enmities
To turn your hearts from honor ; for the queen,
As she shall be toward God, so I toward her
Would be fast friend and servant ; but wherein
She is not friend with heaven nor with the state
I were no friend to serve her, nor to say
There were no danger and no sin to serve.
Ye must all think I think not to live long ;
And being so signed of sickness for my grave
With such a mortal seal, I speak alive
As one being dead that speaketh ; if ye lose
The grace of God here won by your own hands,
The power ye have to serve him, and the effect
Of his good hour, through negligence of will
Or pride or pity, ye shall see the state
Break from your hands, and for one devil cast
out

Seven entered in its body. *Sirs, take heed ;*
The least thing lightly overlooked or done
May undo all things wrought. Keep fast your
guards ;

By the King's counsel if they be withdrawn,
Upon his head that bade them go shall rest
What bloodshed ever follows ; yet in time
Think nothing weak that is not with us ; each
May have some sting or weapon of itself
That till sloth feel it sees not.

Queen. A wise rule :
So should the wary wolf pen up the lambs,
The falcon set good guard upon the wren,
For fear of teeth or talons.

Murray. We will give
To the king's hand the bond for yours to sign ;
Meantime all ease and reverence shall you
have,
And freedom for your household folk to serve
As best your need may bid them.

Queen. *Sirs, farewell.*
I will not pray you do but what ye will,
Which shall seem wisely to me.—Let me have
Word of their instant sentence. [*Aside to*

Darnley.
Darnley (aside). With all speed.

[*Exeunt DARNLEY, MURRAY, MORTON and*
RUTHVEN.

Queen. Where are my servants Standen and
Traquair ?

Arthur Erskine. At hand to serve your
highness.

Queen. Ah, to serve !

My highness is brought low, too low to claim
Service of men ; if I may find but love
Or only pity of any, this shall be
All utmost service I desire of them.

I have but my sorrows to my subjects left,
And these rebellious ; yet I keep what state
And rule I may upon them. Tell those twain
I pray their patience lend me but the time
To hear what I would have them, and to
choose

If they will do it for pity.

Arthur Erskine. Think them here
And your will done already. [*Exit.*

Queen. Yea, my will !
What knowest thou may my will be ? by this
light,

I feel a heat and hurry of the heart
That burns like joy ; my blood is light and
quick,

And my breath comes triumphantly as his
That has long labored for a mountainous goal
And sets fast foot on the utmost cliff of all.
If ere the race be run my spirit be glad,
What when it puts the palm of peril on
And hreathes clear air and conquers ? *Nay, I*
think

The doubt itself and danger are as food
To strengthen and bright wine to quicken me
And lift my heart up higher than my need,
Though that be high upon me.

Re-enter ERSKINE with TRAQUAIR and
STANDEN.

Now, my friends,
Ye come unlike to courtiers, come to serve
Me most unlike a queen : shall I think yet
I have some poor part in your memories safe,
And you some care of what I was, and thought
How I fare now ? Shall I take up my hope,
That was cast down into the pit of death,
To keep the name God gave me, and the seal
That signs me royal, by your loves and faiths
Recrowned and reinstated ? Say but no,
Or say but nought, this hope of mine and
heart

Are things as dead as yesterday : my cause
Lies in your lips, to comfort or confound,

As ye see reason. Yet, as power is yours,
So let remembrance in you be for light
To see the face of the time by ; so let faith,
Let noble pity and love be part of you,
To make you mindful what a cause it is
That ye must put in judgment, and what life
For fame or shame to you through all time born
Ensues upon your sentence ; for ye choose
If ye will match my dangers with your faiths
And help me helpless with your hearts, who lie
By grief and fear made heartless ; or lend hand
To make my weakness weaker, and break
down

My broken wall of sovereignty ; which now
Ye wot were no sore labor.

Standen. Let him die
As heartless toward the grace of God, who
hath

No heart in him to give its blood for yours !

Traquair. So say we all your servants.

Queen. Did I know it ?

Methinks I knew when I bade send for you.
Ye should so say. Ah friends, I had no fear
But I should find me friends in this fierce world,
Or I had died unfriended. Shall I thank you
For being the true men and the kind ye are,
Or take your service thankless, since I thought
Ye could not else, being young and of your
kinds,

But needs must be my help ? ye have not hearts
To strike at men weaponed ; ye would not
Lay hard hand on a woman weak with child,
A sick sad woman that was no man's queen
Of all that stood against her ; yet her son,
The unborn thing that pleads again with you
As it could plead not with them, this dumb
voice,

This sightless life and sinless, was their king's,
If ever they would let it come to life.

Lo, here their aim was ; here the weapons
went

That should have stabbed to death the race of
kings

And cut their stem down to the root ; here,
here

The pistol's mouth that bruised my breast, the
hand

That struck athwart my shoulder, found their
mark,

Made here their point to shoot at ; in my womb
By them the bud of empire should have died
That yet by you may live and yet give thanks
For flower and fruit to them that saved the
seed.

Standen. They shall die first.

Traquair. Command us what next way
There is to serve you, though the way were
fire

We would be through it.

Queen. To-night then at first watch
I purpose with the man's help—nay, what
name

Shall his be now ? king, husband, or, God
help,

King's father ?—with the man that you called
king

As I called husband, to win forth of bonds
By the close covered passage underground
That by strange turns and strait blind working
ways

Winds up into the sovereign cemetery
Whose dust is of my fathers ; therewithout
Wait you with horse ; and when you see us rise
Out of the hollow earth among the dead,
Be ready to receive and bear us thence.
Some two hours' haste will speed us to Dunbar,
Where friends lie close, and whence with sud-
den strength

I trust to turn on these good lords again.

Do this for such poor love's sake as your
queen's,

And if there be thanks worthy in the world,
Them shall she give ; not silver, sirs, nor gold,
Nor the coined guerdon that is cast on churls
To coin them into service ; but a heart,
If not worth love, yet loving, and a faith
That will die last of all that dies in me
And last of all remembrances forgone
Let your names go. God speed you, and fare-
well.

SCENE II.—RUINS OF THE ABBEY OF HOLYROOD.

*Enter ARTHUR ERSKINE, TRAQUAIR, and
STANDEN.*

Standen. It must be time ; the moon is
sick and slow

That should by this be higher.

Arthur Erskine. It is your eye
Whose sight is slow as sickness ; for the moon
Is seasonable and full : see where it burns
Between the bare boughs and the broken tombs
Like a white flower whose leaves were fire ;
the night

Is deep and sharp wherein it hangs, and heaven
Gives not the wind a cloud to carry, nor
Fails one faint star of all that fill their count
To lend our flight its comfort ; we shall have
Good time of heaven and earth

Traquair. How shall the steeds
Be shared among us ?

Arthur Erskine. If she keep her mind,
My English gelding best shall bear the queen,
And him the Naples courser. Hark, they
come.

Standen. It was a word said of the wind to
hear
What earth or death would answer. These
dead stones

Are full of hollow noises though the vault
Give tongue to no man's footfall ; when they
come

It will speak louder. Lo how straight that star
Stands over where her face must break from
earth

As it hath broken ; it was not there before,
But ere she rise is risen. I would not give
The third part of this night between us shared
For all the days that happiest men may live
Though I should die by morning.

Traquair. Till she come,
I cannot choose but with my fears take thought,
Though all be after hersweet manner done
And by her wise direction, what strange ways
And what foul peril with so faint a guard
Must of so tender feet be overpast
Ere she win to us.

Arthur Erskine. All these with laughing lips
Shall she pass through ; the strength and spring
of soul

That set her on this danger will sustain
Those feet till all her will and way be won.
Her spirit is to her body as a staff
And her bright fiery heart the traveler's lamp
That makes all shadow clear as its own light.

*Enter from the vaults the QUEEN and
DARNLEY.*

Queen. Here come the wind and stars at
once on us ;

How good is this good air of that full heaven
That drives the fume back of the sepulchres
And blows the grave away ! Have no more
fear ;

These are no dead men.

Darnley. Nay, I fear no dead ;
Nothing I fear of quick or dead but God.
Shall I not go before you ?

Queen. Not a foot.
See you, my friends, what valiant hearts are
here,
My lord's and mine, who hardly have crept
forth,

In God's fear only, through the charnel-house
Among the bones and skulls of ancient kings
That thought not shame to stand for stumbling
stones

In their poor daughter's way, whose heart has
failed

But that his hardier heart held up her feet
Who even if winds blew did not shrink nor
shake

For fear of aught but God. The night is kind
And these March blasts make merry with the
moon

That laughs on our free flight. Where stand
your steeds ?

Arthur Erskine. Madam, hard by in shadow
ow of the stones ;

Please you, this way.

Queen. I will to horse with you

Darnley. No, but with me.

Queen. It is not my good will

Ride you alone, and safer. Friend, your arm

SCENE III. — MURRAY'S LODGING IN
HOLYROOD.

Enter MURRAY, MORTON, and RUTHVEN.

Morton. There is no present help ; the
violent speed

Of these fierce days has run our chance
down.

It is found certain she comes back to-day ;
Soon as their flight drew bridle at Dunbar,
Yet hot from horse, she sends for Bothwell in
With all his border thievery, red-foot knaves
The hardest hinds of Liddesdale ; next him
His new bride's brother, Huntley, more in care
To win the land back than revenge the blood
His father lost for treason ; after these
Caithness with Athol, and the queen's chief
strengths,

The earl marshal and the archbishop ; in few
days

Eight thousand swords to wait on that sword
hand

Was worth so little manhood ; then Argyle
Who should have been a sea-wall on our side

Against the foam of all their faction, he,
Struck to the heart with spite and sharp despair

Through proof late made of English faith—
you,

My lord of Murray, felt it when ye twain
Sought help and found false heart there—cast
himself

Over upon her side ; with him to more

Her last year's rebels, Rothes and Glencairn,
And pardon sealed for all that rose with them
Who were not of our counsel in this death.
Thus fare we without help or hope of these,
And from the castle here of Edinburgh
The hot Lord Erskine arms in our offence
His mounted guns, making the queen more
strong

Than had her flight won first its darkling walls
And for a free camp in the general field
Set up her strength within the fortress here
Which serves her now for outwork, while be-
hind

The whole force raised comes trooping to her
hand.

In this deep strait that our own hands have dug
And our own follies channelled, to let in
Storm on our sails and shipwreck on our hopes,
My counsel is that whoso may stand fast
Should here in harbor bide his better day,
And we make land who may not; you, my lord,
As by James Melville she solicits you,
May honorably assure your peace with her,
Being speckless in her sight of this man's
blood;

We that dipped open hand in it must hence,
And watch the way of the wind and set of
storm

Till the sea sink again.

Ruthven. Sir, so say I;
You serve not us a whit nor change our chance
By tarrying on our side. Let no man fly
For our deed's sake but we that made our deed
The witness for us not to be gainsaid
By foe of ours or friend we have on earth.
It was well done; what else was done, and ill,
We must now bear the stroke of, and devise
Some healing mean in season. This is sure,
That faith or friendship shall have no long life
Where friendship is engrafted on breach of
faith;

But shame, despite, division, and distrust
Shall eat the heart out of their amity,
And hate unreconcile their heartless hands
Whom envious hope made fast or cunning fear.
This cannot be but nigh; and ye that live
shall see more sure for this blind hour's default
and hold more fast and watch more heedfully
the new chance given for this chance cast away.
I shall not see it, how near soe'er; and yet
the day that I shall die in banishment
is not much nigher than must their doom's
day be

Whose trust is in the triumph of their hour.

Mine is now hard on end; but yours shall last.

I doubt not, till its service be all done
And comfort given our people. Take the
Lairds

Grange and Pittarrow with you to the queen;
Ye shall find peace and opportunity
With present welcome as for proffered love;
Make swift agreement with her; this shall be
The surest staff that hope may take in hand.
Farewell.

Murray. I would not say it, if ye not knew
My faith departs not with me from your side
Nor leaves the heart's bond broken of our loves;
But in this trust, though loth, I take farewell,
To give you welcome ere the year be dead.

Ruthven. Me shall you not, nor see my face
again,

Who ere the year die must be dead; mine eyes
Shall see the land no more that gave them
light,

But fade among strange faces; yet, if aught
I have served her, I should less be loth to
leave

This earth God made my mother.

Murray. Then farewell,
As should his heart who fares in such wise forth
To take death's hand in exile. I must fare
Ill now or well I know not, but I deem
I have as much as you of banishment
Who bear about me but the thought of yours.

SCENE IV.—HOLYROOD.

The QUEEN and SIR JAMES MELVILLE.

Queen. Am I come back to be controlled
again,

And of men meaner? must I hold my peace
Or set my face to please him? Nay, you see
How much miscounselled is he, strayed how far
From all men's hope and honor, and to me
How strange and thankless, whom in self-
despite

You will me yet to foster: I would live
Rather the thrall of any hind on earth.

Melville. I would but have your wisdom
hide somehow

The sharpness of your spirit, whose edge of
wrath

There is no man but now sees manifest;
As there is none who knows him that hath
cause

To love or honor; yet great pity it is
To see what nobler natural mind he had
And the first goodness in him so put out
By cursed counsel of his mother's kin,

The bastard Douglas, and such ill friends else
As most are unfriends : but this fire in you
Who chose him, being so young, of your own
will,

Against the mind of many, for your lord,
Shall rather burn yourself than purge his mood,
And the open passion of your heart and hate
I carten in him the hate he bears not you
But them that part you from him. Twice you
know,

Or now my tongue were less for love's sake
bold,

Twice hath it pleased your highness charge me
speak

When time or need might seem for counsel ;
then

That thus you charged me, now such need is
come,

Forgive that I forget not.

Queen. I might well,
Did you forget, forgive not ; but I know
Your love forgot yet never any change
That faith to me laid on it ; though I think
I never bade you counsel me to bear
More than a queen might worthily, nor sought
To be advised against all natural will,
That with mine honor now is joined to speak
And bid me bear no more with him, since both
Take part against my patience. For his hate,
Henceforth shall men more covet it than fear ;
My foot is on its head, that even to-day
Shall yield its last poor power of poison up,
And live to no man's danger till it die.

Enter DARNLEY and MURRAY.

Welcome, dear brother and my worthy lord,
Who shall this day by your own word be clear
In all men's eyes that had ill thoughts of you.
Brother, to-day my lord shall purge himself
By present oath before our councillors
Of any part in David's murdered blood,
And stand as honorable in sight of all
Whose thought so wronged him as in mine he
doth

Who ever held him such as they shall now.

Murray. Must he swear this ?

Darnley. Who says I shall not swear ?

Queen. He has given his faith to swear so
much to-day,

And who so shameless or so bold alive
As dare doubt that ?

Murray. Not I : in God's name, no ;
No more than any other.

Darnley. Nay then, well ;

I am not angry.

Queen. 'Tis the noblest mood
That takes least hold on anger ; those faint
hearts

That hold least fire are fain to show it first ;
The man that knows himself most honorable
Fears least or doubts if others hold him so ;
But he that has small honor in himself

Is quick to doubt what men may deem of him
And is the most swift in anger as in fear

Of imagined judgments ; praised be God,
Ours is none such. Is the deed not drawn

That gives into our servant Bothwell's hand
The forfeit lands of Maitland for his own
That by his former fault stand forfeited ?

Murray. Is it your purpose he shall have
those lands ?

Queen. It is my very purpose.

Murray. I grieve at it.

Queen. Grieve or be what you will, it stands my
purpose yet.

We should be gone to meet our councillors ;
My heart thinks long till it shall know my lord
Held of the world as noble as of me.

Darnley. It is not time.

Queen. No, but much more than time.

Come with me, brother. [*Exeunt QUEEN and
MURRAY.*]

Melville. I am sorry for your grace.

Darnley. You must not think I know not
all this while

That she doth mock me.

Melville. Nay, her mood may change.

Darnley. Never for me. I had been much
better dead

Than cast off thus, who cast mine own friends
off

And knew not for whose sake. She hath slain
the men

Who kept that night the gates while he was
slain ;

I would she had rather taken too my blood
Than put my life to shame ; yet I may live

To put that off upon her ; had I friends,
Shame should go back from me to her, who
thinks

To lay it on her wedded lord and laugh ;
As I may one day laugh yet. Hear you news
Of Morton and mine uncle ?

Melville. They are fled ;
I hear but this, not whither.

Darnley. As they brewed,
So let them drink ; the hands were none of
mine

That mixed that cup to them; so much I swear,
And may so much with honor. Yet would God

I had not chosen to lose their loves for hers,
And found so cold her favor. Scarce escaped,
Scarce out of bonds, half breathless yet with flight,

No mind was in her of my help, my love,
My hand that brake her prison; for all this,
My kin forsaken, mine own wrongs and griefs
Forgotten, mine own head imperilled, mine
For hers that I delivered and perchance
To leave within their danger had done well,
No thought or thanks I get of her; and these
That had I stood by them might stand by me
When I shall need, may mock me for her fool
And curse me for their traitor. Yet I think,
Were I once clear of her as now of these,
Please God, to make mine own strength by myself,

Being both ways free; I know not well yet how,

But I will take mine own part yet or die.

[Exeunt.

SCENE V.—A STREET.

Enter TWO BURGESSES.

First Burgess. What is this news that flies
so in the dark

like a bird whereof we know it is
bringing we know not?

Burgess. This that comes
of exiled lords in England, to make

The face of Darnley's falsehood, with what lips
He swore his deed away and damned himself?
They had no sooner knowledge of such shame
Than word was sent of him through all the
land,

Large witness of his full complicity
And conscience with them of the work to be
For which they groan in barren banishment
While he crawls here before the scornful queen,
And has betrayed the blood of his allies
To the axe's edge of unjust judgment.

First Burgess. One
By treason of his tongue already slain
Now speaks of him with breathless mouth to
God;

And Maitland and two more lie under doom
Through but his witness: yet for this shame
It seems he has won small guerdon save the
shame,

But hath his treason for his treason's fee;
And this more comfort, to behold the man
That by his lips and nobler hands than his
Was done to righteous death, and thrust in
earth

Before the main door of this Abbey church,
Unearthed again and nobly reinterred
Hard by the grave's edge of Queen Magdalen,
That men may judge how near he grew alive
To the queen's side yet living; where instead
A worthier stay now in her brother stands
For her false lord to look upon and loath
No less than David, and much more to fear,
Whom with that David he laid trains to slay
Aforetime, and again made vaunt but now
In the queen's sight to slay him; or so herself
Gave word to the earl, and willed him make
demand

Of the king's own false fearful mouth; but he,
Whom thus perchance she sought to make the
sword

To pierce her husband, modestly bespake
Before her face this caitiff like a friend,
And was put off with faint excuse; and yet,
Heart-wrung to see him stand or any man
Fast in her favor, like one sick with grief
The king flies forth to Glasgow, where apart
His father's head is hidden; and there as here
He sits not in men's sight now royally,
But with some six or eight goes up and down
Even where he lists, and none takes note of
him;

While the miscounselled queen, grown high in
mind,
Holds privy commerce with the brood o' the
Pope

Whose plots corrupt the northward English air,
And with the murderous Irish, to put out
The live light of our God from sea to sea
With insurrection of the fires of hell
And smoke of slaughter; meantime she re-
claims

Of the English queen for prisoners to her
hand
The death-doomed lords in exile; and men say
They find scant countenance of the southern
court;

Yet they think not she will deliver them.

Second Burgess. One is there hath found
sure deliverance;

No chain of man's can mark him prisoner more,
Nor whence he rests can any banish him;
Ruthven is dead.

First Burgess. God hath his friend then
safe;

For God's friend he was ever ; and hath died
Most fortunately ; seeing not what we live
Too soon to see.

Second Burgess. He was a nobler man
Than his own name was noble ; no Scot born
More true to the old love of his natural land
Nor stouter-hearted on the gospel side
Of all that stood to serve it. Yet have these
As valiant servants ; Morton, though cast out,
Lives secret yet in England, whence the queen
Dares not I think for shame's sake yield him up
To this queen's bloody judgment, or for fear
And hostile heart she will not. We shall know
Shortly what upshot God will bring of all ;
Whate'er this be, there will be none again
That shall do Darnley good.

First Burgess. I saw him swear
That day before the council ; he was pale
As one half drunken, stammering as in wrath,
With insolent forehead and irresolute eyes,
Between false fear and shameful hardihood,
With frontless face that lied against itself,
And trembling lips that were not yet abashed
For all their trembling.

Second Burgess. Ay, good cause was there
To shake him to the soul, having cast off
Friendship and faith of good men, yet being still
Signed with their enemies' blood too plain
and broad

To gain the goodwill of unrighteousness.
When his day comes that men are weary of him,
God shall strike home.

First Burgess. Then should that stroke be
swift ;

For evil and good alike are weary of him.

SCENE VI.—CASTLE OF ALLOA.

MURRAY and DARNLEY.

Darnley. Shall I not see her ? but if I see
her not

I will be wroken of you that shut me out,
By God I will. What, are ye not combined,
You, my false-blooded brother, demi-prince,
And Bothwell, and the trustless fool Argyle,
With her to unmake me ? I shall foil you
though,

Yea, were all three made each a triple man
With thrice your heart and wit.

Murray. You strike too high
And shear but air in sunder : there's none yet
That wills you so much evil as yourself,
Would you but think it. Turn your wrath on
me,

It cannot wound or fright out of its peace
A soul that answers not your hate, nor works
By night or light against you.

Darnley. Swear me that,
And if a devil there be I am rid of you
Whom he will gripe at once and hale to hell ;
You took not word to Melville from my wife
Of warning with rebuke for his past pains
To reconcile us, and with charge to be
No more familiar with me for her sake ;
You were not of her counsel to lie in
At Stirling, whence she fled from sight of me,
Who following hither was again cast off,
And till our child was born in Edinburgh
Might scarce have sight of her, and may not
now

When scarce a month delivered she comes
back

To take by sea and land her pleasure here
Of hunt or sail among the firths and hills
In such fair fellowship as casts out mine ;
It was not you that knew this and approved ;
I pray you swear it.

Murray. You are lesser than a child
That, being as simple, yet by innocence
Exceeds you naturally. What cause have I
Or power to wrong you ? what good thing
yours

Should I desire to strip from you and wear,
What gold or grace to gird myself withal
And stand up clad in thievish ornament
To take your place thrust out ? Conspiracy
Should have some gain for warrant of itself,
With vantage of some purpose ; none lays waste
To slay or steal save what may profit him ;
So sit you safe enough.

Darnley. I shall not see her

Murray. If you will be well counselled, n
her mood
Is hard and keener since your child was born
And she, new-risen from childbed, hith
came

To taste the savour and sweetness of the sea
I think, with no mind you should follow her
Nor am myself, howbeit you hold me hers.
And of one counsel to put down your hopes,
More near her favor ; one man's eye alone
Sees her face favorable, one only ear
Hears her speak soft ; if he be friend of mine
You know as I know.

Darnley. Why, ye are reconcil
I have heard what care she had to appease be
parts,
When you before her face had braved h
saying,

Ere he rest Maitland's forfeit land and state
Some score as honorable as he should die,
And she had cast herself across your wrath
With reconciling passion; ay, my lord,
Take note we are not so dull of ear or brain
But we hear word of you and understand
The traitors that ye all are, all, to me,
The false heart and the lying lips that serve
The murderous meaning of your will, and hers
The first and worst. What, will ye have my life?
Is it my helpless blood that she would take
To serve for christening water to her child,
And for the font no gift of English gold
Though bright and hollow and void as English
love,
But the stait coffin, the vile shell of death,
That hides and bears me graveward? but I
live,
To save myself and to revenge I live,
And will not die for all you.

Enter the QUEEN and BOTHWELL.

Queen. What is this
That makes such wrathful or such woful war
Even on our ears, and here? We bade you not
Come brawl before us like a groom, and break
Our breath of peace with cries of contumely.
Here is not room enough for rioters' threats
To ring through and return; in Edinburgh
You have leave to brawl and wail and swear
and cry,
Feed where you list, and love; here I would
rest,
With thus much leave yet by your gracious
grant,
That I may somewhere sit apart, and think
What man I have to husband.
Darnley. I will go:
I would I had not come between your eyes
Nor now nor ever.

Queen. Then they had never learnt
What makes or makes not man worth looking on.

Darnley. Am I not worth your eye?

Queen. I pray, go back;

I would not say what you are worth or no.

Darnley. I am yetworth two bastards; and
this man,

If he shall do me less than right, by heaven,
Shall wear the proof upon him.

Murray. Sir, your words
Are as swords drawn of drunkards' hands,
which first

Feel their edge bite; me can they make not
shrink,

You they may pierce, and slay your own good
name,

If any man be that gives ear to you.

Darnley. You will not fight with me?

Queen. What, in our face?

Hath fear gone after shame?

Murray. Let him pass hence;

He hath said truth once; we shall not fight.

Queen. I charge you

Make straight atonement; else, though shame
be dead,

I will find means to raise up fear alive.

Darnley. Nay, I speak hot and hastily;
my lord,

You know I bear no bitter heart toward you;

I am more of quick tongue than of evil will.

Murray. Sir, so I hold you.

Darnley. So you do but right.

Nor will I stay to chafe your majesty

That has all power to bid me to and fro,

Who yet was called your lord once of the priest,

And am no lord but servant. *[Exit.]*

Queen. Said you, once?

Not once but twice he hath spoken truth to-day.
Yet sits it strange upon his lips.

Murray. I would

He had come not hither, or you not bidden
him back.

Queen. What, should he stay? Fair brother,
wot you well,

I had rather touch in the dark a serpent's flesh
And with its body and breath confound mine
own

Than with his breath and body. Never more,
By Mary Virgin, while these limbs are mine

And these my living lips, never will I

Pollute myself with him; by kiss nor touch

Shall ever he defile me. Nay too, see,

(You have not seen) what privacies he hath

With what strange friends; here have I to my
hand

Letters of his to Philip and the Pope,

That they should know I am slacker toward the
faith

Than Rome would have me, or Spain; he
swears I am cold,

I have cast off care (God wot) to serve the
church,

And he it is, my lord, being strong in faith,
Expounds mine unfaith to them.

Bothwell. Hath he sworn

To sleep for their sakes in a naked grave?

If this were blown among the popular folk

Scant time there were to sew his shroud, I ween,
Ere earth were shed upon him.

Murray. Ay, but, sir,
They must not know it; it were not well they
knew;

Nor shall it be put forth among them.

Bothwell. No!

It shall not?

Murray. By my will it shall not be.

Bothwell. His will! and shall not! Is it
queen or king

That holds the rod of rule in Scotland here?

Madam, what says your sometime majesty

Of such a kingly will? since, for your own,

It has no power, it shall not fight with his,

Shall not have way, nor shall not be at all,

Except it swim with his will.

Murray. This is nought.

Bothwell. Yea truly, nought shall be this
will of yours,

This potent will that shall not tread us down;

Yea, what you will or will not, all is nought,

Nought as your name, or title to bear rule

Within the realm possessed more royally.

Murray. 'Tis not a score as big-voiced
men as this

Shall make me weak with wagging of their
tongues

That I should loose what lies into my hand.

Madam, what faith I bear you and goodwill,

If that you know not, let the time and proof,

Not mine own lips, be witness; in this realm

I have some power to serve you, by no craft

Unjustly purchased nor by force of hand

Won masterfully: and for God's love and
yours

That which I may I will do to keep fair

In the open eye of all men your good name

And power which if that name be blown against

With windy whispers of ill-minded folk,

Or such as see your marriage-bed lie cold

And know not wherefore, dies out of your
hand

And is no more for ever. Therefore is it

I would not the worst cause of strife you have

Were opened to the people; for himself,

You know if ever love between us were

Since first I fell under your stroke of wrath

For his sole sake, whose match then made
with you

I would betimes have broken, but being made

Would not now see rent shamefully in twain

That men should speak you wrong.

Queen. You are honorable;

But yet the whole worst cause you know not of,

That even his father Lennox writes me here

Letters to put the charge thereof away

And clear himself of fellowship therein,

Assuring his own honesty, albeit

His word is worthless with his son my lord

And his name held not as a father's name.

This letter will I lay before the lords

That they may see what manner of cause he
hath

To plead against us with what likelihood,

When his own father shall forswear his cause.

I am assured he hath set his lewd light mind,

Out of what fear I know not or what shame,

To flee forth of the kingdom and take ship

For the islands westward of that southern cape

Where the out-thrust heel of England cleaves
the sea—

But God knows how to live there, if by spoil

Or what base mean of life; only thus much

In parley with the French ambassador

He hath avowed, and wept to tell of wrongs

That as he swears have driven him down to
this.

Murray. He is a fool, and vile; yet let
not him

Be the more dangerous to you even for this,

That he is vile and foolish; there should be

Wise means to curb and chain the fool in him

Without the scandal of the full-mouthed world.

Queen. Such have I sought; and presently

I think

To have him brought again in Edinburgh

Before the lords in council, even those men

Who stood in arms against him with yourself

When first there grew debate upon our match

(Which I could pray now with too tardy tongue

That God had given you force to break indeed),

And were of counsel with him afterward

In David's bloodshed, and betrayed of him

Into mine hand again for perfect fear,

Fear and false heart; even before these, I say,

Whose threefold memory of him so must knit

Their hearts to his, there shall he plead,
and say

If he have aught against me blameworthy,

Or what he would; so shall he be displayed

And we in the eyes of all men justified

That simply deal with him and honorably,

Not as by cunning or imperious hand,

But plain as with an equal.

Bothwell.

By my head,

Your counsel, madam, is more than man's

poor wit.

Murray. It may do well: would all were

well indeed!

I see no clearer way than this of yours

Nor of more peaceful promise. I will go

To bid my friends together of the lords
Who will be counsellors of me, and to show
Your purpose righteous : so I take my leave.

[Exit.

Queen. Is not that light red oversea ?

Bothwell. Blood-red.

Queen. The wind has fallen ; but there the
clouds come up ;

We shall not sail to-day.

Bothwell. No ; here will be
No woman's weather.

Queen. Yes. I had in mind
Either to sail or drive the deer to-day.
I fear not so much rainfall or sea-drift
That I should care to house and hide my head.

I never loved the windless weather, nor
The dead face of the water in the sun ;
I had rather the live wave leapt under me,
And fits of foam struck light on the dark air,
And the sea's kiss were keen upon my lip
And bold as love's and bitter ; then my soul
Is a wave too that springs against the light
And beats and bursts with one great strain
of joy

As the sea breaking. You said well ; this
light
Is like shed blood split here by drops and
there

That overflows the red brims of the cloud
And stains the moving water : yet the waves
Pass, and the split light of the broken sun
Rests not upon them out a minute's space ;
No longer should a deed, methinks, once done
Endure upon the life of memory
To stain the days thereafter with remorse
And mar the better seasons.

Bothwell. So think I.

Queen. If I were man I would be man
like you.

Bothwell. What then ?

Queen. And being so loved as you of me,
I would make use of love, and in good time
Put the scythe to it and reap ; it should not rot
As corn ungarnered, it should bring forth bread
And fruit of life to strengthen me : but, mark,
Who would eat bread must earn bread : would
you be King ?

Bothwell. Nay, but servant ever to my
queen.

Queen. Let us go forth ; the evening will
be fair.

SCENE VII.—EDINBURGH. THE PARLIA-
MENT-HOUSE.

The QUEEN seated in state ; near her DU
CROC and MURRAY ; DARNLEY in front, as at
his arraignment ; on the one side the Lords of
the Congregation ; on the other those of the
Queen's party, BOTHWELL, HUNTLEY, CAITH-
NESS, ATHOL, and the ARCHBISHOP of ST.
ANDREW'S.

Queen. My lords, ye hear by his own word
of hand

How fair and loyally our father writes,
To purge his name that had indeed no soil
Of any blame to usward : though he have
No power upon our wedded lord his son
To heal his heart's disease of discontent :
Which, for myself, before God's face and yours
I do protest I know not what thing done
Hath in my lord begotten or brought forth,
Nor of what ill he should complain in me.
Nay, here in very faith and humbleness
I turn me to him and with clasped hands be-
seech

That he would speak ever all his mind of me,
In what thing ever I have given my lord of-
fence,

And if before him I stand blameworthy
Would lay my blame for burden on my head
In this high presence ; which to bear shall be
At once for penance and instruction to me
Who know not yet my lightest fault by name.

Ochiltree. So would we all be certified of you,
Sir, that your cause may stand forth visibly
And men take cognizance of it who see
Nor root nor fruit now or discontent ;
We pray you then make answer to the queen.

Du Croc. My lord, ye have held me for
a friend, and laid

A friend's trust on me ; for that honor's sake
For which I am bounden to you, give me now
leave to ease you in all faith of heart

Honor not yourself nor this great queen
By speech or silence with a show of shame ;
Let it be seen shame hath no portion here,
But honor only and reconciled remorse
That pours its bitter balm into the wound
Of love somewhere divided from itself

And makes it whole ; I pray you, be it so now.

Queen. An honorable petition, my good
lord,

And one that comes reverberate from my heart.
Darnley. I will not stand the question.

Are ye set

To bait me like a bondsman ? Sirs, I think
Their is no worthier man of you than I,
Whom ye would chide and bait and mock ;
howbeit,

Ye shall not wring out of my smitten lips,
As from a child's ye scourge till he speak truth,
One word I would not; rather being thus
used

I will go forth the free man that I came,
No nobler, but as noble. For your grace,
I have stood too near you now to fall behind
And stand far back with vassal hat plucked off
To bow at bidding; therefore with free soul
For a long time I take farewell and go,
Commending you to God; and if as seems
I was or nought or grievous in your eye,
It shall not take offence this many a day
At this that here offends it. So I have done;
Enough said is said well.

Bothwell (aside to the Queen). I never saw
Such heart yet in t'is fool. Madam, speak
now;

I wot he hath made a beard or two of them
Nod favorably.

Queen. What should I say? not I.

Bothwell. Speak to the ambassador; bid
him take heed

This feather fly not shipward, and be blown
Out of our hand; speak to him.

Queen. Have no such fear;
He will not fly past arm's length; the French
lord

Will hold him safe unbidden. Look, they
talk.

Bothwell. And yet I would he had spoken
not so high.

I did not think but he would bend, and mourn
Like a boy beaten.

Queen. With what sorrow of heart,
My lords, we have heard such strange and
harsh reply

To our good words and meaning, none of you
But must be as ourself to know it well.
But since nor kindliness nor humble speech
Nor honest heart of love can so prevail
Against the soul of such inveteracy,
But wilful mind will make itself more hard
Than modesty and womanhood are soft
Or gentleness can speak it fair, we have not
One other tear to weep thereon for shame.
So without answer, yea, no word vouchsafed,
As all ye witness, no complaint, no cause,
No reason shown, but all put off in wrath,—
I would not say, ourself in you, my lords,
Mocked with defiance,—it were but a scorn
To hold our session further. Thus in grief
Will we fare hence and take of you farewell,
Being southward bounden, as ye know, to hear
At Jedburgh what complaint of wrong there is

Between our own folk and the bordering men,
Whose wardens of the English side have
wrought us

Fresh wrong but late; and our good wardens
here

Shall go before us to prepare our way.

SCENE VIII.—HERMITAGE CASTLE.

The Queen and BOTHWELL.

Bothwell. I did not think you could have
rid so fast.

Queen. There is no love in you to lift your
heart,

Nor heart to lift the fleshly weight, and bear
Forward: I struck my love even as a spur
Into the tired side of my horse, and made it
Leap like a flame that eats up all its way
Till I were here.

Bothwell. Why came you not before

Queen. What, am I now too slow?

Bothwell. Ay, though you rode
Beyond the sun's speed, yea, the race of time
That runs down all men born. Forgive it me
That I was wroth and weary for your love,
Here lying alone, out of your eyes; I could
not

But chafe and curse, sending my spirit forth
From this maimed flesh yet halting with its
wound

To move about you like a thought, and bring
me

Word of your works and ways.

Queen. I could not come

Bothwell. Was there so much work worth
thier to be done

Than this, to give love and to take again
Thus? but for my part, of all things in the
world

I hold this best, to love you; and I think
God never made your like for man to love.

Queen. You are my soldier; but these silk
soft words

Become your lips as well as mine, when love
Rekindles them; how good it is to have
A man to love you! here is man indeed,
Not fool or boy, to make love's face ashamed
To abash love's heart and turn to bitterness
The sweet blood current in it. O my fair lord
How fairer is this warrior face, and eyes
With the iron light of battle in them left
As the after fire of sunset left in heaven
When the sun sinks, than any fool's face made
Of smiles and courtly color! Now I feel

As I were man too, and had part myself
In your great strength; being one with you
as I,

How should not I be strong? It is your deed,
By grace of you and influence, sir, it is
That I fear nothing; how should I lift up
Mine eyes to your eyes, O my light o' the war,
And dare be fearful? yours but looked upon,
Though mine were timorous as a dove's
affrayed,

For very shame would give them heart, and fire
To meet the eyes of danger. What were I
To have your love and love you, and yet be
No more than women are whose name is fear
And their hearts bloodless—I, who am part of
you,

That have your love for heart's blood? Shall
I think

The blood you gave me fighting for my sake
Has entered in my veins and grown in me
To fill me with you? O, my lord, my king,
Love me! I think you cannot love me yet,
That have done nought nor borne for love of
you;

But by the eye's light of all-judging God
That if I lie shall burn my soul in hell,
There is not in this fierce world anything,
Scorn, agony, stripes, bonds, fears, woes, deep
shame,

Kingdomless ruin, but with open hands,
With joyous bosom open as to love,
Yea, with soul thankful for its great delight
And life on fire with joy, for this love's sake
I would embrace and take it to my heart.

Bothwell. Why, there should need not this
to love you well;

What should you have to bear for me, my
queen,

Or how should I more love you? Nay, sweet,
peace,

Let not your passion break you; your breast
burns,

Your very lips taste bitter with your tears.

Queen. It is because—O God that pities
us!

I may not always lie thus, may not kneel,
Cling round your hands and feet, or with shut
eyes

Wait till your lips be fast upon my face,
And laugh with very love intolerable
As I laugh now—look, now I do not weep,
I am not sad or angered against heaven
That ever he divides us; I am glad
That yet I have mine hour. Sweet, do not
speak,

Nor do not kiss me; let mine eyes but rest
In the love's light of yours, and for a space
My heart lie still, late drunken with love's wine,
And feel the fierce fumes lessen and go out
And leave it healed. O, I have bled for you
The nearest inward blood that is my life
Drop by drop inly, till my swooning heart
Made my face pale—I should look green and
wan

If by heart's sickness and blood-wasting pain
The face be changed indeed; for all these days
Your wound bled in me, and your face far off
Was as a moving fire before mine eyes
That might not come to see you; I was dead,
And yet had breath enough, speech, hearing,
sight,

To feel them strange and insupportable;
I know now how men live without a heart.
Does your wound pain you?

Bothwell. What, I have a wound?

Queen. How should one love enough,
though she gave all,

Who had your like to love? I pray you tell
me,

How did you fight?

Bothwell. Why, what were this to tell?

I caught this reiver, by some chance of God,
That put his death into mine hand, alone,
And charged him; foot to foot we fought
some space,

And he fought well; a gallant knave, God wot,
And worth a sword for better soldier's work
Than these thieves' brawls; I would have
given him life

To ride among mine own men here and serve,
But he would nought; so being sore hurt i' the
thigh

I pushed upon him suddenly, and clove

His crown through to the chin.

Queen. I will not have you

Henceforth for warden of these borders, sir:
We have hands enow for that and heads to
cleave

That but their wives will weep for.

Bothwell. Have no fear;
This hour had healed me of more grievous
wounds;

When it shall please you sign me to your side,
Think I am with you.

Queen. I must ride—woe's me!

The hour is out. Be not long from me, love;
And till you come, I swear by your head
I will not see the thing that was my lord
Though he came into Jedburgh. I had thought
To have spoken of him, but my lips were loth

To mar with harsh intrusion of his name
The least of all our kisses. Let him be ;
We shall have time. How fair this castle
stands ! [stream]

These hills are greener, and that singing
Sings sweeter, and the fields are brighter
faced, [walls]

Than I have seen or heard ; and these good
That keep the line of kingdom, all my life
I shall have mind of them to love them well.
Nay, yet I must to horse.

Bothwell. Ay must you, sweet ;
If you will ride thus fifty mile a day,
But for your face you should be man indeed.

Queen. But for my face ?

Bothwell. If you will make me mad—
Queen. I dare not dwell with madmen ;
sir, farewell.

Bothwell. But for your love and for its
cruelty,
I would have said, you should be man.

Queen. Alas !
But for my love ? nay, now you speak but
truth ;

For I well knew there was no love in man.
But we grow idle in this our labouring time ;
When we have wrought through all the heat
o' the day,

We may play then unblamed, and fear no
hand

To push us each from other ; now farewell.

SCENE IX.—THE QUEEN'S LODGING AT JED- BURGH.

The three MARIES.

Mary Carmichael. What, will she die ?
how says this doctor now ?

Mary Seyton. He thinks by chafing of
her bloodless limbs

To quicken the numbed life to sense again
That is as death now in her veins ; but surely
I think the very spirit and sustenance
That keeps the life up current in the blood
Has left her as an empty house for death,
Entering, to take and hold it.

Mary Beaton. I say no ;
She will not die of chance or weariness ;
This fever caught of riding and hot haste
Being once burnt out, as else nought ails her,
will not

Leave her strength tainted ; she is manly
made, [brain,
And good of heart ; and even by this her

We see begins to settle ; she will live.

Mary Carmichael. Pray God she may, and
no time worse than this [lan]

Come through her death on us and all he
Left lordless for men's swords to carve and
share ;

Pray God she die not.

Mary Beaton. From my heart, amen !
God knows and you if I would have her die.

Mary Seyton. Would you give up your
loving life for hers ? [nor I think]

Mary Beaton. I shall not die before her
Live long when she shall live not.

Mary Seyton. A strange faith :
Who put this confidence in you ? or is it
But love that so assures you to keep life
While she shall keep, and lose when she
shall lose

For very love's sake ?

Mary Beaton. This I cannot tell,
Whence I do know it ; but that I know it
know,

And by no casual or conjectural proof
Not yet by test of reason ; but I know it
Even as I know I breathe, see, hear, feel,
speak,

And am not dead and senseless of the sun
That yet I look on : so assuredly
I know I shall not die till she be dead.
Look, she is risen.

Enter the QUEEN, supported by attendants.

Queen. What word was in your lips ?
That I must die ? [hear]

Mary Seyton. Heaven hath not such hard
Queen. I think I shall not, surely, but
God's grace ; [brin]

Yet no man knows of God when he will
His hour upon him. I am sick and weak.
And yet unsure if I be whole of mind.

I think I have been estranged from my right
wits [tell me]

These some days back ; I know not. Prithee
Have I not slept ? I know who you are ;
You were about me thus in our first days,
When days and nights were roseleaves that
fell off

Without a wind or taint of chafing air
But passed with perfume from us, and the
death

Had on it still the tender dew of birth. [li
We were so near the sweet warm wells of
We lay and laughed in bosom of the dawn
And knew not if the noon had heat to burn

Or the evening rain to smite us ; being grown
tall,

Our heads were raised more near the fires of
heaven

And bitter strength of storms ; then we were
glad,

Ay, glad and good. Is there yet one of you
Keeps in her mind what hovers now in mine,
That sweet strait span of islanded greenground
Where we played once, and set us flowers
that died

Before even our delight in them was dead ?

Now we are old, delights are first to die

Before the things to breed them.

Mary Seyton (aside). She roams yet.

Mary Beaton. I do remember.

Queen. Yea, I knew it ; one day

We wrangled for a rose' sake and fell out

With tears and words protesting each 'twas
she,

She 'twas that set it ; and for very wrath

I plucked up my French lilies and set foot

On their gold heads, because you had chafed
me, saying

The were her flowers who should be queen
in France,

And leave you being no queen you Scottish rose

With simpler leaves ungilt and innocent

That smelt of homelier air ; and I mind well

I rent the rose out of your hand and cast

Upon the river's running ; and a thorn

Pierced through mine own hand, and I wept
not then,

But laughed for anger at you and glad heart

To have made you weep, being worsted.
What light things

Come back to the light brain that sickness
shakes

And makes the heaviest thought that it can
hold

No heavier than a leaf, or gossamer

That seems to link two leaves a minute, then
A breath unlinks them ; so my thoughts are : nay,

And should not so ; it may be I shall die,

And as a fool I would not pass away

With babbling lips unpurged and graceless
heart

Unreconciled to mercy. Let me see

That holy lord I bade be not far off

While I lay sick—I have not here his name—
My head is tired, yet have I strength at
heart

To say one word shall make me friends with
Commending to him in the hour of unripe death

The spirit so rent untimely from its house

And ere the natural night lay hold on it

Darkly divided from the light of life.

Pray him come to me.

Mary Beaton. It is my lord of Ross
The queen would see ? my lord is at her hand.

Enter the BISHOP OF ROSS.

Queen. Most reverend father, my soul's
friend, you see

How little queenlike I sit here at wait

Till God lay hand on me for life or death,

With pain for that gold garland of my head

Men call a crown, and for my body's robe

Am girt with mortal sickness : I would fain,

Before I set my face to look on death,

Mine eyes against his eyes, make straight the
way

My soul must travel with this flesh put off

At the dark door ; I pray you for God's grace

Give me that holy help that is in you

To lighten my last passage out of sight.

For this world's works, I have done with them
this day,

With mine own lips while yet their breath was
warm

Commending to my lords the natural charge
Of their born king, and by my brother's mouth

To the English queen the wardship of her heir,

And by the ambassador's of France again

To his good mistress and my brother king

The care of my unmothered child, who has

No better friends bequeathable than these :

And for this land have I besought them all,

Who may beseech of no man aught again,

That here may no man for his faith be wronged

Whose faith is one with mine that all my life

I have kept, and fear not in it now to die.

Bishop of Ross. Madam, what comfort God
hath given his priests

To give again, what stay of spirit and strength
May through their mean stablish the souls of
men

To live or die unvexed of life or death,

Unwounded of the fear and fang of hell,

Doubt not to have ; seeing though no man be
good

But one is good, even God, yet in his eye

The man that keeps faith sealed upon his soul
Shall through the bloodshedding of Christ be
clean.

And in this time of cursing and flawed faith

Have you kept faith unflawed, and on your
head

The immediate blessing of the spouse of God.

Have no fear therefore but your sins of life,

Or stains or shadows such as all men take,

In this world's passage, from the touch of time,
Shall fall from off you as a vesture changed
And leave your soul for whiteness as a child's.

Queen. I would have absolution ere I die,
But of what sins I have not strength to say
Nor hardly to remember. I do think
I have done God some service, holding fast
Faith, and his Church's fear; and have loved well

His name and burden set on me to serve,
To bear his part in the eye of this thwart world
And witness of his cross; yet know myself
To be but as a servant without grace
Save of his lord's love's gift; I have sinned in pride,

Perchance, to be his servant first and fight,
In face of all men's hate and might, alone,
Here sitting single-sceptred, and compel
For all its many-mouthed inveteracy
The world with bit and bridle like a beast
Brought back to serve him, and bowed down to me

Whose hand should take and hale it by the mane

And bend its head to worshipping as I bade,
I, first among his faithful; I said,
And foolishly; for I was high of heart;
And now, behold, I am in God's sight and man's

Nothing; but though I have not so much grace
To bind again this people fast to God,
I have held mine own faith fast and with my lips

Have born him witness if my heart were whole.
Bishop of Ross. Therefore shall he forget
not in your hour

Nor for his child reject you; and shall make
The weight and color of your sins on earth
More white and light than wool may be or snow.

Queen. Yea, so my trust is of him; though
as now

Scarce having in me breath or spirit of speech
I make not long confession, and my words
Through faintness of my flesh lack form; yet,
pray you,

Think it but sickness and my body's fault
That comes between me and my will, who fain
Would have your eye look on my naked soul
And read what writing there should be washed out

With mine own heart's tears, and with God's
dear blood,

Who sees me for his penitent; for surely
My sins of wrath and of light-mindedness,

And waste of wanton will and wandering eyes,
Call on me with dumb tongues for penitence;
Which I beseech you let not God reject
For lack of words that I lack strength to say.

For here as I repent and put from me
In perfect hope of pardon all ill thoughts,
So I remit all faults against me done,
Forgive all evil toward me of all men,
Deed or device to hurt me; yea I would not
There were one heart unreconciled with mine
When mine is cold; I will not take death's hand

With any soil of hate or wrath or wrong
About me, but being friends with this past world

Pass from it in the general peace of love.

Mary Beaton. Here is some message from
the world of friends

Brought to your brother: shall my lord come in?

Queen. What lord? ye have no lord of
any man

While I am lady of all you. Who is this?
Message? what message? whence?

Enter MURRAY.

Murray. From Edinburgh
Your husband new alighted in sharp speed
Craves leave of access to your majesty.

Queen. By heaven, I had rather death had
leave than he.

What comes he for? to vex me quick or dead
With his lewd eyes and sodden sidelong face
That I may die again with loathing of him?

By God, as God shall look upon my soul,
I will not see him. Bid him away, and keep

Far off as Edinburgh may hold him hence
Among his fellows of the herded swine

That not for need but love he wallows with
To expend his patrimony of breath and blood

In the dear service of dishonoring days.

Murray. Let him but bide the night here.

Queen. Not an hour;
Not while his horse may breathe. I will not
see him.

Murray. Nay, for the world's sake, and
lest worse be said,

Let him sleep here and come not in your sight.

Queen. Unless by some mean I be freed of
him

I have no pleasure upon earth to live.

I will put hand to it first myself. My lord,
See how this ill man's coming shakes my soul

And stains its thoughts with passionate earth
again

That were as holy water, white and sweet,
For my rechristening ; I could weep with wrath
To find between my very prayer and God
His face thrust like a shameful thought in
sleep.

I cannot pray nor fix myself on heaven
But he must loose my hold, break up my trust,
Unbind my settled senses, and pluck down
My builded house of hope. Would he were
dead

That puts my soul out of its peace with God.
Comfort me, father ; let him not have way ;
Keep my soul for me safe and full of heaven
As it was late.—See that you rid him hence,
I charge you, sir, with morning.

Murray. Yea, I shall ;

Twere best he saw you not.

Queen. I think so. Hark !
Who is there lighted after him ? I heard—
Nay, he is sick yet, wounded ; yet I heard—
Pray God he be not risen too soon, to ride
With his wound's danger for my sickness' sake.

Mary Beaton. It is my lord the warden.

Queen. What, I knew it—
So soon so far, and with such speed ! ay, never
Had queen so ill befriended of her own
So fast a friend and loving. I will see him ;
I am stronger than I was. Give me your
hands ;

I can stand upright surely. Come you in
And help to attire me like a living queen ;
These are as grave-clothes. One go bring me
word

How he looks now, if weak or well indeed,
If stout of cheer or tired. Say, for his coming
And care unbidden of me, I thank him not
If he have done his own wound hurt thereby.
I will but rest, and see him : bring me in.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE X.—CRAIGMILLAR.

*The QUEEN, MURRAY, BOTHWELL, MAIT-
LAND, HUNTLEY, and ARCYLE.*

Queen. If it must be, or all without break,
I am content to have Lord Morton home ;
Nay, all of them ye will, save two I keep
To be the food of justice and my wrath,
Now hunger-starven ; his red hand who set
To my child-burdened breast the iron death,
And the uncle of my caitiff ; they shall bleed,
As Ruthven should, but for death's hastier
hand

That plucked him up before me : for his son,
Let him come back too.

Maitland. It is nobly judged,
And shall content the lords and land alike
With such good counsel and such fair consent
To see your highness moved to rid yourself
Of their disease and yours, with all men's will
Purged from you by the readiest mean we may.

Queen. Ay, by divorce : I have then your
tongues to that,

Yours, both my friends now that were ill
friends once

But handfast here in common faith to me
And equal-hearted ; and my brother's voice,
Joined with these good lords present : but you
said,

Was it not you said, sir, that by divorce
Though leave were given of them that might
withhold,

And the priest's word that bound unbound us,
yet

Some soil might from lips of evil will
On our son's birth-name ?

Maitland. Yea, from ill men's mouths
And all that nate you such rebuke might fall,
Which were foul shame to suffer and be dumb,
Though made by your divorce unanswerable.

Queen. In sooth, I thought so ; and how-
beit yourself,

My lord of Bothwell, by the judgment given
That loosed your mother's from your father's
hand

Stood undespoused in fair inheritance,
It may be where the east is of a crown,
And such a crown as in contention shakes
Two several-storied kingdoms, even the chance
Should stand not questionable, and friend nor
foe

Have word to show against it.

Maitland.

So I said.

Bothwell. Yet must the queen be freed ;
and for the fear

Lest England for his sake be moved, I know
not

What hold it has upon us, who but now
Saw what good heart and loyal will they bear
To the right heirship of your majesty
Who bide on our south border, when their
guns

From Berwick hailed you passing hither, and
made

The loud-mouthed crags cry to their batteries
back,

And tell the sundering Tweed and all green
hills,

And all the clamorous concourse of the sea,
The name that had the lordship of both lands

In heritage to bind them fast in one.
There heart and tongue outspake of the true
north

That for his caitiff sake should not be moved
Nor alter from its faith though he were cast.
With haltered throat or millstone round his
neck,

From a queen's heel into the naked sea.

Maitland. Madam, we are here for service
of your grace,

Chief of your council and nobility:
We shall find mean whereby without wrong
done

To your son's title, you shall well be quit
Of your ill-minded husband; and albeit
My lord of Murray present here be one
As scrupulous of his faith a Protestant
As is your grace a Papist, he will look
As through his fingers on the work we do
And say no word, I am well assured, of all
His eye may wink on.

Queen. Nay, I cannot tell;
I would not have mine honor touched, nor buy
My peace with hurt of conscience; being so
wise

As silence proves you or as speech proclaims,
Ye shall do well to let this be; perchance
The good ye mean me being untimely done
Might turn to my displeasure, and your hands
Leave me more hurt than holpen.

Murray. You say well;
For none but honorable and lawful ends
Have I desired this council, to procure
Your just and honest freedom, and repeal
The banished Morton, whose advice thereto
Shall not be fruitless; for no further aim
To no strange mean have I put hand. Fare-
well. *[Exit.]*

Argyle. He will not know of us enough to
thwart;

And so not least may serve us; but if here
These hands whose help would hurt you not
be set

To such a bond as may put forth our cause
And bind us to sustain it with one soul,
Shall they more hurt than help you?

Queen. Nay, ye are wise;
I know not; but I think your helpful hands
Could not be set but to my service.

Huntley. Then
Should we set down what reason of resolve
We have to make it manifest and sure
That this young fool and tyrant by our will
Shall bear no rule among us, and thereto
For divers causes shall he be put forth

One way or other, and what man soe'er
Shall take this deed in hand or do it, all we
Shall as our own and general act of all
Defend and fortify it.

Queen. Must all set hands
To one same hond for warrant?

Bothwell. Who should fail
Not we that shall devise it, nor Ballour,
My kinsman here and a friend.

Queen. Must you sign too?
Bothwell. How must I not? am I not fit to
serve

As being or coward or faithless or a fool,
Or all or any? or what misdoubt of yours
Should wash my writing out or blur my name?
What faith a faithful servant of his hands
May freely challenge of the king they serve,
So much I challenge of your majesty.

Queen. Nay, my fair lord, but for your
known faith's sake

And constant service the less need' it were
To have your hand here on your side; less
men

Should lay the deed but on mine ancient
friends,

Whose names not all men love yet for my sake
And call it but our privy plot and hate
Which is the judgment of all wisest lords
And equal sentence of the general land.

Maitland. So we that were not counted
with your friends

Should bear the whole deed and its danger up
We whom you have loved not, madam, for this
stand

We made against the perilous loves and hate
That loosened half your people's love from
you.

Yet must we have his hand too.

Bothwell. Ay, and shall
I wear no glove when hands are bared to strike

Queen. Be it as you will; I am nothing in
your count;

So be it; my council shall not cumber you.
Do all ye list.

Maitland. And all that shall be done
Will be the more strength to your majesty
And comfort to your cause: which now we go
With all our help to hearten.

Queen. Go, and thrive
[Exeunt MAITLAND, HUNTLEY, and ARGYLE.]

I would we had no need of such men's tongues
Bothwell. He has the wisest name on all
their side;

And by the tether that holds fast his faith

We lead their lesser wits what way we will.
Sharp-spirited is he surely, deep of soul,
Cunning and fearless ; one that gives, men

say,

Small heed or honor to their faiths or fears
And breath of holy custom ; undistraught
By doubt of God's hand paddling in our clay
Or dream of God's eye slanted on our sin ;
As one that holds more worthily of God,
—Or would not hold at all—whate'er he be,
Than of a sidelong scrupulous overseer
That pries askance upon our piteous lives
To judge of this and this, how ill or well.
And mark souls white or black with coal or
chalk

For crowning or for burning, palms or fires ;
One therefore that through all shut ways of
life

[ing wind,

Lets his soul range, even like the all-winnow-
And ply her craft in all life's businesses
Not like a blind man burdened ; sure of hand
And great of counsel, like an under fire
That works in the earth and makes its breach

by night

[forth

And leaps a league's length at the first stride
Of its free foot, blackening the face of men ;
So strong and keen and secret is his soul. [creed

Queen. So he keep trust, I care not if his
Be faced or lined with craft and atheism,
His soul be close or open ; but what bond
Shall bind him ours so sure that fraud nor
force

May serve against us more ?

Bothwell. Doubt me not that ;
By hilt, not edge, we hold him as a sword
That in our hand shall bend not till we break,
If we would break it when our work is done.

Queen. Have we the strength ? I doubt
not of this hand,

That holds my heart, if it be strong or no,
More than I doubt of the eyes that light mine
eyes,

The lips that my lips breathe by—O my life,
More than I doubt of mine own bitter love,
More than of death's no power to sunder us,
Of his no force to quench me who am fire,
Fire for your sake, that would put all these
out

To shine and lighten in your sight alone
For warmth and comfort, being to all eyes
beside

Or fear or ruin more fleet of foot than fear.
I would I had on breast or hand or brow
In crown or clasp the whole gold wrought of
the earth,

In one keen jewel the store of all the sea,
That I might throw down at your hand or
foot.

Sea, land, and all that in them is of price,
Or in the strong wine of my piercing love
Melt the sole pearl of the earth, and drink
dissolved

The cost of all the world's worth.

Bothwell. Yea, my queen ?
Have then no fear what man shall deem or
do ;

For by this fire and light of you I swear
That is my sunlight and my fire of day
We shall not walk as they that walk by night
Toward our great goal uncertainly, nor swerve
Till we strike foot against it. Kiss me now,
And bid me too speed on my way with them
To bring back all their hands here to the
bond

Set fast as mine, or as your heart is fast
Set on his death whose life lies nigh burnt
out,

Half brand half ash already in the heat
Of that bright wrath which makes as red as
flame

[heaven,

Your fearful and sweet splendour ; nay, by
It flushes all the light about your face
With seven times kindled colour of pure fire,
And burns mine eyes beholding, as your lips
And quick breath burn me kissing. My sweet
fear,

Had you not been the sweetest, even to me
You must have been the fearfulest thing
alive.

Queen. For love is so, and I am very love,
And no more queen or woman ; have no
heart,

No head, no spirit or sense at all of life,
Save as of love that lives and that is I,
I that was woman and bore rule alone
Upon myself ; who am all diskingdomed now,
Made twice a slave, mine own soul's thrall
and yours

[will.

Who wield the heart that wields me at your
I can but do as wills the spirit in me
Which is your spirit's servant. Ah, my lord,
My one lord every way, my poor heart's
blood,

Breath of my lips and eyesight of mine eyes,
How did I live the life that loved you not ?
What were those days wherein I walked apart
And went my way and did my will alone
And thought and wrought without you in this
world ?

Then I did evil and folly : the more need
I purge me now and perfect my desire,
Which is to be no more your lover, no,
But even yourself, yea more than body and
soul,

One and not twain, one utter life, one fire,

One will, one doom, one deed, one spirit, one God ;

For we twain grown and molten each in each
Surely shall be as God is and no man.

Bothwell. God speed us then till we grow
up to God !

Me first, who first shall clear our way to climb
By carving one weed's earthly coil away
That cumbers our straight growing : pray for
me !

I will have all their hands to it in an hour.

SCENE XI.—COURTYARD OF A HOSTELRY
AT WHITTINGHAM.

BOTHWELL and MORTON.

Morton. Fled in pure fear of me? well, he
knows best.

Towards Glasgow, said you?

Bothwell. Soon as came the word
You were brought home with welcome of the
queen,

He spurs from Stirling with all heat of speed
Even from her arms now-reconciled and face
That favorably had received him ; leaves the
feast

Half made and his unchristened yeanning there
Not yet signed God's and dewy from the font
Long waited for, till the English golden gift
Was grown too strait to hold and hallow him ;
Flies from all sight and cheer of festal folk,
And on the way being smitten sick with fear
Cries out of poison working in his flesh
Blue-spotted as with ulcerous pestilence,
Weeps himself dead and wails himself alive,
As now he lies, but bedrid ; and has lain
This Christmas through, while the queen held
her feast
At Drummond Castle.

Morton. Yea, I heard so ; and you
At Tullibardine likewise, or men lie,
Kept the feast high beside her. Well, my
lord,

Now have you time and room to say for each
What ye would have of me, the queen and you,
Who are hand and tongue at once of her de-
sign ;

Here am I newly lighted, hot from horse,
But fresh come forth of exile and ill days
To do you service ; let me have her hand
For warrant of what dangerous work she will,
And mine is armed to do it ; but till I have,
Expect of me, who have seen times strange as
this,

Nothing.

Bothwell. I have her warrant in my lips;
By me she speaks you safe in serving her.

Morton. Let that secure yourself ; I must
have proofs.

Bothwell. You shall have all, and written ;
but your hand

Must be in this with ours.

Morton. I have cause enough,
Good reason and good will to see it performed;
But will not strike through mine own side at
him.

Make your mind sure of that.

Bothwell. Well, you shall have it ;
Myself will fetch your warrant from her hand ;
That from my mouth assures you not ; and
then—

Morton. Then shall my hand make answer
to her own. *[Exit.*

SCENE XII.—CALLANDER.

The QUEEN and LADY RERES.

Queen. I do not feel as at past partings ;
then

My heart was sick and bitter, and mine eye
Saw not beyond the grievous hour at hand ;
Now when of all time I should be most sad,
Being parted at love's highest of height from
love

And bound to meet love's poison and my
plague,

My life's live curse yet married to my life,
Yet am I light and fuller of sweet hope
Than even sweet memory fills me.

Lady Reres. It is well
When dawn discomforts not the whole sweet
night.

Queen. There be stars sure that die not of
the day,

Or in this hoariest hour of dusk and dew
How should my heart be warm with last
night's fire?

Enter BOTHWELL.

What, risen so soon, my lord?

Bothwell. What, not yet forth?
That was the question laughing on your lips,
And this my plea to kill the question with.

[Kissing her.]
I must ride now. There waits a messenger
From our wed lord in Glasgow.

Queen. Ay? would God

He had slipt his saddle and borne his charge
to hell!

Must we part here? I ask but what I know,
Only to have a breath more of your mouth.
A smile more of your eye, turn of your head.
Before you kiss and leave me. Why should
love,

That can change life, seat and disseat the soul
In heaven or hurl it hellward, break and build,
Root an unroot the very springs o' the heart,
Have not the force to pluck but twelve hours
back,

And twice consume and twice consummate life,
Twice crowned and twice confounded? I
would give

All but love's self, all hope and heat of life,
But to have over this scant space again,
Since yesterday saw sunset.

Bothwell.

You shall win
A better prayer than this; for one poor hour
Caught from the gripe of all good-grudging
time,

And hundredfold in long-lived happiness,
Secure and scatheless of all change or fear.

Queen. Yet this joy waited on by fear and
doubt,

Plucked casually, a flower of accident,
On the rough lip and edge of danger's breach,
How sweeter is it than the rose to smell
We gather from our garden with gloved hand,
And find nor thorn nor perfume! You must go,
And I part hence; yet all through life and
death

I shall have mind of this most gracious place,
Poor palace of all pleasure, where I found
Brief harborage in long travel of my life.
Now take farewell of me.

Bothwell.

Fair lips, farewell,
And love me till we kiss again and sleep.

[Exit.]

Queen. So may my last sleep kiss me at
your lips,

And find me full of you as heaven of light
When my time comes of slumber.—Did this
man

Come in that waits: he shall bear word of me
Before I stand in his lord's sight again.

Enter CRAWFORD.

What message from our lord your master, sir?

Crawford. Madam, with all his heart my
lord commends

His heart's excuses to your majesty
For the great grief and doubt wherein it stands

Of your unstanched displeasure; of which fear
He lies soul-sick, and sends that heart by me
To crave its pardon of you, and for grace
From your dread lips some comfortable word
That may assure him who now lives in pain
Through the evil news he hears from all winds
blown,

In all mouths open; whence as one distraught,
And knowing not how to bear himself secure
Or dare put forth to meet you, for the words
He hears you have said, though fain, I know,
to come

And clear himself of aught that you suspect
By present inquisition—this I know,
Though now he laid no charge on me to say—
He hath writ you word already of his grief,
And finds no answer but of bitter sound,
Nor any light of pity from your face,
Nor breath of healing; wherefore on my knees
He kneels before you to require his doom.

Queen. I have no remedy for fear; there
grows

No herb of help to heal a coward heart.

Fears were not rank were faults not rank in
him.

Crawford. It is no caittiff doubt that pleads
with you,

No rootless dread sprung of a craven mood
That bows him down before your highness'
foot

To take the sovereign sentence of your eye
And bide and bear its judgment given as God's:
He knows, he says, by proof and speech of
men

What cause he has what friends of yours to
fear.

Queen. What, must I ride alone to comfort
him?

Tell him he may sleep sure then though I come;
Lord Bothwell is bound back to Edinburgh;
There is no man to affright him in my train
But grooms and lacqueys; and for all I hear
He never feared my women.

Crawford. Please it you,
My master doth but wish all hearts of men
Were on their faces written with their faith.

Queen. Hath he no more than this, our
lord, to say?

Then let him hold his peace; and bear him
word

That of our grace we come to cherish him
With not a man's face to procure his dread.
Tell him so much and bid him keep good
heart,

If heart he have, even for my sake who swear

He shall not long live in this fear of me.

SCENE XIII.—DARNLEY'S LODGING IN
GLASGOW.

DARNLEY *on a couch, as sick*; CRAWFORD
in attendance.

Darnley. She is come in then?

Crawford. Presently she comes.

Darnley. You found her yet more sharp of
eye than tongue?

Crawford. Ay.

Darnley. Would I had but strength to
bring myself

Forth of this land where none will pity me,

No, not the least of all you, though I die.

Who comes with her? what household? I
would speak

With Joachim her French fellow there, to
know

Why she should come—you cannot show me
—ay,

And if for good—and if they come with her,

Her outland folk and Bothwell's—or at least

If she have mind yet to send off or no

Joseph, her dead knave's brother? Are you
sure

Himself shall come not? wherefore being
come in

Should she not lodge beside me? Nay, I hear
More than she wots of, and have spies to see

What counsels breed among the crew of them.

What talk was that of marriage that should be

Between her fiddler and no maid of hers,

To what fair end? Would God I might take
ship,

I would make speed for England; there at
least

They durst not lay their nets about my life:

Here every wind that blows hath smells of
blood.

I am lost and doomed; lost, lost.

Crawford. Have better thoughts.

Take hope to you, and cheer.

Darnley. Ay, ay, much cheer!

Ye are all in one to abuse me, snare and slay—

Ye are all one heart to hate, one hand to smite;

I have none to love nor do me good, not one,

One in the world's width, of all souls alive.

I am dead and slain already in your hearts:

By God, if ever I stand up strong again,

I will be even with all you. Doth she think

I fear her? there is none that lives I fear.

What said she to you?

Crawford. With her last breath she said
You should no longer live in fear of her.

Darnley. Why, so I do not: nay, nor
ever did.

Let her come now and find I fear her not,

What shall she say?

(*Without*) Make way there for the
queen.

Enter the QUEEN, attended.

Queen. How is it with our lord?

Darnley. Ill is it, ill.

Madam, and no lord but your servant here.

Will you not kiss me?

Queen. Nay, you are sick indeed.

Let me sit here, and give me but your hand.

I have a word with you to speak for love,

And not for chiding.

Darnley. I beseech you, no:

I have no force to bear man's chiding now,

Being sick, and all my sickness is of you,

That look so strange and heavily on me:

Howbeit I could now die, I am made so glad,

For very joy to see you; if I die,

Look, I leave all things to your only will,

And of my pure love make no testament,

Nor lay no charge on any else for love.

Queen. I will rebuke you not but tenderly,

As a right wife and faithful woman; sir,

What word was that you wrote me, and
wherein

And wherefore taxing some for cruelty,

Of what suspicion misconceived and born,

That came forth of your hand to strike my
heart?

You that have found no cause, and will not
say

You have found or shall find ever cause of
fear,

So to misdoubt me—what could sting you so,
What adder headed thought or venomous

dream,

To make you shoot at this bared breast to you?

Suspicion winged and whetted with ill thoughts?

What words were these to write, what doubts
to breed,

Of mere mistrust and stark unfriendliness?

Nay, and I know not, God can witness me,

So much as what you doubt or what misdeem

Or wherein hold me dangerous or my friends,

More than I know what source your sickness
hath,

Whereof I would fain think all this is bred

And all ill fears grown but of feverish nights.

What cause most ails you? or what think you on?

Darnley. I think how I am punished—ay, God knows

I am punished that I made my God of you. What should I mean of cruelty but yours That will not look on my sore penitence For my least sin, as God would look on all? Though I confess wherein I have failed indeed, Yet never in worse kind than was avowed, And many a man for such revolt as mine Hath had your pardon; in this kind I have sinned,

Not in such wise as ever I denied, And am yet young; and though you should cast up

How often being forgiven I have gone back And fallen in fresh offence of you that late Forgave me, may not any twice or thrice So slip that is none older than I am, Or slack his promise plighted, yet in the end, Repenting, by experience be chastised? If my weak years and grief may get but grace, I swear I never shall make fault again; And this is all, and honest, that I crave, To have again my wife to bed and board, Which if I may not by consent of you Out of this bed I never will rise more. I pray you tell me whereof you resolve, That I may die or live, who have no thought But only of you; and at such luckless time As ever I offend you, even the offence Grows of yourself; for when I am wronged or wroth

If I for refuge might complain to you Of any that offends me, I would speak Into no ear but yours; but being estranged, What now soe'er I hear, necessity Binds me to keep it in my breast, and hence I am moved to try my wit on mine own part For very anger. Now, being at your foot, Will you forgive me? that for love indeed And fear of you have trespassed, being so young,

And had no good man's counsel, and no guard, No light, no help, no stay,—was yet scarce man,

And have so loved you whom I sinned against.

Queen. Why would you pass in the English ship away?

Darnley. I swear by God I never thought thereon;

I spake but with the men; but though I had, I might have well ta'en hold on such a thought, To hear much less things than the least I heard.

Queen. What inquisition was it that you made

To hear such things as fright you?

Darnley. Nay, by heaven, I have made none; I never sought man out To speak with any; I swear I see no spies.

Queen. Must I return to your own ear again

The very words were spoken?

Darnley. I did hear There was a letter brought you to subscribe By certain of the council, to the intent I should be cast in prison, and with power To slay by your warrant, should I make Resistance; Highgate said so; I confess I spake with him; my father that first heard Brought him to speech of me.

Queen. Spake he so much? But Walcar, that at Stirling brought me word Of this man's speeches here, had heard of him That you with certain of our lords had laid A plot to take our son, and having crowned Reign for him king of Scots; whereon the man Being had before our council with good speed Swore he knew no such tale, and had but heard

Some rumor blown of your imprisonment, But nothing of your slaying; to which again His witness summoned gave him straight the lie.

Yet would I not conceive the tale for true That being incensed with some our loyal lords Who were not of the faction that should lay Such regency upon you for your son, You had threatened them aloud with wrath to come.

What say you to it?

Darnley. I say you do me wrong To speak to me of him that as you say Belied me to you; who saith so of me lies, And I will pluck his ears from off his head, The knave whose tongue so misdelivers me. And I beseech you think he lies that saith I would be wroth with any man your friend, Or would not rather give away my life Than by despite toward such displease you; yet

I have heard strange things here of a trustier tongue;

The Laird—you know him—of Minto, my fast friend,

If any friend be fast on earth to me, He told me to what bond what hands were set; Yea, and more hands than those that signed me dead,

He swore, were set to slay me ; but God knows
I gave no faith to it—would not dream or
doubt

You could devise, that were my proper flesh,
To do me any evil ; nay, I said

It was well seen you would not, by their writ
Against my life that you subscribed not ; else,
Could I think once you hungered for my
death, [long,

God knows I would not hold you hungering
But make mine own throat naked for your
knife

As readily as your hand could pluck it forth :
Howbeit the best man of mine enemies else
Should buy me dear—ay, any of all but you,
Except he took me sleeping ; as indeed

Were now not hard to take me : had I but
A hand to help my heart, and health to go,
A foot to stand against them, God and you,
Madam, should oversee us and judge ; but
now [help,

You see what power I have, what hope of
What strength to serve my will and my best
heart [that,

Lies in my broken body ; ay, these know
What force is left to second my goodwill
They know who durst not else devise or do,
Had I the natural might yet of my limbs,
What now—but you, if you have pity of me,
Seeing me how faint I am and how sore sick,
And cannot eat for weakness, though I faint,
That makes me loathe my meat—but will you
not

Feed me, and kiss me ? surely I could live,
Being quickened of your hands and piteous
lips,

So sweet you are and strong and large of life.
Nay, do but kiss me once though I must die,
Be it but lest all men say you loved me not.

Queen. I have a pain here takes me in
my side—

I pray you—where my sickness left it sore
And liable to swift pains yet—pardon me.

Darnley. 'Tis I you cannot pardon, I,
woe's me,

You cannot love or pardon ; but I swear,
So be it you will not leave me, I will go.
So but I may not lose you out of sight,
Borne in a litter, such as here I lie,
So weak, so full of sickness, where you will.
Be it to Craigmillar, though death went with
me,

Or to the world's end, going in sight of you.

Queen. Have here my hand then and my
faith to it, sir,

When there the heating springs have washed
you whole

As they shall surely, with cold cleansing
streams [veins

Whose medicinal might shall bathe your
And kill the fire that feeds upon their blood,
I will once more dwell with you as your wife,
In all the lovely works and ways of love
And dues of duteous life and unity [now,
That man may claim of woman. Tell me
Ere we go thither, where the leech and !

May help you, nor be far off from my son,
What are those lords you are wroth at ? since
I hear

Some are there that you threaten, as in doubt
Their minds are bitter toward you ; shall I
say

You stand in fear of Maitland ?

Darnley.

Him ? not I—

I pray you speak not of him for my sake—
I stand in fear of no man ; I beseech you,
Speak me not of him ; I will see no man,
To be our makebate and your talebearer ;
I have heard too of your brother, how he says
I spake with him at Stirling, where I swear
I came not in his chamber, spake not half
Of all whereof he has rounded in your ear
That I made plaint to him concerning you ;
For all my faults are published in your eye,
And I deny not ore, and nought put off ;
What should it boot me to deny my speech ?
But there are they that think the faults they
make

Shall to all time lie still unspoken of,
Yet will they speak aloud of small and great
And tax alike all faults of other folk,
The least fault as the worst, in men like me
That have not craft to hide or most or least ;
God save you from such friendship : it is
thought

Through power upon you of such evil tongues,
Yourself have not your power upon yourself
As by your slight still of my proffered love
I would believe you have not ; such a friend
Rode with you hither—or unfriend as I
doubt—

I like her not—the Lady Reres, your friend ;
I pray God she may serve you, if she be,
To your own honour ; it runs through all
men's mouths

She was Lord Bothwell's harlot, who stands
marked

For a lewd liver above all men alive ;
She and her sister both lie side by side
Under the like report of his rank love—
Foul concord and consent unsisterlike
In such communion as beasts shun for shame.
Nay, for you know it, it lives on common
lips.

tries from all tongues, you know it ; but for
my part [were
I will love all that love you, though they
But for that love's sake shameful in men's
eyes. [night,

Why will you wake not with me this one
But so soon leave me, and I sleep so ill ?

Queen. Nay, though this night I may not
watch with you,

I leave you not till you turn back with me ;
But for the lords' sake must it not be known
That if you change not purpose ere that time
When you are whole we shall be one again ;
Lest when they know it, remembering your
loud threat

To make them find, if ever we agreed,
What small account they had made of you,
and how [them

You had counselled me to take not some of
To grace again without assent of yours,
They fall in fear and jealousy, to see
The scene so broken and the play so changed
Without their knowledge, contrariwise
Was first set up before them.

Darnley. Think you then
They will for that the more esteem of you ?
That I am glad at heart you speak of them,
and do believe now you desire indeed
That we should live together in quietness ;
For were it otherwise, to both of us
Might worse fall than we wot of ; but I now
Will do whatever you will do, and love
All that you love ; and I have trust in you
To draw them in like manner to my love ;
Whom since I know they aim not at my life
I will love all alike, and there shall be
No more discussion of your friends and mine.

Queen. It was by fault of you all this fell
out [well ;
That I must heal. For this time fare you
When I get rest : I will return again.

[Exit with attendants.

Darnley. What say you now ? she is
gentler in mine eyes
Than was your word of her.

Crawford. Ay, sweet to sight,
Exceedingly gentle. Wherefore, could one
tell,

Should she desire to lead you so in hand
Just to Craigmillar ? whence report came late
Of no good counsel toward you or good hope,
Except the hope be good, there to be healed
Of all life's ill for ever, once being bathed
In the cold springs of death : and hence
meseems

More like a prisoner than her wedded lord

Are you borne off as in her bonds.

Darnley. By heaven,
I think but little less, and fear myself,
Save for the trust indeed I have in her
And in her promise only ; howsoever,
I will go with her and put me in her hands,
Though she should cut my throat ; and so
may God

Between us both be judge. I have been
men's fool [friends ;
That were but tongues and faces of my
I see by mine own sight now, and will stand
On no man's feet but mine. Give me to
drink ;

I will sleep now ; my heart is healed of fear.

SCENE XIV.—THE QUEEN'S APARTMENT IN
THE SAME.

The QUEEN and PARIS.

Queen. Here is the letter for your lord to
know

I bring the man on Monday, as is writ,
Hence to Craigmillar. Say too this by mouth,
The Lady Reres can witness, with mine oath,
I would not let him kiss me. Bid our lord,
Mine and your lord, enquire of Maitland first
If our past purpose for Craigmillar hold
Or if the place be shifted, and send word
To me that here await his will by you.
Be of good speed ; I say not of good trust,
Who know you perfect in his trust and mine.
Farewell. [may,

Paris. I am gone with all good haste I
And here come back to serve your majesty.
Hath it no further counsel or command
To be my message ?

Queen. Tell him, night and day
And fear and hope are grown one thing to
me [thoughts
Save for his sake : and say mine hours and
Are as one fire devouring grain by grain
This pile of tares and drift of crumbling
brands

That shrivels up in the slow breath of time,
The part of life that keeps me far from him,
The heap of dusty days that sunder us.
I would I could burn all at once away
And our lips meet across the mid red flame
Thence unconsumed, being made of keener
fire [eyes

Than any burns on earth. Say that mine
Ache with mine heart and thirst with all my
veins,

Requiring him they have not. Say my life

Is but as sleep, and my sleep very life,
That dreams upon him. Say I am passing now
To do that office he would have me do,
Which almost is a traitor's; say, his love
Makes me so far dissemble, that myself
Have horror at it; bid him keep in mind
How were I not to obey him I had rather
Be dead before I did it; let him not
Have ill opinion of me for this cause,
Seeing he is alone the occasion of it himself,
Since for mine own particular revenge
I would not do it to him that I most hate;
My heart bleeds at it. Say, he will not come
But on condition that I shall cleave to him
Hereafter, and on that word given of mine
Will go where I would have him go: alas,
I never have deceived yet any man,
But I remit me to my master's will
In all things wholly; bid him send me word
What I shall do, and come what may thereof
I shall obey him; if some new subtiler way
By medicine may be thought on when I bring
The man here to Craigmillar, that as yet
May not this long time of himself go forth
Out of the house, let him advise himself
How to put this in hand: for all I find,
This man I here endure to play upon
Lives now in great suspicion; yet my word
I hath credit with him, but not far enough
For him to show me anything; but yet
I shall draw forth of him what thing I will
If my lord bid me be more plain with him;
But I will never take delight to wrong
The trust of any that puts trust in me;
Yet may my lord command me in all things.
And though by checks and hints of that I
feared
This man sometimes even touch me to the quick
With words dropt of mine honor and my power
On mine own self, whereby I surely know
That he suspects him of the thing we wot
And of his life, yet as to that last fear
I need but say some three good words to him
And he rejoices, and is out of doubt.
He was seen never as gay of mood as now
When I make show of grace and gentle heart,
And puts me in remembrance of all things
That may assure my faith he loves me well.
Let not my love suspect me for his sake,
Who take such great joy of his love-making
That I come never where he is but straight
I take the sickness of my sore side here,
I am vexed so with it; wearied might he be,
This poisonous man that gives me all this pain
When I would speak of things far sweeter; yet

He is marred not overmuch of form or face
Though he have borne much, and his venom'd
breath
Hath almost slain me though I sit far off.
He would have had me watch with him, but I
Put off the night; he says he sleeps not sound;
He never spake more humbly nor more well;
And if I had not proven his heart of wax
And were not mine cut of a diamond
Whereinto no shot ever can make breach
But that which flies forth of mine own love's
hand,
I had almost had pity of him; but say
I bid the captain of my fortressed heart
Fear not; the place shall hold unto the death.
And bid my love in recompense thereof
Let not his own be won by that false kind
That will no less strive with him for the same.
I think the twain were trained up in one school,
For he hath ever tear in eye, and makes
Most piteous moan to arouse men's pity, yea,
Humbly salutes them all, even to the least,
To make their hearts soft toward him; and
desires
That with mine own hands I would give him
meat;
But let my lord, where he is, give no more trust
Than I shall here. Tell him all this; and say
I am in the doing here of a work I hate
Past measure; and should make him fain to
laugh
To see me lie so well, or at the least
So well dissemble, and tell him truth 'twixt
hands.
Say, by the flatteries I perforce must make
And prayers to him to assure himself of me,
And by complaint made of the men designed,
I have drawn out of him all we list to know,
Yet never touched one word of that your lord
showed me, but only wrought by wiles; and
say
With two false kinds we are coupled, I and he,
My love; the devil disserve us, and God
Knit us together for the faithfulest pair
That ever he made one; this is my faith,
I will die in it. Excuse me to my lord
That I writ ill last night, being ill at ease,
And when the rest were sleeping was most glad
To write unto him, who might no more, nor
could
Sleep as they did and as I would desire,
Even in my dear love's arms; whom I pray
God
Keep from all evil and send him all repose.
And being so long my letter hindered me

To write what tidings of myself I would,
Who had wrought before for two hours of the
day

Upon this bracelet I would send to him
Though it be evil made for fault of time,
I have had so little, and I can get no lock,
Though that mine hands might end it yestereve
I would not see the man ; but this mean time
I think to take one fairer ; let him not
Bring it in sight of any that was here,
For all would know it, seeing it was wrought
for haste

In sight of them ; yet might it bring some
harm

And may be seen if he should chance be hurt ;
Let him send word if he will have it, and say
If he will have more gold by you, and when
I shall return, and how far I may speak ;
For this man waxes mad to hear of him
Or of my brother ; and when I visit him
His friends come all to be convoy, say,
And he desires me come the morn betimes
And see him rise. This letter that I send,
Bid my lord burn it, being so dangerous,
With nought in it well said,—for all my mind
Was on this craft I loath to think upon—
And if it find his hand in Edinburgh,
Let him soon send me word, and that I doubt
Be not offended, since to doubts of him
I give not o'er-great credit ; but say this,
That seeing to obey him, who is my dear
heart's love,

I spare nor honor, conscience, hazard, state,
Nor greatness whatsoever, I beseech him
But that he take it in good part, and not
As his false brother-in-law interprets, whom
I pray him give not ear to nor believe
Against the faithfulest lover he ever had
Or ever shall have ; nor cast eye on her
Whose feigned tears should not be esteemed so
much

Nor prized so as the true and faithful toils
Which I sustain but to deserve her place :
Where to that I despite all bonds may climb,
Against my nature I betray them here
That may prevent me from it ; God forgive me,
And God give him, my only love, the hap
And welfare which his humble and faithful
love

Desires of him ; who hopes to be to him
Ere long a thing new-named for recompense
Of all her irksome travails. Tell him this ;
Say I could never stint of hand or tongue
To send love to him, and that I kiss his hands,
Ending ; and let him think upon his love

And write to her, and that oft ; and read
twice through

Mine evil-written letter, and keep in mind
All several sayings writ of the man therein
Say for delight I have to send to him
I run twice over all the words I send,
And that each word may fasten in his ear
As in his eye, and you may witness me
That hand and tongue and heart were one to
send,

Put all my message in your lips again
That here was written. Say—I know not
what ;

I can say nought but with my silent hands,
Speak with the lips of deeds I do for him.

Paris. Shall I say nothing of Lord Darnley
more ?

Queen. Say, when I did but speak of Mait-
land once,

His caitiff flesh quaked in each joint of him,
Each limb and bone shivered ; even to the
feet

He shook, and his shrunk eyes were stark
with fright,

That like a live thing shuddered in his hair
And raised it ruffling from the roots for dread.
Let him mark that : though coward the man
be, and fool,

He has wit and heart enough to know the
worst

Of his wrong-doing, and to what manner of
man,

Being fool, he did it, and discerning him
Think whether his cause of dread be small or
no

For less or more of peril. So to horse,
And lose no word sent of my heart to him.

SCENE XV.—KIRK OF FIELD.

Enter BOTHWELL.

Bothwell. This is the time and here the
point of earth

That is to try what fate will make of me.

I hold here in my hand my hand's desire,
The fruit my life has climbed for ; day on day
I have I strid over, stretching toward this prize
With all my thews and spirits. I must be glad,
If I could think ; yet even my cause of joy
Doth somewhat shake me, that my sense and
soul

Seem in their springs confused, even as two
streams

Violently mingling : what is here to do

Is less now than the least I yet have done,
Being but the putting once of the mere hand
To the thing done already in device,
Wrought many times out in the working soul.
Yet my heart revels not, nor feel I now
The blood again leap in me for delight
That in the thought grew riotous and beat
high

With foretaste of possession unpossessed.
Is it that in all alike fruition slacks
The shrunk imagination? in all deeds
The doing undoes the spirit to do, the joy
Sickens, the lust is swallowed as of sand?
Why, yet the stream should run of my desire
Unshrunk, and no deserts drink it up,
Being unfulfilled; no satiate sluggishness
Gape with dry lips at the edge of the dry cup
For the poor lees of longing. I am here
Not royal yet, nor redder in the hand
Than war has dyed me fighting; the thing
done

Is but for me done, since I hold it so,
Not yet for him that in the doing must bleed;
I that stand up to do it, and in my mind
Behold across it mightier days for deeds,
Should not he way-sick yet nor travel-tired
Before I drink fulfillment as a wine;
And here must it restore me.

Enter PARIS.

Hail so soon?

What news of her?

Paris. The queen commends to you
Her best heart in this letter, and would know
How yet your purpose toward Craigmillar
bears,

Whether to train him thither by her hand
Or what choice else.

Bothwell. Say, the device is changed
By counsel and consent of whom she wots;
Here must they come; James Balfour and my-
self

Have waked all night to see things well begun,
For that bond's sake whereto his hand was set
With mine here at Craigmillar; all things now
Stand apt and fit in this his brother's house
To entertain the kingship of its guest;
We have seen to it, Maitland with us.

Paris. I was sent
From the town hither, finding you set forth,
But why folk wist not.

Bothwell. Carry to my queen
This diamond; say too I would send my heart,
But that she hath already, and no need

To pluck it forth and feel it in her hand.
Bid her be swift as we have been for love,
And the more surety quickens our design:
The rest unsaid shall tarry till she come.

SCENE XVI.—THE QUEEN'S LODGING IN
GLASGOW.

*The QUEEN in bed; LADY RERES and
PARIS attending.*

Queen. What was his word at parting? let
it kiss

Mine ear again.

Paris. Being horsed, he bade me say,
Madam, he would be fain for love of you
To train a pike all his life-days.

Queen. Please God,
It shall not come to that. Ere this month die
That has not half a week to live, we stand
In Edinburgh together. He will go
Without more word or fear; and being well
hence—

How looked my love?

Paris. Madam, as one uplift
To the height of heart and hope, though full
of cares,
And keen in resolution.

Queen. I grow strong
To hear of him. Hath he not heart enough
To fill with blood a hundred of our hearts,
Put force and daring, for the fear cast out,
In all our veins made manlike? Prithee,

Reres,
Was he thus ever? had he so great heart
In those dead days, such lordliness of eye
To see and smite and burn in masterdom,
Such fire and iron of design and deed
To serve his purpose and sustain his will?

Hath he not grown since years that knew me
not

In light and might and speed of spirit and stroke
To lay swift hand upon his thought, and turn
Its cloud to flame, its shadow to true shape,
Its emptiness to fulness? If in sooth
He was thus always, he should be by now
Hailed the first head of the earth.

Lady Reres. It cannot be
But in your light he hath waxed, and from your
love,

Madam, drawn life and increase; but indeed
His heart seemed ever high and masterful
As of a king unkingdomed, and his eye
As set against the sunrise; such a brow
As craves a crown to do it right, and hand

Made to hold empire sword like, and a foot
To tread the topless and unfooted hill
Whose light is from the morn of majesty.

Queen. When mine eye first took judgment
of his face

It read him for a king born : and his lips
Touching my hand for homage had as 'twere
Speech without sound in them that bowed my
heart

In much more homage to his own. Would
God

I could so read now in that heart I serve
What thought of me moves in it, hear what
word

Now hangs upon those lips ; If now his eye
Darken or lighten toward mine unseen face,
Or his ear hearken for my speech unheard.
Why art thou now not with him, and again
Here the same hour to tell me ? I would have
More messengers than minutes that divide
Mine eyes from their desire, to bring me word
With every breath of every change in him,
If he but rest or rise ; nay, might it be,
Of every thought or heart-beat that makes up
His inner hours of life : yet by mine own,
If he so loved me, should I know them not
I will rise now and pass to see how soon
We may set forth to-morrow.

Lady Reres. Can it be
He shall have strength ? but let your highness
heed

That pretext be not given for knaves to say
You had no care to wait on his good time,
But vexed and harried him, being sick, with
haste
And timeless heat of travel.

Queen. Fear not you :
I will make means to bring him in my hand
As a tame hound, and have his thanks and love
For bringing him so wifelike on his way.
It is the last pain I shall take for him,
The last work I shall do for marriage-sake
And wifhood wellnigh done with duty now.
I have not much more time to serve my lord,
And strife shall fall between us twain no more.

SCENE XVII.—DARNLEY'S CHAMBER IN
KIRK OF FIELD.

DARNLEY and NELSON.

Darnley. Thou hast the keys ? This house
is strange and chill,
As chill as earth ; I have slept no better here.
Those two days that we halted on the way

There at Linlithgow, I could see the haste
That burnt in her to be in Edinburgh,
And here being come she sets me in this grange,
And till her chamber be made ready sleeps
In Holyrood apart, and here by day
Hath still by her that face I warned her from,
That woman's that I spoke of, plays and sings
There in the garden with none else—by God,
I like not aught of it. I am sick again,
Sick-hearted, or my will should be a sword
To sunder them. I would I were away.
I have ill dreams, man.

Nelson. Please your highness—
Darnley. Ay !

Is majesty gone out of all men's mouths ?
Is my state dead before me, even the name
Dead of my place, then ?

Nelson. There is come from court
Lord Robert Stuart to see your majesty.

Darnley. Let him come in. Robert ? he
was my friend ;

I think he held me dear till David died :
He supped with them that night. I found
him once

A quick-souled fellow that would quaff and
kiss

The glow of woman's or of wine-cup's mouth,
And laugh as mine own lips that loved the like
Can now no more this long time. Let him
come.

Enter ROBERT STUART.

My holy lord of Holyrood-house, good day ;
You find a fit man for a ghostly rede.

Robert Stuart. I am glad you have a jest
yet ; but I come

On graver foot than jesters run, my lord.

Darnley. How, graver than your ghostly
name ? nay, then

'Tis a matter for a grave-side.

Robert Stuart. Sir, it may :
I would be secret with you.

Darnley. What alone ?
Why should we talk alone ? what secret ? why ?

Robert Stuart. I will put off my sword and
give it your man,

If that will ease you.

Darnley. Ease me ? what, by God,
You think I fear you come to kill me ? tush,
I am not the fool—and were that all, being
thus,
'Faith, you might end me with your naked
hands.

Leave us. [Exit NELSON.]

What is it? you make me not afraid—
Sir, I fear no man—what, for God's sake speak,
I am not moved—in God's name let me have it.

Robert Stuart. I came to do you such good
service, sir,

As none has done you better nor can do.
There is an old phrase in men's mouths of one
That stands between the devil and the deep sea;
So now stand you; the man that toward a reef
Drives naked on a thunderstricken wreck
And helmless, hath not half your cause of fear;
The wretch that drops plague-eaten limb from
limb

Crumbles to death not half so fast as you:
The grave expects not the new-shrouded man
More surely than your corpse now coffinless.

Darnley. Who put this in your mouth?
what enemy?

How have you heart, or whosoe'er he be,
Albeit ye hate me as the worm of hell
Who never harmed you in my hapless days,
To use me so? I am sick—

Robert Stuart. Ay, sick to death,
If you give ear not to me that am come
In very mercy, seeing I called you friend,
For pity's sake to save you, or at least
To stretch your days out for some brief span
more

Of life now death-devoted.

Darnley. What, so soon?
God would not have it done, so young I am,—
What have I done that he should give me up?
So comfortless,—who hath no help of man,
They say, hath God's; God help me! for God
knows

There is none living hath less help of man.
Nay, and he must, as I have faith in God,
Hang all my hope upon him,—For God's sake,
Whence got you this?

Robert Stuart. No matter.

Darnley. At whose hand—
O me, what hand! who is it shall touch me?

Robert Stuart. Hark.—

*From beneath is heard the QUEEN'S voice
singing.*

Qui se fie
À la vie
A vau l'eau va vers la mort;
Et que l'onde
Rie ou gronde,
Elle entraîne loin du port.

Darnley. She sings I know not what—a
jesting song,

A French court rhyme no greater than a
flower,
Fruitless of sense—this is no threat—a
toy—

QUEEN (from beneath, sings).

Sur l'opale
Du flot pâle
Tremble un peu de jour encor;
Sur la plage
Au naufrage
Le haut vent sonne du cor

Darnley. What is it she sings now? nay,
what boots to hear?
I will not hear; speak to me—pray you,
speak.

QUEEN (from beneath).

La mort passe
Comme en chasse,
Et la foudre aboie aux cieux;
L'air frissonne,
La mer tonne,
Le port se dérobe aux yeux.

Plus d'étoile
Que ne voile
L'orage âpre au souffle noir;
Pas de brise
Qui ne brise
Quelque vaisseau sans espoir.

Noire et nue
Sous la nue,
La nef brisée à mortelle
Tourne et vire
Ou l'attire
La sombre mer sans pitié.

La nuit passe,
Et la chasse
S'est éteinte au fond des cieux;
Mais l'aurore
Pleure encore
Sur les morts qu'ont vus ses yeux.

Ce qui tombe
Dans la tombe
Coule et s'en va sans retour;
Quand sous l'ombre
Plonge et sombre
Ou la vie ou bien l'amour.

Robert Stuart. Why did you shake and
hide your eyes? take heart;
Let fear not be more swift to slay than hate.

Darnley. I said, what hand—you bade me
hearken—well,

What say you now she sings not?

Robert Stuart. I have said.

Darnley. I will not be your baiting-stock;
speak plain;

Whence had you word of any plot on me?

Robert Stuart. If you will heed me, well:
if not, for me

I will take heed yet that it be not ill.
Weigh how you will my counsel. I am sure
If my word now lie lightly in your ear
It would not lie the heavier for my oath
Or any proof's assurance. Whence I had
This word you have of me, I am not bound
To put the knowledge into trust of you
Who trust not me in asking.

Darnley.

What, I knew

There was no plot but yours to scare me.
none—

Your plot to get my favor, stay yourself
On me as on a staff—affright me sick
With bloodred masks of words and painted
plots,

And so take hold upon me afterward
Having my strength again and state and
power—

A worthy friend and timely,—Nay, but, nay,
I meant not so—I am half distraught—I
meant

I know you for my friend indeed and true;
For one thwart word in sickness cast not off
Your friend that puts his trust in you, your
friend

That was nigh mad a minute, being sore sick
And weak and full of pain and fear, and hath
No friend to help and bear with him if you
Will help or bear not—by my faith and life
I do believe you love me, and in love
Came, and in faith to me—if I believe not
God give me death at once and hell to boot.
I pray you pardon.

Robert Stuart. Sir, your faith and life
Have neither weight enough to poise an oath
As now they hang in balance. If you will,
Take to your heart my words; if not, be sure
It shall not grieve me though you trust me not,
Who never think to give you counsel more.

[*Exit.*]

Darnley. Nay, but one word—how would
you have me fly?

He goes and mocks me—would my hands had
strength

To dig his heart out for my dogs to feed!
He flies and leaves me weaponless alone
In the eye of peril, coward and false heart—
Should not the tongue be false too? If he
came

To affright me only with a fearful face,
Blow but a blast of danger in mine ear,
And make my faith as wax that in his breath

Might melt and be reshapen of his hands—
Nay, I will see the queen, and in her eye
Read if his tongue spake truth, and from her
lips

Draw forth his witness; if she mean me ill
I cannot now but see it. Nelson!—she hath
No trick to keep her from my instant sight.
Knows not his errand to me; and at once
I take her unawares and catch her soul
Naked, her mind plain to me, good or ill.

(*QUEEN (sings from below).*)

Lord Love went Maying
Where Time was playing,
In light hands weighing
Light hearts with sad;
Crowned king with peasant,
Pale past with present,
Harsh hours with pleasant,
Good hopes with bad;
Nor dreamed how fleet
Than Time's swift metre,
O'er all things sweeter
How clothed with power,
The murderess maiden
Mistrust walks laden
With red fruit ruined and dead white
flower.

Darnley. What sting is in that song to
smite my heart
And make the blood and breath come short in
me?
O God, I know it—his last year's song of
death—
They struck it on his lips who struck him
through.
Nelson! I will not see her—I will not die—

Enter the QUEEN.

Queen. I heard your call from under and
came in—
What ails you, sir? why stare you thus ask-
ance?

Darnley. I had a pang of sickness that
passed by
While you were singing.

Queen. Is my brother gone?

Darnley. There was none here—your
brother? what, ye earl?

Doth not his wife lie at St. Andrew's sick,
Where he is gone to visit her?

Queen. For love,

Why will you lie to me in jest? you know
Here was my brother Robert.

Darnley.

Ay, but now—

I did not say he was not here but now.

Queen. Has he not moved you?

Darnley. Why should I be moved?
I am not lightly shaken of men's breath;

What think you that he came to move me for?

Queen. In faith, I guess not.

Darnley. Nay, though I be weak,
I am no reed yet for him to blow and make
What music of me shall best please his mouth.

Queen. I think you are not, but for all
winds blown

Of fears and threats fixed and unshakeable.

What said he to you that has moved you not?

Darnley. Nothing.

Queen. What, you were moved then
of his words?

Darnley. I say I was not.

Queen. He said nothing then?

You held discourse but of days foul or fair,

Skies wet or dry, seasons and accidents,

All things and nothing?

Darnley. Would you not know that?

Queen. Even as you list or list not, so
would I.

Darnley. What if it please me you should
know this not?

Queen. Why, you do wisely, seeing I love
you not.

Darnley. I did not say so; I may hold my
peace,

Yet not for doubt that irks me of your love.

Queen. Surely you may; good reasons may
stand thick

As buds in April in your judgment's sight

To cover both your counsels from mine eye

That hast no lust to invade your secrecies.

Darnley. And if it please me show it, as
now it shall,

You will not dread I doubt your love of me.

Queen. I have not heart to dread the doubt
I know

You have not heart to harbor of my love.

Darnley. Why, he came here to warn me
of my life.

Queen. Your life?

Darnley. Ay, mine; and what
now say you to him?

Queen. I say he spake as your good friend
and mine.

Darnley. Ay?

Queen. What more kindness
could be shown of man

Than in your ear to warn me of your life

If it so stand in peril?

Darnley. What, you think

He told it me to have me tell it you?

Queen. It was done gently, brother-like
for fear

The word of danger being first heard by me

Should strike too sharp upon my slighter soul

And pierce my woman's sense with such quivering
pangs

As might dethrone my judgment, shake my
wits

To feminine confusion, and by force

Disable my swift thoughts, now maimed with
dread,

From their defence and office; he did well

And my heart thanks him, showing you his
fear,

Who are manlike of your mood and mould
mind

And have but for your own life to take thought

Not for one dearer; as, I know you well,

By mine own heart I know, to have heard
me

Endangered would have killed your heart with
fear,

That in your personal peril beats at ease

With blood as perfect as I see you now,

With pulse thus changeless and with cheer
thus calm.

Indeed I thank him for it, and twice I thank

That he would serve you and would save
not me.

Where said he was this danger?

Darnley. Nay, by God

That would he not say; that I nothing know

Save by some hint of shoulder or writhed lip

That seemed to shoot at you; and when you
sang

He bade me hearken, and would speak
more.

Queen. At me! but if such fire be on his
tongue,

It should be forked and set on fire of hell.

At me! but if he be not mad, to you

He shall approve it, instant face to face,

Eye to confronted eye, word against word,

He shall maintain or mark himself for liar,

With his own fire and iron brand the brow

That burned not to belie me.

Darnley. Sweet, not here

Would I could fight with him! but being
o'erthrown

Of my disease already, to what end

Should he come back now save to insult on me

Who have no hand to strike at him again

In championship of you?

Queen. He shall come back

And twice shall oversay the word he said
In your own ear, or else unswear it. What,
Shall I be put to shame of mine own blood,
To mine own lord in mine own love maligned,
Stricken with: slanderous fangs of speech, and
stabbed

In my heart's core of honor, yet lie still
And bleed to death dumb and dishonorable?
Rather let come the deadliest of my kin,
Make enemies born, and bind and burn me
quick,

Or ever I die thus; rather let all
The false blood of my father in strange veins
Be set on fire against me, and its heat
Consume my fame with my frail flesh, and
make

My scaffold of my kingdom; rather fall
My naked head beneath the mortal axe,
And with my blood my name be spill and
shed,

Than this charge come upon me.

Darnley. You are stirred
Beyond all right of reason; be not moved:
You see how I believed him.

Queen. And to see
I—my soul's comfort; but this wound that
bleeds

Here in my heart's heart cannot well be
stanch'd

Till by the tongue that smote me, as men say
That by the anointing of the sword that hurt
The wound it made finds comfort, I be healed.

Darnley. Nay, let him come; I will main-
tain it to him,

Here, to his face, he warn'd me of my death
Or present danger in you.

Queen. He shall come.
But lie now down and sleep; I have wearied
you.

Darnley. I pray you sing me something
then; indeed

I am weary and would forget; but now you
sang—

Both that French songbreak where you broke
it off?

Queen. No, there is more. Sleep, I will
sing it you. [*Sings.*

Sur la grève
Rien ne rêve
Aux naufragés de la nuit;
A la trombe,
Gouffre et tombe,
Au flot qui frappe et qui fuit

Apaisée
Et baisée
Par les brises sans souci
Brille et vibre
Au jour libre
La belle mer sans merci.

Tant que dure
La nuit dure
Sur la grève où rit la mort,
Sous l'orage
Flotte et nage
Le jour qui luit et qui sort.

Pas de brume
Que n'allume
L'astre ou l'éclair des amours;
Pas de flamme
Qui dans l'âme
Brûle ou luit tous les jours.

À l'aurore
Tout se dore,
Tout se fane avant la nuit;
Et que l'heure
Chante ou pleure,
Dans une heure tout s'enfuit.

Cœur sans crainte,
Œil sans feinte,
Quand l'amour met l'aile au vent,
Sur la plage
Sans naufrage
Est-il revenu souvent?

L'ombre emporte
La nef morte,
Et la joie, et le beau jour;
Trop profonde
Était l'onde,
Et trop faible était l'amour.

[*The scene closes.*

SCENE XVIII.—BEHIND KIRK OF FIELD.

BOTHWELL, ORMISTON, HEPBURN of BOL-
TON, and HAY of TALLA.

Bothwell. If it be done to-morrow, we shall
stand

The surer that the queen slept here to-night.
Cousin, bring you my knaves from Holyrood
At nightfall to that hinder gate wherethrough
We three shall give you passage with your
charge

To the strait garden-plot beyond the walls
Whereto the door that opens from beneath
Shall stand unbolted, and you entering spread
Along the blind floor of the nether vault
The train that shall set all these walls on wing
Ormiston. How said you, that his groom
here had the keys?

Bothwell. That under door which lets us
down lacks none;
There is no lock to palter with; it needs

But leave the bolt undrawn ; and yesterday
By the queen's order was the door removed
At bottom of the stair, to be instead
A cover for his bath-vat ; so there stands
But the main door now.

Hepburn. That was well devised :
She sleeps beneath his chamber here to-night ?

Bothwell. Ay, to the west.

Hay. She has the stouter heart.
I have trod as deep in the red wash o' the wars
As who walks reddest, yet I could not sleep,
I doubt, with next night's dead man overhead.

Bothwell. We are past the season of divid-
ed wills ;

Where but one thought is, nothing to be done
Has power to hurt the heart that holds it fast .
Or leave the purpose weaker by a wound
Given it of doubt or afterthought : we have
One thing to do, one eye to see it, one hand
To pluck it from the occasion ; what he wills
None but a fool would mix his will to achieve
With pain and fear ; the mind once shaped
and set

That works and yet looks back and weeps to
do

Is but half man's ; and all a man's hath she.

Hepburn. Yet woman-moulded outward,
clothed upon

As 'twere with feminine raiment, touched with
thoughts

Of female-colored fashion, woman's craft :
She sees and thinks on what could touch not
us

Nor graze in passing even our skirts of sense :
Takes order for the hangings of his bed
Whom we must kill to her hand, lest water
soil

The sable velvet from his bath, and bids
Pluck down and save them ; such slight things
and strange

As take the thought and hold the eye of girls
Her soul, as full of great things as it is,
As large and fiery, bright and passionate,
Takes no less thought for, and hath heed of
these

No less than of high deed and deep desire
Beyond where sight can scale or thought can
dive

Of narrower eye and shallower spirit than hers.

Bothwell. Most royal is she, but of soul
not all

Uncurable, nor of all shafts that fly
Scatheless, nor of all shots invulnerable ;
She had no part else and no power in us,
No part in all that mingling makes up man,

No power upon our earth who are earthlier
made ;

She has the more might on men's ways of soul
Not being almighty, nor from all man's moods
Divided, but as passion-touched and mixed
With all such moods as men are ; nay, not
these,

But such as bear the rule of these and lead
Which way they will—women's ; and being so
mixed

She is even the more entire, more whole and
strong,

Herself and no self other. She nor I
Live now on thoughts and words ; the deed
it is,

Our deed alone we live by, till being done
It leave us time for life that deals with these.
I will be with you ere night fail again
Within the town-wall ; thither get you now,
And doubt not of us.

Ormiston. Doubt not you to find
All ready by the night and need : farewell.

[*Exeunt all but BOTHWELL.*]

Bothwell. The time is breathless ; earth
sees heaven as chill

In the after air declining from high day.
I would the winds would muster, or the sun
Show half an eye-blink of his face that hangs
Now downward to the sea, curbed in with
cloud,

And with a brief breath fire the rack that flies.
Why should not flame break over Arthur's
Seat

This hour, and all the heaven with burning
tongues

Cry from the world's height to the under line
That ends it for us gazing ? If the sky
Had speech as it hath fire, or night or day
Voice to declare God's pleasure or his wrath
With their dumb lips of light, from moon or
sun

Or the mute mouths of stars, would earth that
heard

Take thought and counsel of the cause, to stir
Men's hearts up for our deed's sake here ? I
am wrought

Out of myself even by this pause and peace
In heaven and earth, that will not know of us
Nor what we compass ; in this face of things,
Here in this eye of everduring life
That changes not in changing, fear and hope,
The life we live, the life we take, alike
Decline and dwindle from the shape they held,
Their import and significance ; all seem
Less good and evil, worth less hate and love,

Than we would have them for our high heart's sake.

How shall this day when all these days are done

Seem to me standing where it sets my feet?
Nay, whence shall I behold it? or who knows
What crest or chasm, what pit or pinnacle,
Shall feel my foot or gulf my body down,
Bear up or break me falling? Fall or stand,
At least I live not as the beasts that serve,
But with a king's life or man's death at last
Make all my travails perfect; and a queen,
The fairest face I have loved and fieriest heart,
Shines with my star or sets.

Enter PARIS.

What sends she now?

Paris. I came to know if you stand fixed indeed,

Sir, for to-morrow.

Bothwell. For to-morrow, man;
What ails him at to-morrow?

Paris. My dread lord,
Nought ails me but as part of your design;
But I beseech you by your trust of me,
What says this while my lord of Murray?
Bothwell. He!

He will nor help nor hinder—but all's one.

Paris. He is wise.

Bothwell. But is it to tell me he is wise
That you bestow your own wise tongue on me?
Came you to advise me or to show my trust
How cracked a casket I have closed it in
Who trusted in so white a heart as yours?

Paris. I have a message—

Bothwell. Well, the message, then;
And as you are wise, make me not wroth to-day,

Who am but foolish.

Paris. Sir, the queen by me
Wills you to know that from her husband's mouth

She is assured there came here yesterday
To him her brother, Abbot of St. Cross,
To warn him of some danger.

Bothwell. From his mouth!
Had ever mouth such hunger to eat dust?
Well, it shall soon be filled and shut; what else?

Paris. She has taxed hereof her brother—
Bothwell. What, hy word?

Paris. No, but by note she let him wist
she knew it.

Now he denies again his word aloud—

Bothwell. He does the wiselier; there your tongue struck right;
She has wise men to brethren.

Paris. And desires
To prove it on the accuser's body, being
Once whole again to meet him.

Bothwell. A fair proof:
Doth either sword seek mine for second?

Paris. Nay;
But the queen bade me tell you he should go
To her lord's chamber for his challenge's sake
And do that thing ye wot of.

Bothwell. Tell the queen
I will speak to him. We must not mar our hand;

Say I will see him before the morrow morn.
Howbeit, it shall be well but for a night
To put our present purpose back, and see
If chance or craft will mend our hand again.
Who strikes most sure strikes deepest; say I go
To try this brother's edge; if he be sure,
He shall well serve us as a glove to wear
And strike, and have the whiter hands to show.
[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE XIX.—DARNLEY'S CHAMBER.

DARNLEY and NELSON.

Darnley. I never had such evil dreams as now.

Save for the terror of them and after pain,
I durst well swear I had not slept to-night.

Nelson. You have slept seven hours.

Darnley. I have been seven years in hell;
Mine eyes are full yet of the flames, my flesh
Feels creep the fire upon it; even my heart
Is as a sere leaf shrunken.

Nelson. Being awake,
Let not it move you.

Darnley. Nay, it shall not move.
Yet were they dreams to shake with waking fear

A sounder state than mine is.

Nelson. Sir, what dreams?
Darnley. No matter what: I'll tell thee yet some part,

That thou may'st know I shrink not for no cause.

I dreamed this bed here was a boat adrift
Wherein one sat with me who played and sang,
Yet of his cittern I could hear no note
Nor in what speech he sang inaudibly,
But watched his working fingers and quick lips
As with a passionate and loathing fear,

And could not speak nor smite him ; and me-
 thought
 That this was David ; and he knew my heart,
 How fain I would have smitten him, and
 laughed
 As 'twere to mock my helpless hands and hate.
 So drove we toward a rock whereon one sat
 Singing, that all the highest air of heaven
 Was kindled into light therewith, and shone
 As with a double dawn ; stars east and west
 Lightened with love to hear her, and the sky
 Brake in red bloom as leaf-buds break in
 spring,
 But these bore fires for blossoms : then awhile
 My heart too kindled and sprang up and sang
 And made sweet music in me, to keep time
 With that swift singing ; then as fire drops
 down
 Dropped, and was quenched, and in joy's stead
 I felt
 Fear ache in me like hunger , and I saw
 These were not stars nor overhead was heaven,
 But a blind vault more thick and dross than
 earth,
 The nether firmament that roofs in hell,
 And those hot lights were of lost souls, and
 this
 The sea of tears and fire below the world
 That still must wash and cleanse not of one
 curse
 The far foul strands with all its wandering
 brine :
 And as we drove I felt the shallop's sides,
 Sapped by the burning water, plank from plank
 Severing ; and fain I would have cried on God,
 But that the rank air took me by the throat ;
 And ever she that sat on the sea-rock
 Sang, and about her all the reefs were white
 With bones of men whose souls were turned to
 fire ;
 And if she were or were not what I thought
 Meseemed we drew not near enough to know ;
 For ere we came to split upon that reef
 The Sundering planks opened, and through their
 breach
 Swarmed in the dense surf of the dolorous sea
 With hands that plucked and tongues thrust
 out at us,
 And fastened on me flame like, that my flesh
 Was molten as with earthly fire, and dropped
 From naked bone and sinew ; but mine eyes
 The hot surf seared not, nor put out my sense:
 For I beheld and heard out of the surge
 Voices that shrieked and heads that rose, and
 knew

Whose all they were, and whence their wrath
 at me ;
 For all these cried upon me that mine ears
 Rang, and my brain was like as beaten brass,
 Vibrating ; and the froth of that foul tide
 Was as their spittle shot in my full face
 That burnt it ; and with breast and flanks dis-
 tent
 I strained myself to curse them back, and
 lacked
 Breath ; the sore surge throttled my tongueless
 speech,
 Though its weight buoyed my dipping chin,
 that sank
 No lower than where my lips were burnt with
 brine
 And my throat clenched fast of the strangling
 sea,
 Till I swam short with sick strokes, as one
 might
 Whose hands were maimed ; then mine ill
 spirit of sleep
 Shifted, and showed me as a garden walled,
 Wherein I stood naked, a shipwrecked man,
 Stunned yet and staggered from the sea, and
 soiled
 With all the weed and scurf of the gross wave
 Whose breach had cast me broken on that
 shore :
 And one came like a god in woman's flesh
 And took mine eyes with hers, and gave me
 fruit
 As red as fire, but full of worms within
 That crawled and gendered ; and she gave me
 wine,
 But in the cup a toad was ; and she said,
Eat, and I ate, and *Drink*, and I did drink,
 And sickened ; then came one with spur on
 heel
 Red from his horse o'er ridden, smeared with
 dust,
 And took my hand to lead me as to rest,
 Being bruised yet from the sea-breach ; and
 his hand
 Was of molten iron wherein mine
 Was as a brand of fire ; and at his feet
 The earth split, and I saw within the gulf
 As in clear water mine own writen face,
 Eaten of worms and living ; then I awoke.
Nelson. It was a foul and formless dream,
 my lord,
 With no soul in it.
Darnley. Nay, I think it had not.
 And I did mind me waking how the queen
 Sang me a song of shipwreck, and strange seas,

And love adrift by night, and fires burnt out
That shine but for a song's length ; I did think
It was this singing made up half my dream.
For there was talk of storm in it, and stars,
And broken ships, and death that rode in the
air :
So was there in my dream. What step comes
here ?

Enter ROBERT STUART.

Robert Stuart. I come to change less than
a word with you,
And take my leave for all your rest of life.

Darnley. I will not speak alone with you
again :
Stay by me there.

Robert Stuart. Have you not armour on ?
You should not sleep with sword ungirt on
thigh,

Lest one should fall upon you. For this time
I come indeed to see if you be man
Or ever knew beyond that naked nar.

What grace and office should belong to man
Or purpose to his sword. Reply not yet ;
I know you are sick, weak, pitiful, half dead,

And with the ingrained infection of your soul
Its bodily house grown rotten ; all you will ;
You cannot swear yourself that piteous thing
That I will not believe you wretcheder ;

No flesh could harbour such a worm alive
As this thing in you taken for a soul,
And scape corruption ; but if you shall live
To stand again afoot and strike one stroke

For your own hand and head, you shall fight
with me

Or wear the lie writ red upon your face
With my hand's buffet, that you speak who
said

I had given you note of danger from the queen.
Darnley. Is it a plot, her plot upon me ?
Sir,

By God, I never said so ; what I said
I have heart and sword to uphold against all
swords,

And kill you if I might as many times
As you shall iterate on me this for true
Which is most false. When I may stand and
go—

Robert Stuart. Yea, then shall we see
fighting.

But as now

You can but swear you said not this of me ?
Darnley. I am not bound to swear it or
unswear

At any bidding ; but so much I will—
That you may see no hot foul words of yours
Have quenched in me the old thought of
fellowship--

As swear again I said but what I might
With honor and clear heart : I spake no word
To bring you in suspicion, or to turn

Thwart eyes upon you of men's jealousies
Or cast you out of favour with the queen ;
I said but you did warn me of my life,

As being my fast friend still, I thanked you
for it—

I know not what she says I said—but this
I know, I spake no treason of you. See,
This is a foolish wind of wrath that shakes
And wrecks your faith in me, mine own in

you
Being firm and flawless ; what you have said,
you have said ;

And what I have spoken of you was no more
Than I have right to speak and rest your friend.

Robert Stuart. Will you fight with me to
maintain so much ?
Darnley. If I might rise I would put off my
state

To stand against you equal ; you did say it,
That I was even as one the law damns dead
And she was parcel of my peril.

Robert Stuart. Ay !
You said so to her ?
Darnley. She will not say I did.

Robert Stuart. Plight not your faith to that ;
I am assured
You said so, and so lied ; and this last time
I bind you yet to meet me on this cause

Or bear the lie about you as a badge.
Darnley. By God, I will grow strong to
fight with you.

Robert Stuart. If I shall see your living
face again,
It shall be as mine enemy's ; foot to foot

And hand to mortal hand we twain will meet,
Or ere the day dawn I shall see you dead.

Darnley. I am like to die, then ? and your
warlike words
Have so much iron in them, and your heart
Such daring to provoke one wellnigh dead ?

I wist your tongue would move more tenderly
If I had now my strength of natural hand
And body to bear arms : but these shall
come.

And you change face and lower your look to
see.

Robert Stuart. I will abide my peril ; do
you the like,

You shall do wisely ; should I say farewell,
It were to bid you fare not as they do
Who are of your kind or of your fortune ;
yet

I bid you, sir, fare better than I think.
[Exit.]

Darnley. Ay, you think venomously.
What hour to-day
Should the queen come ?

Nelson. To-night your highness knows
Her man Sebastian weds a maid of hers,
And she makes feast for them in Holyrood
With masque and music ; having early supped,
She will be here somewhere with certain lords
To visit you, and so pass back ere night.

Darnley. She shall not make so much,
when I am revived,
Of outland folk and fiddlers, who should have
Too much of them by this. I would she had
come

To see me turn the lie back on his lips.
I did not answer as I might, being whole,
But yet not like a sick man, ha ? like one
Whose wit and heart lie sick too with his flesh ?

Nelson. Nay, with your natural spirit of
speech you spoke,
With the same heart and tongue you have in
health.

Darnley. I think I did ; I would she had
come betimes.

SCENE XX.—THE GARDEN BEHIND KIRK OF FIELD.

BOTHWELL, ORMISTON, HAY.

Bothwell. Did I not bid them spare no
speed ? the devil
I think has maimed their feet in my despite,
To keep a knave so piteous out of hell.

By God, it will be moonrise ere they come.

Ormiston. Tush, man ! the night is close.
Bothwell. Ay, close and safe
As is the lock of a girl's maidenhood
When the gold key turns in it. They halt like
jades ;

God plague their laggard limbs with goads of
fire !

Must they fall spavined now ?

Hay. Here come they three,
And with charged hands ; be not so outward
hot,

But as their charge is ere we give it fire.

Bothwell. Teach your own tongue to take
your tune, not mine.

Enter HEPBURN with Servants.

Have you some devil's cramp in your bones,
crawl
At this worm's pace ? Set down your load and
go.

[Exit Servants.]
What maimed these knaves' feet or belated you
To hold us here thus till the moon were up ?

Hepburn. 'Tis not yet risen ; and your own
word it was

Withheld us till the west should cast off red.

Bothwell. Well, we have time. Ye three
are hands enough

To bear this down and strew it within the vault
While I go help the queen here bide her hour
Till you send Paris to me for a sign.

Take heed there be no noise. Let but two
stay

To fire the train ; you, cousin, for my love
Shall be one hand thereto. Pass in, and see

Ye go down sure and softly. From this gate
Ye know the passage under ; go, and speed.

[Exit.]

SCENE XXI.—DARNLEY'S CHAMBER.

The QUEEN, DARNLEY, Earls of CASSILIS,
HUNTLEY, and ARGYLE.

Queen. But I must chide you for one thing,
my lord,
That you would hold your servant Duram here
Though it be for love you bear him ; he is sick,
And should not sleep nor watch with you to-
night ;

You do not well to keep him from the town
Against his health, who should take physic
there

And come back whole to serve you.

Darnley. Let him go.

I did but bid him leave me not alone ;

I will have one for service at my hand.

Queen. Have you no more but just this
young man gone

Whom I bade go even where was best for him ?

Let your page lie at hand here.

Darnley. Nay, I will.

You sent off Alexander ?

Queen. He was sick ;

We should show care of them we take to grace

More friendlike than by cherishing ourselves

With their forced company ; the grace is more

To take thought for them whom we hold in trust

Than still to exact their service, tax their faith,

Whose faith and service we that lean thereon
Should put to no more toil and pain than needs,
Requiting love with labor.

Darnley. You say well ;
But what should ail him ? save that yesterday
He found his bed-straw here by chance afire
And flung it out at window ; on which plea
He would not lie to-night here, till I bade him
Sleep with me as aforetime, being of all
The man bound closest to my love and trust ;
Then first he spake of sickness, as you heard
Who sat between us. Nay, but let him go ;
The boy shall serve to sleep here.

Queen. Sickness makes
All wills to serve it like necessity ;
Witness my will to keep my brother here
Whom his wife's sickness at St. Andrew's now
Parts from our feasts and counsels, caught up
hence
As if a wind had rapt him.

Darnley. She is sick too—
The Lady Murray ?
Queen. Nigh to death, he says ;
I know not : who knows how near death he walks
Who treads as now most upright in the sun ?
Argyle. Why have we death and sickness
in our mouths

Who come forth of a feast not ended yet
That in good time recalls us ?

Queen. Presently.
I would you were in health to dance me down
To-night but for the bride's sake ; for the groom,
He may live easier that you grace him not
Nor gall with favor or with jealousy.

Darnley. We twain shall see this night out
otherwise.

Queen. I am sure you shall see more of rest
than I.

Darnley. Except I watch for sickness' sake
all night.

Queen. That shall you not ; I charge you
on my love.
Sleep sound for my sake.

Enter BOTHWELL.

Are not you the bell
That strikes the hour to sunder us, my iord ?
Bothwell. Madam, I strike not yet.
Queen. The better ; sit,
And make no sound of parting till your hour,
No timeless note of severance. My fair lord,
Have you no fair word for your noble guests ?
Darnley. I pray you, sirs, of your own
gentleness,

Lay it not to my discourtesy for shame
That I can but thus sickly entertain
The grace ye do me ; that I meet it so,
Impute not to my will that is myself
But to my weakness that is none o. me
Save as our enemy may be part of us,
And so forgive it.

Huntley. Sir, we are fain to see
Even in your gracious words that speak you ill
Some spirit of health already.

Cassilis. I would pledge
My name and word you shall not long lie sick
Who bear yourself thus lordlike. [*Noise below.*
Queen. Ah ! my heart—

It wrings me here in passing ; pardon me.
Bothwell. God's lightning burn them I will
they mar me now ? [*Aside, and exit.*

Darnley. Heard you no noise ?
Argyle. Where ?

Queen. Some one stirred below ;
A chair thrown down or such-like.

Darnley. Nay, I caught
A rush and rattle as—

Cassilis. Of pebble-stones ?
Darnley. Where is my lord gone forth ?

Queen. Why are you moved ?
Darnley. I am not moved ; I am no fearful
fool

To shake and whiten as a winter tree
With no more wind than this is.

Queen. Do you think
It is your counsellor come back in wrath

To warn again and threaten ?
Darnley. Nay, for him

I think he hath learnt a lesson of my rede
To vex his soul and trouble me no more.

Re-enter BOTHWELL.

Queen. What deadly news now of what
danger, sir ?

Bothwell. Some fellow bearing faggots for
the fire

Slept at the threshold : I have admonished him
What din his knaveship made even in our ears

As if he had the devil there in his hands.
Queen (aside). It was of them ?

Bothwell (aside). Ay, hell take hold on them,
It was their din, God thank them for it with
fire,

Our careful helpers ; but I have made them
safe :

The train is wellnigh laid now : what remains
To strew I have charged them shed without
more sound

Than where the snow strikes.

Darnley. Must you part indeed?

Queen. They look for us ere long.

Darnley. Now know I not
What I would give to hold you here a night,
Even half my life I think, and know not why.

Queen. That were too much. I slept here
yesterday;

Were you the better for me?

Darnley. Ay, and no;
I deemed I was the better till I slept,
And then—

Queen. Why, did my being here break your
sleep?

It shall not break to-night then.

Enter PARIS, and stands at the door.

Bothwell (aside to ARGYLE). Time is come;
Touch him, and give him the sign.

Darnley. The air turns sharp;
There came a wind as chill as from the pit.
Why do you fix your eyes so fast on me?

Queen. Not out of mind to mar your sleep
again.

Darnley. I will not sleep alone.

Queen. Ay, will you not?
The town looks like a smoke whose flame is
out,

Deformed of night, defaced and featureless,
Dull as the dead fume of a fallen fire.
There starts out of the cloud a climbing star,
And there is caught and slain.

Darnley. Why gaze you so?

Queen. I looked to see if there should rise
again

Out of its timeless grave the mounting light
That so was overtaken. We must part;
Keep with this kiss this ring again for me
Till I shall ask it of you; and good night.

Darnley. A good night it may be to folk
that feast;

I see not how it shall be good to me.

Queen. It may be better. I must be some
hour

Again among the masquers: you that sleep
Shall hear no noise and see no company.

Enter NELSON.

For this one night here comes your chamber-
lain:

Good rest with you. 'Twas just this time last
year

David was slain.

Darnley. Why tell you me of that?
Queen. This very time as now. Good night,
my lord.

[*Exeunt all but DARNLEY and NELSON.*

Darnley. What folk remain by me?

Nelson. Sir, four of us:

Myself and Seymour, Taylor and his boy.

Darnley. Let Taylor sleep here in my room
to-night,

You three in the south gallery.

Nelson. Well, my lord.

Darnley. I am left here very lonely. She
was kind,

Most kind she was; but what should make
her speak

Of David's slaying?

Nelson. A word that shot by chance;
A shaft of thought that grazed her and flew by.

Darnley. Why should she tell me of it?

My heart runs low;
As if my blood beat out of tune with life,
I feel the veins shuddering shrink in, and all

My body seems a burden to my soul

Come, I will think not that way.

Re-enter PARIS.

Paris. Sir, the queen,
Having forgot for haste in parting hence

Her outer cloak of fur, hath sent me for it,
Lest this night's weather strike her blood acold.

Darnley. Take it and go. (*Exit PARIS.*)

I do not like their eyes,
These foreign folk's that serve her. Is it cold?

I feel cold here.

Nelson. A fair sharp night, my lord;
And the air less cumhered than it was with

cloud.

Darnley. I find no night of all nights fair
to me;

I am sick here at my heart all the dark hours.
Give me the book there. Ay, my book of

psalms?

What day is this?
Nelson. The ninth of February.

Darnley. How says it of God's foes, they
were afraid

Where no fear was? That am not I: my fear
Dies without food. I am not as were these.

I prithee tell me, of thine honest heart,
Think'st thou I have no cause to feed my fear,

Or keep the bitter life in it alive?
Nelson. I know not, sir; but what you
give it of food

Is so much taken from your health of heart

That goes to starve your spirit a likely life,
Darnley. Why then I will not feed it with
 false thoughts.
 Call here my chamber-fellow. *My heart*

Enter TAYLOR.

Be but the servant of chance cold and heat,
 And the brain bear not rule upon the blood,
 We are beasts who call us men. *Thomas,*
 good-night.

[Exit NELSON.]

What, shall we watch awhile?

Taylor. So please your grace.

Darnley. I have more mind to sleep than
 power to sleep;

Some unrest in me fights against my rest.
 Come hither, Will. Of all thy fellows here
 I think thou lov'st me; fain am I to think;
 I would not live unloved of all men born;
 I hope I shall not. Dost thou feel to-night
 Thy living blood and spirit at ease in thee?

Taylor. Surely, my lord.

Darnley. I would thy lord did too.

This is a bitter writing where he saith
 How in his prayer he mourns, and hath his
 heart

Disquieted within him; and again,
 The fear of death is fallen upon him, see,
 And fearfulness and trembling, as is writ,
 Are come upon him, and an horrible dread
 Hath him o'erwhelmed: O that I had, saith
 he,

Wings like a dove! then would I flee away,
 And be at rest; would get me then far off
 And bide within the wilderness, it saith,
 I would make haste to escape. Lo, here am I,
 That bide as in a wilderness indeed
 And have not wings to bear me forth of fear.
 Nor is it an open enemy, he saith,
 Hath done me this dishonor: (what hath put
 This deadly scripture in mine eye to-night?)
 For then I could have borne it; but it was
 Even thou, mine own familiar friend, with
 whom

I took sweet counsel; in the house of God
 We walked as friends. Ay, in God's house it
 was

That we joined hands, even she, my wife and I,
 Who took but now sweet counsel mouth to
 mouth

And kissed as friends together. Wouldst thou
 think,

She set this ring at parting on my hand.

And to my lips her lips? and then she spake
 Words of that last year's slaughter. O God,
 God,

I know not if it be not of thy will
 My heart begins to pass into her heart,
 Mine eye to read within her eye, and find
 Therein a deadlier scripture. Must it be
 That I so late should waken, and so young
 Die? for I wake as out of sleep to death.
 Is there no hand or heart on earth to help?
 Mother! my mother! hast thou heart no
 hand

To save thy son, to take me hence away,
 Far off, and hide me? But I was thy son,
 That lay between thy breasts and drank of
 thee,

And I thy son it is they seek to slay.

My God, my God, how shall they murder me?

Taylor. I pray you, comfort your own heart,
 my lord;

Your passion drives your manhood off of you.

Darnley. I know it doth; I am hare-
 hearted, for

The hunters are upon me. There—and
 there—

I hear them questing. I shall die, man—die,
 And never see the sun more; ay, this hour
 Will they come in and slay me. O great God,
 Sweet Jesus, will you have me die this death,
 Such death as never man before has died?
 See how they will not let me pray to you
 To take my soul out of their fangs and hell—
 Will you not make the sun rise for my sake
 That I may see you in the dawn and live
 And know the grace that God hath ere I die?

Taylor. Sir, for God's love—

Darnley. I say I hear their feet—
 Thou hast no ears—God hath no ears for me
 Nor eyes to look upon me—hands he hath,
 Their bloody hands to smite with, and her heart
 Is his toward me to slay me. Let them come:
 How do men die? but 'so trapped alive—
 O, I shall die a dog's death and no man's.
 Mary, by Christ whose mother's was your
 name,

Slay me not! God, turn off from me that
 heart—

Out of her hands, God, God, deliver me!

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

JANE GORDON.

ACT III.

TIME: FROM FEBRUARY 10 TO JUNE 11, 1567.

SCENE I. — BOTHWELL'S APARTMENT IN HOLYROOD.

BOTHWELL, ORMISTON, HEPBURN OF BOLTON, and other Gentlemen.

Bothwell. Is my knave sent for to me from the queen?*Hepburn.* Ay, my good lord.*Bothwell.* I had happier thoughts of him Who served us but unhappily last night: This Paris had been faithful, and his tongue That might have struck a sting into my fame Had done me royal service, and let fly No word to bring me in disgrace of men When I stood friendless; for which cause ye know

[lains] I gave him place with the queen's chamber- And promise of more furtherance; but this thing

Has turned his six years' service into dust And made his faith as running water slip Between my hands that held it for a staff; For since I first brake with him of the deed He hath been for fear besotted like a beast.

Ormiston. Faith, he was heavy enough of cheer last night, [thence] When you came forth, and the queen parted And hither to the bridal.*Bothwell.* By this hand, I came upon him glooming and withdrawn Up in a nook with face as of one hanged. And asked what ailed him to put on that gloom [queen?]Or make such countenance there before the And I would handle him in such sort, I said, As he was never in his life; by God, I had the mind to do it: and he, *My lord, I care not what thing now ye do to me,* [sick, And craved he might get thence to bed, as But that I would not: then as ye twain saw When came the wind and thunder of the blast

That blew the fool forth who took wing for death,

[hair] Down my knave drops me flatlong, with his Aghast as hedgehogs' prickles, and *Alas, My lord, what thing is this?* and *He had seen Great enterprise, marry, and many of them, But never one that scared him so as this; And such a thing would never have good end, And I should see it;* by God I had a will To have set my dagger here into him, but yet I drew it not forth.*Ormiston.* I doubt you did not well: 'Tis of such stuff that time makes talebearers.*Bothwell.* I would not strike him for old service' sake, [help.] Were he more dangerous to me; but, God What hurt here can he do us? I tell you, sirs, I think my star that was not swift to rise But hung this long time strangled in dead cloud

Is even by this a fire in heaven, and hath The heat and light in it of this dead man's That it hath drunk up as a dew-drop drawn Into the red mid heat of its own heart And ye that walk by light of it shall stand With morning on the footless mountain-tops Crowned.

Hepburn. There are crags yet slippery to be clomb,

And scours to rend their knees and feet who rise. [throat of time.]

Bothwell. I have my hand here on the And hold mine hour of fortune by the hair. Had I let slip this season I had fallen Naked and sheer to break myself on death. A cragsman crushed at the cliff's foot; but now

Chance cannot trip me, if I look not down And let mine eye swim back among slain fears

To reckon up dead dangers; but I look High up as is the light, higher than your eyes,

Beyond all eagles' aeries, to the sun.

Oraxston. You will be king?

Bothwell. Was I not crowned last night?
The hand that gave those dead stones wings; to
fly

Gave wings too to my fortune, and the fire
That sprang then in our faces, on my head
Was as the gold forefigured on a king's.

Enter PARIS.

What says the queen? why shak'st thou like a
cur?

Speak, beast, or beastlike shalt thou fare with
me;

Hast thou not seen her?

Paris.

Ay, my lord.

Bothwell.

Ay, dog?

What said she to those gaping eyes of thine?

Paris. My lord, I found her in her mourn-
ing bed

New-hung with black; her looks were fresh
and staid;

Her fast being broken only with an egg,
Ere she addressed herself again to sleep
She spake but three words with me of yourself,
How might you fare, a' when she rose by
noon

You should come to her; no more.

Bothwell.

So let her sleep;

There are that watch for her. For thine own
part,

I charge thee tell me one thing: in thy life
List thou pledge ever promise or plight faith
To that dead mask of kingship?

Paris.

Nay, my lord.

Bothwell. Seest thou not now these gentle-
men my friends?

Not one of them but for troth's sake to me

And living service hath cast all things off

To do as I shall and to fare as I;

And if thou think'st, whom no faith bound nor
love

To serve that fool or come 'twixt hell and him
To buckler him from burning—if thou think'st,
That art my servant, thou hast sinned toward
God

In our offence, this lies not to thy charge

But mine who caused thee do it, and all the
lords'

Who with me took this work in all their hands.

And if now thou have will to go thy way,

Thou shalt depart right soon with recompense;
but for all pains that can be put to thee

Thou must not take this on thy tongue again.

Paris. My lord, I will not.

Bothwell.

Sirs, with me it rests

To take some order for the burial soon

When the queen's eye hath dwelt upon him
dead,

As shall be, lest men say for shame or fear

She would not see him; then with all privy
speed

He shall by night be given here to the worms.

His raiment and his horses will I take

By the queen's gift; for being now highest in
place

I will present me kinglike to the time

And come before men royal, who shall know

I stand here where he stood in all their sight;

So seeing at once if I be lord or no

He that shall hate me risen shall need take heart

To strike betimes, or strike not. At this hour
Bold heart, swift hand, are wiser than wise
brain.

I must be seen of all men's fear or hate,

And as I am seen must see them and smite
down

Or lie for ever naked underfoot

Down in the dark for them to triumph on.

That will I not; but who shall overthrow

Must kill me kingly, sworded hand to hand,

Not snared with gin or limetwig as a fool,

Nor hurled by night up howling into heaven,

But in the sun's eye weaponed. Some of you

Go forth and find what noise is in the streets,

What rumors and how tempered on men's
tongues:

When I pass out among them I will take

Some fifty with me to my guard, and ride

As might their king ride. Be it proclaimed
abroad

In mine own name and Maitland's and Argyle's

Two thousand pounds shall pay that good
man's pains

Who shall produce the murderers of our king

For just and sudden judgment. In few days,

If Mar be not mine unfriend and his own,

Who holds the keys of Stirling, we shall pass

With some of counsel thither, and there bide

Till the first reek of rumor have blown by,

Then call in spring our parliament again.

Hepburn. Your heart of hope is great;
with God to friend,

A man could speed no better than your hope.

Bothwell. I tell thee, God is in that man's
right hand

Whose heart knows when to strike and when
to stay.

I swear I would not ask more hope of heaven

Than of mine own heart which puts fire to me
And of mine own eye which discerns my day.
And seeing the hope wherein I go now forth
Is of their giving, if I live or die,
With God to friend or unfriend, quick or dead
I shall not wake nor sleep with them that fear
Whose lives are as leaves wavering in a wind,
But as a man foiled or a man enthroned
That was not fooled of fortune nor of fear.
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—ANOTHER ROOM IN THE SAME.

The body of DARNLEY lying on a bier. Two men in attendance.

First Attendant. There is no wound.

Second Attendant. Nor hath the fire caught here ;

This gown about him is not singed ; his face
Is clenched together, but on hair nor cheek
Has flame laid even a finger ; each limb whole
And nothing of him shattered but the life.
How comes he dead ?

First Attendant. Tush, tush ! he died by chance.

Take thou no pain to know it. For mine own mind,

I think it was his sickness which being full
Broke as a plague-spot breaks and shattered him

And with his fleshly house the house of stone
Which held him dying ; his malady it was
That burst the walls in sundler and sent up
A ruin of flaming roofs and floors afire.

Second Attendant. Was not his chamber-fellow's corpse as his ?

First Attendant. Ay, woundless as they say and unconsumed ;

I know not surely. But the blast that made
The good town ring and rock here through her streets

Shook not all sleepers in the house to death ;
Three souls have crept forth of the wreck alive
That slept without his chamber.

Second Attendant. What say these ?

First Attendant. What should they say,
with thanks for their own hap,
But that this chance is dire and this man dead ?
There is no more yet for sage lips to say,
That would not timeless be stopped up with earth.

Enter the QUEEN and BOTHWELL.

Queen. Leave us, and after take your charge again.

First Attendant. We must forbear her till her moan be made. (*Aside.*) [*Exeunt Attendants.*]

Queen. Let me look on him. It is marred not much ?

This was a fair face of a boy's alive.

Bothwell. It had been better had he died ere man.

Queen. That hardly was he yesterday ; a man !

What heart, what brain of manhood had God sown

In this poor fair fool's flesh to bear him fruit ?
What seed of spirit or counsel ? what good hope

That might have put forth flower in any sun ?
We have plucked none up who cut him off at root,

But a tare only or a thorn. His cheek
Is not much changed, though since I wedded him

His eyes had shrunk and his lips grown wan
With sickness and ill living. Yesterday,

Man or no man, this was a living soul ;
What is this now ? This tongue that mourned to me,

These lips that mine were mixed with, these blind eyes

That fastened on me following, these void hands

That never plighted faith with man and kept,
Poor hands that paddled in the sloughs of shame,

Poor lips athirst for women's lips and wine,
Poor tongue that lied, poor eyes that looked askant

And had no heart to face men's wrath or love
As who could answer either,—what work now

Doth that poor spirit which moved them ? To what use

Of evil or good should hell put this or heaven,
Or with what fire of purgatory annealed

Shall it be clean and strong, yea, keep in it
One grain for witness of what seed it was,

One thread, one shred enwoven with it alive,
To show what stuff time spun it of, and rent ?

I have more pity such things should be born
Than of his death ; yea, more than I had hate,

Living, of him.

Bothwell. Since hate nor pity now
Or helps or hurts him, were we not as wise

To take but counsel for the day's work here
And put thought of him with him underground ?

Queen. I do but cast once more away on him

The last thought he will ever have of mine.
You should now love me well.

Bothwell. Ay should I, sweet.

Queen. I think you shall; it were more hard than death
You should not love me.

Bothwell. Nay, not possible.

Queen. I think God never set in flesh of man

Such heart as yours would be to love me not.

Bothwell. Will you give order for his funeral?

Queen. Ay.

But if you loved not—I would know that now
That I might die even this day, and my hands
Shed no more blood nor strive more for your sake;

For if I live whose life is of your love
I shall take on them more of toil and blood,
To stain and tire them laboring all their life.
I would not die bloodguiltier than is need,
With redder hands than these and wearier heart,
And have no love to cleanse and comfort them.
For this man, I forgive him.

Bothwell. For which fault?

Queen. That he touched ever and defiled my life
With life of his and death. I am fain to know

You do not love me for his sake the less
Who so have soiled me with him.

Bothwell. Shall I not swear it with him for sponsor to mine oath?

Queen. Kiss me before his face here for a sign.

Bothwell. You have strange doubts and dreams.

Queen. I will not have.
When part we hence, and whither?

Bothwell. I have word
Your careful warden, the grave lord of Mar,
Will hardly give my followers at your prayer
Place to come in to Stirling at your back.
Here now the streets begin to sound and swarm

So that my guard is now for more than pride;
Wherefore I hold it well we take with us
Some friends of our own counsel, as Argyle,
Huntley, my brother-in-law that shall be none,
With Maitland and the archbishop, and set forth

To the lord Seyton's, who shall give us house

Till this loud world fall stiller than it is.

Queen. Be it where you will, and how; do you but lead,

Would I not follow naked through the world?
For him of whose dead face mine eyes take leave

As my free soul of shameful thought on him,
Let him have private burial some fit night
By David whom he slew. I mind me now
'Tis not a year since I fled forth with him
Even through the graves where he shall lie alone,

And passing through their dusty deadly ways
For some few minutes of the rustling night
I felt his hand quake; he will quake not now
To sleep there all night long. See you to that.
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—SEYTON CASTLE.

LORD HERRIES and SIR JAMES MELVILLE.

Herries. So stands it, sir; she hath put into his hands
Besides the lordship of the port of Leith
The castle's government of Edinburgh,
Of Inchkeith and Blackness, three master keys
That keep the doors o' the kingdom; in Dunbar

He sits now lord, and gathers men to hold
By her next gift Dumbarton: while she sends
A privy message for a priest to plead
With the French king, that by his mother's mouth

And his own hand hath warned her, if her lord
Sleep unrevenged, she being so shamed henceforth

Must hold them for her enemies, and put off
All thought to flee for fear into their guard
From peril of her subjects—even to him
She sends for payment of her dower foregone
Wherewith to levy hireling bands in France
With but her babe for captain called, and be
Fenced round at least with all of these she may,

Of whose despatch none here must know before,

Nor, if these fail her, of her frustrate aim;
Then, ere her mourning month be here played out

With hound and horn and soldierlike delights
To recreate her natural heart and life,
She must repass to Holyrood and meet
The ambassador from England, Killebrew,

Who comes to find folk sorrowing and in fear
 With counsel for our peril and our grief,
 And falls upon us feasting ; and to him
 She plights her faith that by this parliament
 Shall Bothwell have his trial, and the cause
 Be sifted clear in the eyes of all good men ;
 Wherewith content he parts, or discontent,
 I know not, but is gone ; and she come back
 Takes heed no more than of a harp unstrung
 What plaint or plea, what charge or menace
 comes

From her lord's father, but to his demand
 For convocation of the nobles made
 Returns her word their house shall meet in
 spring,
 And puts his charge by lightly as she may.
 Of all this nothing in my mind goes well.

Melville. Nor aught in mine. Your fellows
 of her faith
 Who stand as yet in England on her side
 Will fall off from her, hearing what I doubt
 All ears will hear too soon : I have shown it her
 By letter sent me from a faithful Scot
 That long hath wrought among them on her
 part

And freely thence wrote all his fear for me
 To lay before her, and his grief to hear
 Such bruit of her intent as could but slay
 The opinion of her judgment, who must lose
 By such design God's favor and her fame,
 And in each kingdom that should kiss her
 hand

Each man's heart born her heritage, and miss
 The noble mark she shot at ; I, adjured
 Of him that wrote to bring this in her eye,
 Gave her to read it, which she gave again,
 Silent ; then came the secretary to me
 A short while thence, and took me by the hand,
 Desiring me as by the queen's desire
 To let him see it, who had given him late to
 know

I had shown her a strange letter, and devised
 By mine own counsel for Lord Bothwell's wreck ;
 And having read, What thing was in my mind,
 He said, to do this, which being known to
 the earl,

As shortly there was need to fear it should,
 Would cause him surely seek my life ? and I,
 It was a sore thing for true men to see
 So good a princess run on utter wreck
 And no man be so far concerned in her
 As to forewarn of peril : he replied
 As one who had newly left : wroth, I had
 done

More haire. Can wisely ; bade me fly

Ere the earl came up from dining ; and being
 flown

I know he sought to slay me, who lay hid
 Till his main rage was slackened ; and the
 queen,
 Who had made him swear to seek no scathe of
 mine

When at their meeting next she showed it him,
 Chid him as who would cause her to be left
 Of all her servants ; then he swore anew
 I should receive no harm ; whereof again
 Being advertised I spake with her, and showed
 She had never done me so much wrong as this,
 To make the letter a device of mine
 Which came even whence I had given her
 word ; and yet

Had it not come, I had held me bound to
 speak

Freely, with reverence and humility,
 My thought as did that letter, being of mind
 At one therewith ; but she would give no ear ;
 Nor is there force in counsel or man's wit
 To avert this ill she binds upon herself,
 Who breaks the bonds in twain that hold her
 friends,

And fetters her own feet with gyves of steel,
 When she hath need of them to stand or flee
 Before the face of peril multiform
 That lightens on us flamelike : you, my lord,
 Whose love she hath proven, are not of me to
 learn

The immediate feature of it.

Herries. Alas, not I ;
 I have taken too much note thereof, and stand
 Too near its fangs to live of them unscathed,
 Except I make haste hence.

Melville. What haste, my lord ?

Herries. I have spoken with her of their
 purpose blown

From lip to lip already on men's breath,
 To loose the bonds that bind her lover yet
 By witness of the lady of Buccleugh,
 Who shall proclaim herself his paramour
 And precontracted to him by promise-plight,
 To prove his wife no lawful wife, but bound,
 Will she or no, and love him not or love,
 To sue divorce from him ; if all this fail,
 Then by remonstrance of their kindred blood
 Found some four cousinships away, this bond
 Shall melt or break that parts him from the
 queen.

Melville. Why, ere his marriage with the
 Lady Jane
 She had her dispensation from the Pope,
 For the blood mixed between them, of all bars

Which might have maimed it with impediment.

Herries. So had she, but they think to cover it

As with a veil of invalidity
Pretext for pretence, or with dumb show
Darkly disclaimed; this shall not cumber them;

And they will buy compliance and goodwill
Of Huntley to his sister's putting off
By restoration of his forfeit lands.

Melville. All tongues in the land will as one mouth of fire

Cry death and shame against it.

Herries. So said I.

Melville. So said you to her?

Herries. I said so; whereat she,

As 'twere half smiling in a wondering shame,
Half mourning to be guiltlessly misjudged,
With fervent eyes' fall and with scornful lips
Protests me, never had she thought of it.
Wherefore I hold it ill to tarry here.

Melville. Your wisdom shall do well to spare no speed,

But get it gone from eyeshot of them both.

Herries. I know it; yet would I plead again with her,

For pity and honour of the imperilled state,
That should be shaken with her fall to death
And the crown shattered into shards of gold.
For as a wolf anhungered and awaked

That long hath slept and starved, with foodless dreams

Assuaging its blunt fangs through bloodless
The common people, that in dumb dim rest,
With heartless hopes assuaging its blind heart,

Hath fed for ages on itself asleep, [eyes
Shows now the keen teeth and the kindled

Of ravening heads innumerable, that gape
And glare about the wide ways of the world,

Seeking their meat of God; and if he fail,
Then of the devil that burns in minds of men

Rebellious, whom their heat of heart eats up
Till the fire fasten on authority

To lay red hands of ruin on all state
And leave in ashes empire; as of late

This Ket in England, and his like that swarm
At heel of the new creeds in Lutheran lands

To pluck the sun out of the heaven of rule
And leave men dark and kingless. Hath not

Knox
Struck with his fangs of speech on monarchy

No less than on the Church that first was
strung,

Preaching for all men knowledge equally

And prostitute and perilous freedom shared
With all bleak eyes, brute mouths, and unwashed hands,

That lust for change and take all fires for light,

Except the sun's wherein their fathers walked?
And shall not these at any breach break in

That flaws the sea-wall which forbade their sea

To drown all banks that bound it? She will make

Of all that lived in Scotland hers and ours
A ruin and republic of strewn wrecks,

Ranks rent, bonds broken, all things orderless,

A commonwealth of dead men's bones and dung,

Dust, mire, and blood, and one red rank of beasts

That rage and revel in equality.

Melville. 'Tis true, the commons are as waters chafed [wave

Since this wind blew amongst them: wave by
It lifts their heads up, and the murmuring air

Breathes hard and blackens with the blast of change.

Herries. And were none touched with danger but herself,

This yet were pity enough for tears of blood,
So fair she is and less by place than kind

Royal, so high and so assured of spirit,
So full of all things all men love or fear,

Heart's light and fire, a soul born winged,
with eyes

That mate the sun's eye and the lightning's; yea,

It were past count of pity, past men's thought,
That she should fall for love's light sake self-slain.

Melville. There were one way to serve her that would be

Most thankless, being thankworthiest; but none else.

Herries. That were no way for feet that would not walk

Red as her enemies' did, whose passage shook
With its near sound her life and fame; such ways

Let Morton take or Maitland's weaponed wit,
Whose words are swords.

Melville. It may be so they will.

Herries. Death?

Melville. Nay, who knows when death may come?

Herries. Why, they

Who strike the spur into his fleshless side,
Who prick him forward with their craft for
goad,

Or put for sword their hatred in his hand.
They have done deeds of deadlier policy
Than make submissive show toward Bothwell
here,

Then snare and slay him or put the queen in
ward :

Would they do this they might be serviceable
But perilous must be, putting hand to work
That treads nigh treason though for loyalty.

Melville. Whoso may know their mind, it
is not I.

Herries. She hath sent for Murrav hither ;
in his eye

We may take note which way their faction
looks.

If yet toward violence and red-handed craft,
This mood of hers will strip her for their strokes
Naked, and leave us handless that would fight
On her just side against them. God mend all !

*Enter the QUEEN, BOTHWELL, SEYTON, the
MARIES, and Attendants.*

Queen. The wind has moved my blood like
wine ; I am full

Even to the heart's root of its spirit of life.
Flew not my hawk the last flight well, that sent
The tumbling hern down from her highest ?
I think

You have none better. Is our brother come ?

Seyton. He is now alighting, madam.

Queen. By this hand,
I would when we must light from horse we
might

Take wing instead, and so what time we live
Live ever at glad speed save when we sleep.

It points and edges the dull steel of life
To feel the blood and brain in us renew
By help of that life lifting us, and speed
That being not ours is mixed with us and serves.

I would hold counsel and wage war and reign
Not in walled chambers nor close pens of state,
But or in saddle or at sea, my steed

As a sea-wave beneath the wind and me,
Or the sea serving as a bitted steed
That springs like air and fire. Time comes,
they say,

When we love rest, housekeeping sloth, and
calms ;

To me I think it will not come alive.

Herries. Madam, I would change yet one
word with you

Ere I go hence or others take your ear.

Queen. So shall you, sir ; yet is my heart
too light,

And its live blood too merry from the chase,
And all my life too full of the air of joy
Whereon it mounts up falcon-like for prey
And hovers at its wings' width ere it strike,
To give wise words wise welcome ; yet what
grace

I may to your grave counsels will I show
And modesty of audience. Tell my brother
I shortly will receive him. [*Exeunt all but the*

QUEEN and HERRIES.] My good lord,
It is for that old honor and true love

I bear your high name and your flawless faith
That yet mine ear makes way now for your
words,

In trust they will not wound it for its pains
With any tuneless or intemperate breath.

Herries. Had I no heart, or in the heart I
have

No love to serve you, madam, and no faith,
I had parted hence without more toil of tongue
Or strife of speech unpalatable and harsh

In ears made wide for music ; but in me
Is heart enough to burn with fire of pain,
If not to lighten with that fire their eyes

For whose sake it consumes me, when I see
Danger and death masked as true men and
bold

Attend about them with sheathed knives in
hand

And shut me as of serpents. Let me not
Incense again your flame of spirit and scorn

With faint and void reiteration of dead words
That spent in vain their spirit before : I speak

Not now so much to move you as would God
I had the might to move, but of myself

Rather to save my soul of faith alive
And my deep heart of duty toward your grace

By speech though fruitless and by love though
lost

That will not pass forth silent and give way
To loud-tongued ruin that shall speak too
high

For ears to close against it. Queen of Scots,
Lady that have the loftiest life in hand

Even yet that ever was of queen on earth,
Last hope of men that hope through you in
God,

Last comfort of his Church, light of his lamp
That men have nigh blown out with blasts of
night ;

O you to whose fair face and hand uplift
The treble-kingdomed islands should turn back

Out of the shadow of storm to follow them
And in the shadow of faith instead lie down
Beneath the wings that covered your crowned
head,
Even hers that brood above her fold and yours,
The Church your mother's, that by no hand
else

Looks yet to gather three lands in and save—
Who have the heart and the eye and the hour
for this

Which to none other God may give again
So as you have them—you that should be writ
In all the royal records of the world
Saviour, the light and the right hand of God
Shown in a woman, to bring back and build
What was blown down or shed as dust on the
air—

You that have spirit and mind to apprehend
And to that apprehension put swift hand,
Nor slow of soul or fearful—you, our queen,
And England's heir, that should make higher
on earth

The name of Scot than any star in heaven,
And on the cleft growth of two thorny stems
Bid one rose flower of Catholic royalty
Not to be plucked or trampled—O, will you,
So great, so fair and fearless as you are.
That were you no queen, or such other one
As no such high cause calls on, you would seem
Not less a thing made to heroic end,
A creature crowned and armed by God to bear
His witness to his work, and in man's eye
Stand signal-wise lighting the beacons sea—
Will you put all this as a garment off
And change it like a vesture? By your life
Which is the life of this land's majesty,
And your high soul which is our spirit of hope,
Slay not all these; help them that trust in you;
Help God, lest we believe him for your sake
Ill-minded toward us for our sin, to turn
This empire to a populous wilderness,
A riotous desert where things vile are crowned,
And high made low and low things set on high,
And rule trod under with foul feet and bare,
And kingdom parcelled by hard hands and red;
Pity this people; give not up your realm
To its own madness that takes fire at yours
And lights its ruin at your own ruin, to run
By that blind light darkling to death and hell;
Cast not your name down under foot of man
For such ill cause as loveless love that is
Light lord of foolish women, or such will
As wherewith men self-slaughtered gird them-
selves.

For shame and pity and peril shall be they

Who shall attend and wed you to your will,
And the ring broken of the kingdom's peace
That is yet whole and circular as a crown
Shall be the new ring on your wedded hand.

Queen. Have I not said I never thought of
it?

Herries. I but beseech you keep from
thought of it,
Or from such show as puts it in men's minds.

Queen. If this be all your counsel or your
care,

You crave but what you have; I have given no
cause

By favor shown to faith and loyal hearts
For the evil-witted world to tax me of love.
Twice have you had mine ear now to this tale,
And thrice I pray you that you seek it not.

Herries. I shall no more. God keep
your grace in joy!

Enter BOTHWELL and MURRAY.

Queen. Good morrow, brother; and you,
my lord, good day,
Since you go hence.

Bothwell. Goes my lord from us yet?

Herries. Even now I take my leave. Fare-
well, my lords,

And God be with your counsels. [*Exit.*

Bothwell. Nay, he shall.
The queen was fain to have your voice, my
lord,

Ere she go back to the distempered town.

Murray. That shall she have, sir.

Queen. Brother, we hear word
How the good town is troubled of lewd men
With libels writ and hung about the streets
That in our servants' name deface our own
With fierce invention: wherefore I desired
Your counsel with my lord here and good
help

For satisfaction of well-willing men.

Murray. Even such will tell you it mislikes
the town

That Lennox, as they say, should be debarred
From entrance save with six men and no more
To hold his cause up on the trial day,
And the main witness on his part refused
As under charge of treason for his words
Set forth in writing on the Tolbooth gates;
This makes them doubt of justice to be done
And brood or babble of devised delay,
With tongues and minds diverse and danger-
ous.

Queen.

What,

Shall one proclaimed our traitor pass unscathed

To bear again false witness, for whose sake
The ports are guarded, and the skipper marked
For death who helps him from this kingdom
forth

To mock the judgment whence he stands
attaint

Of foregone treason, and must now stand free,
And the law loose him and receive his word
As a true man's and taintless? What are they
Whom by such witness Lennox would impeach
Besides my lord here who shall answer him?

Murray. James Balfour, and your outland
serving-folk,

Sebastian, Joseph Rizzio, with two French,
John of Bordeaux, and Francis, of your train.

Queen. They shall have trial, and answer it.

Murray. 'Twere best

They did so ; time grows full of tongues ;

There was one . . . went through the streets by
night

With four or five accompanied for guard
That would let none take knowledge of him,
crying

Of his own guilt most lamentably on God,
*Lord, open heaven and pour down of thy
wrath*

*Vengeance on me and them that have cut off
The innocent blood ; whom the chief magis-
trates*

Have seized and cast into the four thieves' pit ;
But still his cry hangs in the common ear.

Queen. Some traitor hired or madman ; but
I sent

To seek the comfort of your hand and help
For weightier cause than of such tongues.

Murray. What cause ?

Queen. That shall he show who bears most
part therein ;

Yet are you parcel of it, and I myself
For love of both and honor toward you.
Speak.

[To BOTHWELL.]

Bothwell. My lord, I doubt not but your
heart conceived

Never that thing whereto being done you
feared

To set your hand in sign ; I therefore pray
you

To look upon the charge for which I stand

In the land's eye accountable, as one

That was consenting with the rest our friends

To what for my poor profit was not done

Nor only plotted for no end but mine ;
And for the part your honor has herein
To underwrite the bond that writes me safe
And set your name for seal upon my side.

Queen. So much would I beseech you to
the bond

By you subscribed here in my lord's defence
Shall be the signet of your faith and love
Set on my heart and his that honor you.

Murray. I would my duty might in all
things serve

No less your honor than maintain mine own ;
But I will set no hand to any bond

Shall bind me to defence or fellowship
Of deeds whereof I know myself no part.

I gave consent to no more than divorce
Between two hands mismatched, king's and

queen's,

Whereby the kingdom's heart was rent in
twain,

And reconciliation found not where to stand ;
But of no red and secret bond of blood

I heard I the bruit before the deed took fire.

Bothwell. Will you so swear? what, none?

Murray. I have said ; and you
That rest your kinsman Balfour by device

Out of my hand and thwarted judgment, see
Your heart be set not now to climb too high

A stair whereon the foot that slips grows red
And stumbling once in blood falls whence nor

wing

Nor hand can lift it from the pit again.

Queen. Vex not yourself lest he should fall
or stand

With whom you stand or fall not.

Bothwell. My desire
Was toward no help of riddling counselors,

But of such friends as speak with hand for
tongue

And acts for parables ; your wit, my lord,
Is nothing of the queen's need nor of mine.

Murray. It may be, no ; but to make trial
of that,

Ere I take ship for France, the ways being
barred

By force and strife through Flanders to the
south

And those fair towns that with her highness'
leave

Shall call me guest awhile in Italy,
I am bound for London, where I fear and

hope
My tongue may serve her more than here your
hands

If it make fair her cause in English eyes.

Bothwell. What hath her cause to do with
their bleared sight,
Or with her name their judgment? who need
care

What color we that breathe with our own lips
Wear in the mist made of their breath far off?

Murray. The ambassador that bore her
last word back

Hath but made way for one at point to come
Whose message, carrying weight as in wise ears
It needs must carry, will take form and force
From present witness of his eye that reads
What mind is borne here and what work is
done,

What judgment or what counsel most bears
weight;

Which it imports us for this land's great sake
That the English queen misknow not nor
misread

For fault or fraud of darkling evidence.

Bothwell. And you it is must give those
blind eyes sight,

Shape to the shadows of that ignorance, form
To their loose judgment of us? What have we,
What hath our Scotland here or queen of Scots
To do with English tongues? can we not strike
Nor stand nor walk alone, but for our need
Must use their hands and feet, their wits and
eyes,

To help us live or live not? By my life,
Which is not held in pawn yet of their leave,
I had rather be an English horse or ass
Than on these terms a Scot, to square my will
By their inscribed conditions.

Murray. At your will!
Lies your own way of life; not yet this land's,
Nor theirs that living should be lords of it.
Madam, to God's care I commend your grace
Who take with careful heart my leave of you,
Lest you too much should lack the care of men.

Queen. Be not too careful for my sake;
your leave

Was given ere you could take it. Sir, farewell.

Murray. Farewell, as you shall will it.

[*Exit.*
Bothwell. God be with you!

Your wisdom shall not be so hot of foot
But it may be outspeeded. If it lay
Plots with the stranger, our prevention here
Must pluck the fangs out of its craft; and first
With his own hand shall Huntley draw the
bond

Where to will we set ours in pledge ere long
To make them fast by contract, I being free
To plight mine own, as by consent unbound

From hers that was my wife pretended; you,
Being by this troublous time bent and inclined
To seek some stay in wedlock and put off
The weak estate of widowhood, yet loth
For worthy reasons of grave strength to choose
Again a stranger subject, have made choice
Of me desertless for my fair deserts.
And purpose even on heel of my divorce
For their good cause to wed me; this sub-
scribed

Shall in my keeping be laid up, and straight
Hence must we back to that loud town of yours
And take our anger by the throat; proclaim
At once my trial; if it be possible,
Before word come from England; let the post
That brings you counsel of Elizabeth's
Find the cause judged and the cry fallen again
And no link hanging of the gyves of law
Round our free feet and steadiast.

Queen. Ah, not mine,
That are fast bound and yet can stand not fast
Except my love's strength hold them up, and
strike

These iron toils in sunder. If the bond
Could bind and loose indeed, knit and unknit
Hands that must part from hands that are to
meet,

With force of more than writing, all my heart
Should bleed glad drops to sign and seal it.
Sir,

Here was again our enemy in mine ears
Forewarning me of marriage; the same
tongue

That was before a serpent at your heel
Shot out anew to sting it; but you know,
The craft of this state horseleech, that by
fraud

Takes pleasure to bear all the world in hand
That no one can be sure of him, and we
May least of all be by such lips allured
To trust and find them dangerous.

Bothwell. Nay, by God,
I mind me how he left his neighbor friends
In his faith's name to hang for hostages
Whose necks paid forfeit of his broken bond
And made his oath a halter for the Lairds
Of Lochinvar and Garlies. By my life
That this keen tongue would strike at, in my
mind

It were the best work worth a good man's
hand
To quit them on Lord Herries.

Queen. No, let be;
You will unpeople me this land of friends;
Mine he must live, or lose his name, and yours

For my name's sake he shall be.

Bothwell.

So might I

Find at his hands such friendship as they twain
Whose throats for him were writhen; and
such a friend

Is he that stands behind our deed, and says
He never heard of manslaying, fie, not he,
Our darkling brother with close lips and
clean,

The blood was no part of his bond, he says,
That his eyes winked on while his hand was
dry;

He will not bear us witness nor take part
With me that have done more than blink at
blood.

He will to London, but to speak for you,
That will he, being a kindly man of kind,
Whole-blooded in his love and faith to you,
God wot, no bastard in his brotherhood.

I would give God a year out of my life
That I have kinglike hope to live with you
For one sweet breath of time to strike at him
And let my sword's tip drink his body dry
And with one deep kiss drain his flesh of
blood.

Who smells not by the savour of his faith
On what close nest of foul and fledgling hopes
His trust sits brooding to build up himself
By overthrowing of that crowned head which
keeps

His misbegotten forehead bare of gold—
And with my hand shall keep it?

Queen.

Ay, though all

That breathe on earth mine enemies at his
beck

Rose by the light of his ambiguous eyes
With his sheathed hand to strike, and leave
ungirt

This forfeit head with empire: but I know
A stronger hand bared for my help and stay,
This that I touch, this that I love; the star
That points my feet on pilgrimage, the staff
That stays my steps back to that troublous
town

Whereof they are weary yet would halt not
now

But tread more fleet than fire their fiery way
To that fair end where they were fain to be.
We will set forth to-morrow.

Bothwell.

Ere we go

I will take order that men's tongues be clapt
Who show too broad their conscience of re-
morse;

There was a knave of Balfour's in our trust
That hath by this, being found unsure of
mouth,

Resigned it to the counsel-keeping worm.
If more there be that live not stingless yet,

The same dumb mouth that has nor lips nor
tongue

Must open them privily; the grave
Hath gorge enough for all such secret food,
And will not babble of the hands that feed.
For them that being in blood of our own kind
Will stand elsewhere against me than in court,
I will make present proffer of myself
To answer them in arms.

Queen.

You shall not fight.

Bothwell.

Not if no need be.

Queen.

There shall be no need.

Not in this cause, you shall not need to fight.
We will set on the trial presently,
And after we may sleep with no blood more.

SCENE IV.—THE UPPER CHAMBER IN HOLYROOD.

The QUEEN and MARY BEATON.

Queen. Is it not hard on ten?

Mary Beaton. At point to strike.

Queen. This forenoon will outlast the
night for length.

How looks the morning?

Mary Beaton. Like the time of year;
The heaven is red and full of wind; the
clouds

Are rent and routed of the striving sun
Like a lost army.

Queen. Is there no noise abroad?

Mary Beaton. The throngs grow thick in
rumour; faces scowl, [crowd
Eyes burn, brows bend, and all the cry o' the
Waits to break forth but titt a fire-flaught fall
To make the dumb brands speak and shoot
out flame

When he shall pass for whom it waits to burn.
Yet have I seen as great a throng from hence
As frets there now.

Queen. I would he had thought to-day
To ride with doubled guard. What brawl is
there?

Mary Beaton. The messenger from Ber-
wick, as I think, [thrust back
That would have entrance to you, and is
By the lord Bothwell's kin that keep the gates.

Queen. What, here so soon? I will not
see him till night.

I am asleep; if there be brawls i' the court,
Call out the troopers, bid my French guard
forth

To quell all rioters.

Mary Beaton. They are of your own part
That make the brawl, my lord's men and your
guard

That press about the gateway.

Queen. The cry sinks ;
Is he not come, that so their noise is fallen ?

Mary Beaton. And Maitland with him ;
He signs them silent ; takes
From the English messenger a letter sealed,
And leaves all still.

Queen. I prayed him see me first
Before he rode to trial. All will be well,
If he have stayed their storm, and keep his
Heart
High as his fortune.

Enter BOTHWELL.

Bothwell. Here is a letter by a hot-foot
post [queen
brought from Sir William Drury, that his
Through him commends her counsel in to you
And bids you, or my thought belies it, show
All favour and furtherance to your enemy's
plea, [would not
Lennox, whose cause she finds most fair, and
For your own sake see slighted or put by,
Lest your fame bleed ; look if she say not so ;
Else I know nothing of her maiden mind,
Who sometime lived her prisoner.

Queen. Let that rest ;
But tell me what the spring was of this noise
That shook our hearing ; would he speak per-
force, [me ?

This English post, though bidden back, with
Bothwell. But that our fellows thrust him
from the gate ;

My captain of the castle, a stalwart guard,
The laird of Skirling, that I put in charge,
Called to the guide aloud, he should be hanged
For bringing English villains through to us
here, [him ;

And hands were there to reive the rope to
Then drew your guard together and our
troops, [steel

Whose musters line the straitened streets with
That holds embanked their muttering multi-
tudes

Till I ride through ; and those within the gates
Hurtled together with blind cries and thrusts,
But at my sight fell silent as a sea
Settling, that growls yet with the sunken wind,
And holds its peace with unslaked wrath ;
then I [senger

Took from the pressed and labouring mes-
His letter for your hand, who were not risen
And should ere night receive him ; so I said,
And thus it shall suffice you do, so be it
We bear the bell to-day in parliament,
Where I should be by this at bar, to stand
And make mine answer.

Queen. I am not sick of fear,
Yet my heart loathes its burden of this hour
And beats and drops like a bird wounded.

Nay,
I do not hold you ; go ; 'tis but my hand
Fastens on yours ; my heart would have you
gone,

And here again to assure me of good speed.
Whom have we of the judges on our side,
Tell me once more, whom doubtful-coloured,
whom

Our enemies certain ? let me know it again,
That I may read the bede-roll of their names
Here over in my heart while you are gone
To make it sure and strong, come evil or
good,

That I may find me heartless.

Of our part
The Arbroath for the Hamiltons
Is as his father's person, Chatelherault,
And Cassilis, a mainstay safe as steel ;
Caithness and Herries are such friends of
yours

As love me less for your sake, yet I think
Must strike to-day beside us ; one man most
I would we might have razed out of the roll,
Which is the assessor, Lindsay ; who shall be
As poison to us ; and evil is our chance
That Morton being of kin to your dead man
Should not sit here to help, as but for this
I would perforce have bound him to our side ;
But let this be ; we shall bear bravely through
For all their factions and fierce policies
As knives unsheathed against us, or being
foiled

Find surer issue than they wot of. So,
With such good hope as grows of a good
heart,

Give me God-speed.

Queen. God speed you as I pray
You may speed ever ; all my prayer is spent,
I can no more of wishing ; what I would,
That must you will, having my heart in you,
That beats but with your blood, thrills with
your sense, [desire,

Thinks with your thought, desires with your
And lives upon your living. Where you go
You bear me with you ; where your face is set
Mine eye takes outlook, and where falls
your foot

I tread beside you silent. O, this day [turns
Shall be to us as the crown o' the wave that
And bears inshore the lading of our lives
With all the might of its great heart that
breaks
And brings us into harbour ; we shall stand
High on the beach where it was spent, and
praise

The faithful hour that served us : yea, even this

Shall be a dear one to us, held fast at heart
When all the pain and doubt of it is dead,
And lovingly remembered ; you shall look
From your high place beside your humble
love

With kingly eye on this dead day, and think
How she that set her crown about your head
And put her own beneath your foot, as now
Bade you fare forth, and kissed you.

Bothwell. I am returned,
Ere I pass forth, already in my heart,
With my cause crowned : I cannot doubt of
speed

Who have your face before mine eyes as fire
And keep your words' heat in mine ear to burn
If I should shrink, and sting my spirit alive
For love's and shame's sake. When we meet
at night.

A king's kiss will I set upon these lips
That seal me royal ere I part. Farewell.
[Exit.]

Queen. I would mine eye were in my heart
to go

With that beside him ; but the heart it is
Sits now in the eye and follows where it may,
But a street's length ; then part they, and the
sight

Turns back, but not the thought ; such wings
it hath

As the sight hath not, and is the subtler nerved
Than the swift spirit of the eye. O my life's
light,

This is not I that looks forth after you
To feel her eyesight, but who leaves you not,
Who rides beside you, breathes out of your lips,
Looks through your eyes and triumphs in your
heart,

That unseen and inseparate thing is I.
Look, he is up ; how royally he rides,
As no king else on earth ! and waves to me
As who should say, Be glad ; and glad I am,
Who have the lordliest lover in the world
And the most heart to love him. Ay, that steed
Should be the higher of heart that feels him
stride

And moves the merrier-mettled ; by none such
Was it before bestriden.

Mary Beaton. Was not this
Lord Darnley's horse ?

Queen. Ay, when Lord Darnley was.

Mary Beaton. The horse he loved of all
the rest and fed
Ere he bestrode it ever ?

Queen.

Like enough ;

What ails it yet to have eaten of his hand ?
It bears not now the worse a better man.

Mary Beaton. Nay, so it seems : it bounds
not as in wrath,

For aught I see, beneath him, but heaves up
A sidelong head toward his new hand, and
turns

The light back on him of a joyful eye.
So is it with only beasts that are beloved ;
They have not hearts like ours.

Queen.

What need they have ?

I would have nothing love him as I love,
And had it heart it would ; yet I do think
All beasts and men are mad that love him not
As I should surely were I beast or man.

He can no longer see my handkerchief ;
Let us go in : I will not sit and wait
With the street's hustling faces in my sight.

[Exit.]

SCENE V.—THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
IN THE TOLBOOTH.

BOTHWELL, with ORMISTON and others attending, at the bar ; ARGYLE presiding as Lord Justice ; LINDSAY as assessor ; CAITHNESS, CASSILIS, ROTHES, ARBROATH, MAXWELL, HERRIES, and others, as jury ; ROBERT CUNNINGHAM as spokesman for Lennox.

Ormiston (aside to Bothwell). Fie, look
not down so at your feet, my lord ;

What devil is this that irks you ? in your face
A fool might read you what you are ; why, so
Might a man look that were now going to
death.

Hold up your face for God's sake and look
blithe ;

Alas and aye woe worth them that devised
The thing that shall make us all mourn, I trow,
For you that now look sadly.

Bothwell.

Hold your peace ;

I would not yet it were to do ; I have
An outgate any way whereby to pass,
As ye shall know, and soon. Trouble me not.

Argyle.

My lords, ye have heard how to
the indictment read

The accused who stands at his own instance
here

Returns his plea of guiltless ; and thereon
The accuser next invoked to approve his
charge,

Nor answering nor appearing, leaves no cause
For us to judge ; but here in his default
Is risen his servant to sustain his part

And unawares among us unrequired
Take up this charge here fallen, or stretch at
least

Some form across of pretext wide enough
To cover with excuse this lack of charge,
Which else might seem with emptiness of cause
To mock your judgments ; wherefore, if ye will,
He stands to plead before us.

Caithness.

We are content.

Robert Cunningham. My lords, I am here

but in my master's name,
The earl of Lennox, to declare what cause
This day constrains his absence ; which in brief
Is first the brief time given for so great work,
Next that he stands now naked of his friends
And fellowship of servants to maintain
His honor with the surety of his life ;
And having help of no friend but himself,
He hath laid on me commandment to desire
A day sufficient for that weight of cause
Which he shall have to keep it ; and if hence
Your lordships at this present shall proceed,
Here I protest that is the assize to-day,
By their twelve persons that upon this charge
Shall enter now on panel, speak him clear
Who stands accused for murder of the king,
It shall be wilful error in men's eyes
And not abuse of ignorance, by this cause
That all men know him for murderer ; and
hereto

Upon this protestation I require
Of your high court a document to stand
And set my lord's right here on register
And those men's wrong who put it by to-day.
Argyle. This is some reason if the ground
be good

Whereon his protest is built up, to excuse
Default of witness by defect of time ;
But here that ground is shaken, that we find,
By letters of his own writ to the queen,
My lord of Lennox earnest to bring on
With forward expedition as of fire
This cause for trial, and by all pleas intent
To enforce this court make haste, and being
convoked

Despatch with breathless justice and short stay
The work wherein he seems to accuse us now
For too much heat to move too fast, and mar
The perfect end of trial with force of speed,
Preventing him of witness. Wherefore then
Was his own will so keen, his plaint so loud,
So strong his protestation, to procure
The speed too late reproached, too soon re-
quired?

Here are we met for judgment, whom himself

Bade the queen summon, with insistent heat
And sharp solicitation urged of wrong,
Nay, with the stroke of an imperative tongue,
As though to impel some loth or laggard heart,
And found instead a free and forward will
In her to meet his own ; here sits the court,
There stands the man of him or his impeached
To give them loyal answer ; where sits he ?
Where speaks his proof ? where stands his
witnesses ?

What sentence of what judges shall be given
Where none stands forth to accuse ? Here are
but words,

Surmises, light and loud and loose, that blow
In the air of nameless lips and babblers' breath
From ear to ear about the wide-mouthed world ;
These are not for our judgment.

Caithness.

We sit here

To find if there be proof or likelihood
More than of common tongues that mark a
man

Guilty, and know not why this man or that,
But some name they must have to feed upon ;
And in my mind, where witness there is none
Nor prosecution of a personal cause,
Even should we err to find the accused man
free,

It were no wilful error, nor this court
In any just man's sight accountable
As for unrighteous judgment, being cut off
From evidence that it was met to hear ;
Which we reject not, but require indeed,
Yet can by no solicitous mean procure.
Moreover, sirs, one flaw there is to note
More evident than these proofs invisible
Even in the letter of the charge, which bears,
Ye see, the nine day's date of February,
When all we know that on the tenth it was
This violence, by what hand soe'er, was done :
So that I see not, for my simple part,
How any man, for that which no man did,
Should stand condemned ; for at this date
assigned

Was no such deed as this done in the world.

Maxwell. Why, let the charge be drawn
again, and straight ;

The court is mocked in this.

Caithness.

How mocked, my lord ?

It is necessity of law, to keep
Pure hands by perfect heed of flawless words ;
And that you stood the dead man's friend alive
Gives ; you not right nor reason to rise up
And tax the reason of the right of law.

Maxwell. Right ! where is right in all
this circumstance,

What last lies bare for judgment?
Second Citizen. Why, the last
 Is not this half hour's shame; each stroke
 each day

Strikes out a fresh one, that five minutes old
Dies of the next forgotten. Yesterday
Some talk was of the challenge yet, which now
No man casts thought on, though by two good
swords

Was battle proffered : by the stout laird first
Of Tullibardine, in that brother's name
Whom they for fear have taxed of treason, so
To eschew his proof and peril ; he defies
The challenge to combat, and requires
England and France for judges of the field
In person of their sovereigns ; this refused,
On such new plea as craven craft may find,
With his queen's leave the ambassador himself
Of England gladly with his own heart's will
Would take the personal cause upon him.

First Citizen.

What !

Is it for fault of Scots to match and mate
The pride in Bothwell sworn with innocent
blood

None but Sir William Drury may be held
Worth his sword's wrath that walks by night ?

Third Citizen.

Perchance

As for his queen he stands here deputy,
And for our own her champion opposite
A field with swords' play or abed with lips,
They hold the match more equal.

Fourth Citizen.

Nay, this news

Is grey of beard already ; hear you not
How by this priestly parliament of ours,
That to beguile us and for no goodwill
Hath in the queen's name passed its act to
affirm

God's present gospel stablished in this realm,
The murderer lives now twice absolved of
blood

And has by voice of prelates and of earls
The assize allowed for good that purged him
first,

And shall be loosened of his marriage bond
That twelve months since was tied ? his
brother-in-law

Shall have again his forfeit lands, and see
His sister from her married bed thrust out,
And stir no finger ; then without more stay
Who sees not where the adulterer's foot shall
climb

And by what head his own be pillowed ? nay,
These papers hung against our walls by night
Are tongues that prophesy but truth ; ye saw
That likeness of a hare enringed with swords
And of a mermaid crowned with burning eyes
Who drove the hounds off with a two-
thonged scourge

That coursed him trembling ; and her hand
indeed

Is found not slow to smite ; a law now lives
Denouncing on his head no less than death
Who shall set up, or seeing shall pluck not
down,

Such placards writ : the first soe'er who finds
And leaves the writing that defames her friend
To pass among the people, at her will
Shall lie in bonds ; but if this brand herself,
Then must the man that spared it or that set
Die ; so the fire-eyed queen of shipwreck sings
Death in their ears who sail this dangerous sea
Whereon the ship reels of our staggering state,
And with the flame shot from her eyes puts
out

The light of theirs that were as lightnings
turned

On her hare-hearted lover.

Third Citizen.

Yet they lack

The power with boast or menace to seal up
The lips of poor men ; but three days ago
As she rode through the Grassmarket I heard
How from their stalls the women cried on her,
God save your grace ! but with this added
word

That smote the smile upon her lips to death,
If ye be spotless of the dead king's blood.

Second Citizen. Such words and souls mount
nigher God's ear and eye

Than theirs who lent this man their hands to
slay

And tongues to purge him of their general sin,
He of St. Andrew's and his under priest,
Bishop of Ross, Leslie and Hamiltons
Whose lips are bloody, and that double soul
Argyle, that steers their faction ; and this crew
Masked here as mouthpiece of the loathing
land

Must hide the people's heart and true men's
truth

With craft of prattling prelates ; yet such
mouths

As are unlocked and locked again with gold
But gape till God shall pluck their tongues out.

Fifth Citizen.

Yea,

Ye hear but this, and have to burn your ears
No hotter news of these men, or what bond
Bears written broad and braves such names as
these

Of earls and bishops ? this is strange yet, sirs,
That fires my cheek to tell you ?

Second Citizen.

Why, men said

There was a knot that met of these to sup
Shut in with Bothwell's hackbutter for guard

That drew round Ainslie's Tavern where
they sat

Like a straight hoop of steel to bind them
And hold them fast from starting; and some
bond

Of these his guests at Bothwell's prayer sub-
There was that bound them to him, against
all foes

That might impeach him of the crime dis-
By the open court's acquittal, from this day
To take his part upon them and stand fast
As to their own cause, being made subject
all

To slander and suspicion that but grows
Of honour and high credit held with kings:
So much we heard, and found not strange.

Fifth Citizen. Nay, this [in
Was but the grace that served their banquet
Of meats as strong as poison; there ensued
A pledge more mortal of a bond more base;
Considering this time present, how the queen
Stood husbandless, and how the general weal
Might let her not long live so, should her
mind

By thought of his true services be moved
To take the earl Bothwell to her loving lord,
They and each man there met of them should
plight

His honour, truth, and heart's fidelity [given
To advance this marriage with all furtherance
Of counsel, satisfaction, and good help
As soon as law might give it leave to be,
And as their common enemy should esteem
What man soever of evil will to them
Might seek its hindrance; and to this were
set

More than those names ye spake of; be it
For craft or vantage, none of these fell off
Save Eglinton that slipped for shame away,
And Morton with the secretary, that gave
Their voice yet for this marriage, but would
seal

No general bond of service on his side:
Save these, no priest or peer of them but
lives
His servant pledged: their hands, tongues,
His or not theirs, and all they mansworn
men.

Third Citizen. I have assurance of a: he
That word was writ of this confederacy
To the English council from the Laird
Grange,

Desiring knowledge with what ear their queen
Shall take these tidings; and albeit of late
In all our trouble being found slow to help
She hath lost the love here borne her, if her
grace

For this late murder will pursue revenge,
She shall win all the hearts of all the best
Again, he says, in Scotland; who should be,
With her good help and favour, swift to take
This vengeance on them, and redeem from
fear

Their prince's life now trembling in the reach
Of hands that slew his father; for our queen
Hath sworn she cares not for her lover's sake
To lose France, England, and her natural
land,
And would go with him to the wild world's
Strip to her smock ere leave him.

Second Citizen. Has he writ
So much to the English court of her? being
ours,

He should let shame keep silence of her
First Citizen. What shame or silence can
shut up for shame

That which at noon walks clamorous of itself
And boastful to be naked? They will wed,
Though thunder sound forth sin, and while
God speaks

Will kiss in sight of lightning.

Fourth Citizen. Was there not
Some noise of strife arisen for fault of pay
Among their crew of Bothwell's villains here
That hold by force of hand the palace gates?

Second Citizen. Such rumour was, for cer-
tain; and himself
Strode in among the middle mutiny [them
Like a thieves' captain, and being braved of
Caught by the throat one that was lord o' the
brawl

And would have slain but for the throng that
cried

And drove upon him shouting, till for fear
He was even fain to stop with promises
Their mouths who clamoured; which to see
fulfilled

Needs must he sit no lower than doth a king.
Third Citizen. So then the gates are open,
and the queen

By leave of these her guards and him their
May part in peace for Stirling now to see
Her son in ward there of the castellan?
Where we, God knows, may give him thanks
that one

So wise as the earl of Mar and stout of heart
Hath our born king in covert, who might
sleep

On that sweet breast that bore him not so safe
As in a hand so honest.

First Citizen. Ay, God help,
There is no surety in such housekeeping
As thunder comes forth of the sky by night
To fall upon and burn it, yet no storm

Save of men's making seen, nor fire in heaven
Save what rose up from under. Verily,
Our good lord Bothwell spake but truth who
said

To good James Melville how so strange a thing
On earth was never known of : pity 'tis
He could not come to look upon the corpse
Though Bothwell bade him, seeing it was re-
moved ;

It was his hapless chance to find it gone
And in safe keeping of some secret hand
That waited on it living ; such things are :
The worse hap his. They say it had no wound ;
So if by some mischance, as God forbid,
The prince were reft unluckily of life,
I think he should have none for eye to see
That might read evil.

Third Citizen. Who shall ride with her ?

Second Citizen. Why, no great train, lest
being within the walls
She take the child into her hand and give
For better care to Bothwell's, with the keys
That keep this castle too ; but yet I think
His hand nor hers shall put God's judgment
back

That waits to take them triumphing, and turn
To tears their laughter and our grief to joy.

SCENE VII.—STIRLING CASTLE.

The QUEEN and HUNTLEY.

Queen. Will you go back from us ?

Huntley. I like it not ;
I do not see how this may be made good.

Queen. There is no flaw but in your fainter
heart ;

The way is fair and even ; I cannot think
What seed is in men's hearts that brings forth
fear

Out of all season. Why are you so sad ?
The thing is no more dangerous than it was
When our first plot was laid ; nay, so much
less

By how much these are ours whose names and
bonds

Speak on our side inscribed.

Huntley. Madam, not so ;
The earl of Sutherland, whose forfeiture
Your grace but now remitted with mine own,
When we shall meet my brother's men in arms,
Will die before he yield you to their hands.

Queen. My lord, you have no brother of
him now

That was your sister's husband. I will write

To bid him bring up men enough to outmatch
All that ride with us homeward, and so far
That none the hardest shall but think on fight.
Three hundred hath your earl ? then in his rank
There shall be more than of our company,
That I to spare men's blood may yield myself.

Huntley. It is too gross and foolishly de-
vised ;

When I spake last with him, he laid on you
The charge to say where we should meet and
when,

And what should by contrivance plead for me,
To save my name though you be yielded up
Who ride with me for escort ; all this charge
He lays on you, and bids me write again
What you shall say by letter ; of himself
He moves not yet ; and I beseech you think,
Before you move him, in what enterprise
You put to pledge your honor, that can never
With honor wed him who being wedded man
By force and violent hand hath borne you off ;
Nor will my folk endure it, I wot well,

But it must come to trial by hap of fight
With doubt and accident of answering arms ;
Where if he will fail on our part, then on his
Shall be the blame and bloody note of war
Made on your personal guard ; but if we win
That ride with you as followers, then is he
The most forlorn of men revolted ; else,
I shall be called of all that sin on earth
The most unthankful traitor, who being now
But newly of your grace remade your man
Shall yield you up by treason without blows
Into a rebel's handling ; and the lords,
I doubt, when they shall see you in his hold,
Will think not much to unswear their oaths,
deny

Their words and hands as given through force
or fear,

And signed not of their hearts ; I pray, think
of it,

And take some other counsel to your mind.

Queen. My lord, if you bear back my word
to him,

It shall be this : that seeing I am come so far,
If of his own will he withdraw him not,
For no persuasion nor for death itself

'Will I be brought to break my faith with him.
For this you say of them that follow you
And of your fear to bear a thankless name

For my supposed betraying, you should by
now

With him have taken counsel of the chance,
And not have thrown it here across my way
Who have no choice to pass not over it,

Seeing I may turn not back for life or death,
For fear or shame or love of any man.
As for the place, he doth not well to cast
On me too even the election ; let him choose,
And send me word, with pardon that herein
I tax my lord of too much negligence.
For those your followers whom you most mis-

doubt,
You shall be wise to weed our train of them
If any wise mean be to draw them forth.
This is my counsel, of a simple wit
And womanish, but not so vile at heart
As to go back for danger from its faith.
I pray you so report of me, and say,
When he shall ask you of my mind again,
No more but this word only ; and farewell.

[Exit HUNTLEY.]

This faint-heart honesty with half a hand
Is falsher found at need than falsehood's self,
And ever was of me more hated. O,
That I might take these hours as in my hand
And men that yet divide us, with one grasp
To gripe them dead and pluck his fang from
time

That waits to fasten on us unawares
And make love mortal with the kiss that kills !
A day and night are as a long life's length
That part the hungering from the perfect hour,
The void from the fulfilling.—Nay, come in.

Enter MARY BEATON and PARIS.

Mary Beaton. Here waits my lord of
Bothwell's messenger
To bear your word back of Lord Huntley's
mind.

Queen. Ay, that I found it trustless. Tell
my lord

He makes me mad to put his faith in him
And to mistrust that which is wholly his,
Even her true heart to whom he should have
sent

Word every day what she should do for him,
And hath done nothing of it. I did say
He should take heed of that false brother-in-
law,

Of whom his negligence and heedless faith
Have put us in the danger ; on my part
There has lacked nothing toward the work in
hand

And had he not more changed his mind than I
Since I went from him, he should need not now
By stranger's lips inquire of my resolve.
Say how you see me, and till he send me word
That I will here lie sick, as God he knows

What health I have at heart ; would I were
dead,

For all I see goes ill ; but tell your lord
This was not in his promise that I find,
Nor no such matter ; but he lets me see
What power has absence on him, to whose bow
His hand has yet another string than mine.
And look you warn him of this brother-in-law
That he hath babbled of our enterprise
Wherein he puts but forth a heartless hand,
And in what great men's ears he well may
guess

Who knows which most are dangerous ; yet
methinks

If still we have need to flatter them, so much
Might naturally be pleaded on his part,
That his good service and long amity
Might well deserve his pardon and their love
If past a subject's duty he put forth,
Not to constrain me but assure himself
Of such place nigh me that no foreign tongue
May by strange counsel hinder my consent
To that whereto he trusts his service shall
Make him one day to attain ; with such excuse
Shall he persuade them that he stands compell-
ed

To make pursuit against his enemies :
And he may find fair words at will to say
To Maitland most of all, through whose keen
tongue

We hold the rest by the ear ; but if at last
The deed of our device mislike him now,
Let him send word and leave not on my head
The blame of all ; and if it like him yet,
Say I beseech him for the honor of God
To come with no less force accompanied
Than of three hundred men ; rather with more,
For that is all the main part of my care ;
Seeing as for Huntley, I assure myself
He in our play shall henceforth bear no part
But of an honest and a fearful man
Whose thought and all his toil of heart it is
To keep the load of treason from his name.
Therefore I would not have my lord in all
Trust or mistrust him, but be circumspect
And take more power unto him.

Paris. So shall I say ;

Your highness hath no message more for me ?

Queen. God wot no time is for us to
change

Tokens and toys of love ; yet I would send
For very sorrow something but in sign
That of my heart's grief I accuse not him
For his cold writing or forgetfulness,
His little memory of me and little care,

And least of all his promise-breach, being now
So far made his that what thing pleases him
Is acceptable to me, and all my thoughts
To his so willingly subdued, that all
That comes of him proceeds of no such root,
In mine esteem, as loveless negligence
Nor any love's lack, but such only cause
As I desire, being just and reasonable,
Which is the final order he should take
For his own surety and honor, who alone
Is my life's stay for which I only will
Preserve it, and without which in this world
My soul desires not but a sudden death.
Bear therefore to him for testimony of me
How lowly I submit me to his law
In sign of homage this that I take off
Of my head's ornament, which is the chief
And guide of other members, as to say
How being possessed of that as of a spoil
Which is the principal he needs must have
The remnant subject to him with heart's con-
sent.

And for that heart, that seeing I have left it
him

Long since I have not now in hand to give.
This stone instead I send him, painted black
And sown with tears and bones, a sepulchre
Whereto my heart is likened, being as it
Carved like a tomb or certain receptacle
To harbor his commandments in, and hold
More fast than all his memory and his name
Therein enclosed as in the ring my hair,
To come forth never till the grant of death
Shall let him rear a trophy of my bones,
As is the ring full of them, set therein
For sign he has made full conquest of my
heart,

That even the bones must be to him be-
queathed

For memory of his victory and my loss
That was so sweet to me : tell him but this,
And say that by the enamelling of black
He shall discern her steadfastness who sends,
And by the tears my fears innumerable
Lest I displease him, and those tears I shed
For this dear absence and for heart's disdain
That I may not in outward shape be his
As with full strength and heart and spirit I am,
And with good cause ; for were my merit more
Than hers of all born ever for men's love
Found worthiest and most perfect, and as
much

As I desire it might be in his eye,
Well might I so rest ever, and shall strive
Still to maintain me in his government

As worthily as I may. Say, I beseech him
That is mine only good, in as good part
To take it at my hand as I at his
With extreme joy received our marriage bond,
That till the marriage of our bodies be
Made publicly shall part not from my breast,
Which keeps it now in sign of all the bliss
I can or hope for or desire on earth :
And that my letter here brake off for dread
Lest this as much should weary him to read
As I took joy to write it ; therefore, say,
Here did I set a kiss as on his hand
With such devotion as I pray to God
To give him long and blessed life, and me
That only good of all which I desire
And only may pretend to in the world,
His love and his good favor who doth hold
Alone my life up ; and this trust I showed
To you in whom I kr - the trust he hath
As I shall for his sake wnoe wife I am,
His humble and obedient lawful wife,
To whom my heart and body are dedicate
And shall in no wise unto death be changed
Nor good nor evil make me go from it.
So tell him, and despatch. [Exit PARIS.]

What said Lord Mar

Touching the child's charge to you ?

Mary Beaton.

But thus much
That he would never let it from his hand
Save with assent of the three several states,
And on condition there shall be proclaimed
Some honest lord and worthy such a charge
As captain of the castle of Edinburgh,
Where only may the prince, he says, lie safe
From them that slew his father.

Queen.

Ay, so brave ?

There speaks a man of trust, found honorable ;
I had as lief be dead as see such men
Stand so at point to thwart me : by my life,
I hold it not a straw's worth in the scale
If I must live so shackled. What, and now,
When my life trembles on the top of fate,
And all my days hang from this edge of time
Twixt night and light suspended, whence one
hour

May hurl all hopes down breathless to the pit
And cast me broken at the mountain's foot
Or set me sure and steadfast in the sun,
To be so crossed of cozening honesties,
And honors made of craft, and fraudulent faith,
Would spur a blood more sluggish than my
sleep

And prick a drowsier passion. Well, let be ;
Our time will come to take all these in hand.
What may doubt deem then I would do with him

That am his mother? Nay, I know their thought ;

It is their fear and hatred of my lord
That glares askant on me ; and the child's self,

I think, as little loves me as he need,
Knowing in what love I held his father. Come,
I will yet see, before I take my leave,
If there be such a nature in our blood

As can command and change the spiritual springs

And motions of our thought, advance or check
The pulse of purpose in the soul that moves
Our longings and our loathings to their end
By mere control and force unreasonable
Of motiveless compulsion ; if such blind
And sensual chances of the stirring veins
That feed the heart of child or mother may
Divert and dull the mind's design, or turn
The conscience and the current of the will
From its full course and action. I believe,
Albeit I would not hurt the life I bare
Nor shed its blood, it is not possible
Such love should live between my child and me

Who know what source he came of more than mine,
And how that part of me once mixed therewith
Was sullied thence and shamed in mine own sight,

That loathes to look upon it, yet must see
In flesh and blood the record writ and sealed
As oft as I behold him : and you saw
He would not lie within mine arm, nor kiss,
But like a fox-cub scratched and strove, to be
Free of my hands again.

Mary Beaton. I see no need
In heaven or earth why you should love him.

Queen. No?
They say such law there is to enforce such love
On either part ; I know not : but I think
Love should but flower from seed of love, and this

Was but a tare sown timeless and in hate ;
Yet so much am I mother in my mind
That, be it for love or loathing, from my heart,
When I perforce commend him to that care
Which will not yield him naturally to mine,
Fain would I parting know if soon or late
Mine eyes shall turn upon that face again
Which out of me was moulded, and take note,
When each on each looks equal-eyed and sees,
His crown a shadow that makes mine a shade,
What king must this be and what queen shall I.

SCENE VIII.—DUNBAR. A ROOM IN THE CASTLE.

MAITLAND and SIR JAMES MELVILLE.

Melville. What, have you seen them since
we came from horse ?

How looks she now ?

Maitland. Disquiet and strange ;
And he so hot and high of mood, I think
We have no safeguard from him but in her ;
And Huntley that at Stirling spake with me
Of this their counsel, and must now suspect
It was by me discovered to the lords,
Will turn perforce his fear of Bothwell's wrath
Into a sword to strike as straight as he
Even at my life, it may be ; which her grace
Shall easilier from fear of them redeem
Than her own fame from evidence of men,
That seeing her prisoner see too if she came
By force or no, and led by heart or hand,
To bonds indeed or freedom.

Melville. Nay, myself
Was warned of him that rode in charge of me,
The Laird here of Blackadder, how his lord
Was of our lady's counsel ; and hut now
As they rode in I heard him swear, and laugh,
Who would soe'er or would not, in their spite,
Yea, though herself she would not with her will,
Yet should the queen perforce now wed with him.

Maitland. The deed has flushed his brain
and blood like wine ;
He is wroth and merry at once, as a man mad.
There will no good come of it.

Melville. Surely, sir,
Of such loose crafts there cannot ; all this land
Will cry more loud upon her than on him
If she be known consenting.

Maitland. If she be !
How shall not all ears know it on earth that hear ?

but two miles out of Edinburgh at noon,
Accompanied of all her guard and us,
She, meeting in mid road at Almond Bridge
The unthought-on Bothwell at his horsetroop's head,
Who with twelve men lays hand upon her rein,
Yield herself to him for fear our blood be spilt,
Or theirs or ours, for tenderness of heart
Submits her to his violent masterdom,
Forbids our swords, ties up all hands with words,

And doglike follows hither at his hand
For pure surprise and suddenness of fear
That plucks the heart out of resistance ; then,
Riding beneath the south wall of the town,
On show of summons to the castle sent
For help of us enforced thus of our foes,
We get but fire of guns charged full of sound
With hay stuffed in for powder ; and God
knows

Balfour knew naught of this, the governor,
Who was forewarned not first of their design,
How by no means to cross but further it
With forecast of his office ; nay, all this
Was undevise'd and on the sudden wrought
To take her by swift stroke of simple hand ;
And so astonished were we all, and so
The castellan, and most of all the queen.
Why, though the world be drunk with faith in
lies,
Shall God make this too gospel ? From this
day

Shall she begin her ruin ; with rent heart
I see the ways wherethrough her life shall lie,
And to what end ; for never henceforth more
Shall she get good or comfort of men's love,
Nor power nor honor that a queen should
have,
Nor hap nor hope renewed in all her days.
She has killed herself to take her kingdom off
And give into strange keeping.

Enter the QUEEN, BOTHWELL, and HUNTLEY.

Bothwell. Here he stands ;
This was the knave that was to baffle me ;
He shall die here.

Huntley. I will not lose the part
My sword should have in him : this hour and
hand
Shall cut off craft and danger. Stand, and
die.

Maitland. Is it the queen's will that pur-
sues my life ?
Then let it strike, and end.

Queen. I charge you, hold ;
I will not foully twice be forced of men
To stand and stain mine eyes with sight of
blood

Shed of a friend, and guiltless. Hold, I say.

Bothwell. Stand by, for I will slay him.

Queen. Slay me then,
For I will fling my body on their points
Before your swords shall find him ; hark you,
sir,

[*To Huntley.*

Whose father died my traitor in my sight,
If one hair perish of my servant's head,
You that had back your lands and goods but
now
Again shall lose them with your forfeit life ;
For boot of this man's blood.

Bothwell. Woman, give way.

Queen. Give all your swords way toward
me ; let me bleed

Ere this my friend that has been true to me :
I swear he shall not.

Maitland. Madam, for God's love,
Come you not in their peril ; I am armed,
If both not run upon me.

Bothwell. Fool, I say,
Give place, or I shall know not what I do ;
Make me not mad.

Queen. I cannot fear you yet.
Will you strike now ?

Bothwell. I should but do you right.
Why thrust you in between me and this man
Whom your heart knows for traitor, and
whose tongue
Crossed and betrayed our counsel to the lords ?
Had he his will, we should not stand to-day
Here heart to heart, but you in ward of them,
And I divided from you.

Queen. My sweet lord,
Let not your wrath confound my happiness ;
Stain not my fair and fortunate hour with blood
Shed of a good man who shall serve us yet.
It shall more help to have him live our friend
Than fiftyfold slain of our enemies.

Bothwell. Have your will's way : he cannot
cross us now ;
I care not if he live.

Maitland. I am bounden to you
For so much grace.

Queen. Vex not his mood again.
To-morrow shall all friends be reconciled ;
To-night rest here in surety.

Bothwell. Be it so. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IX.—THE SAME.

*The QUEEN, BOTHWELL, and the ARCH-
BISHOP of ST. ANDREW'S.*

Queen. What counsel, father ? if their
league be made
So soon and strong at Stirling, we had need
Surely by this be fast in Edinburgh ;
We have sent thither freely as our friends
Lord Huntley and James Melville, who were
here

As in our ward, not prisoners ; every day
Here lingering makes our enemies bitter-
tongued

And our strange state more hazardous ; myself
More taxed for willing bondage, or my lord
For violence done upon me.

Archbishop. In my mind,
There is no mean of policy now but speed
Nor surty but short counsel and stout heart.
The lords at Stirling, while you put off time,
Athol and Mar, and Morton with Argyle,
Are sworn to crown the prince, and of his
name

Make to their cause a standard, if you cleave
Still to my lord here, from whose violent hand
With your own leave they fain would pluck you
forth

And keep your honor hurtless ; but they see
You will have no deliverance at their hands
From him who, as they say, doth boast himself.
If he may get your child once in his ward,
To warrant him for ever in good time
From all revenging of his father's death.
Nay, it is bruited of them all about
How you at parting would have given the boy
An apple poisoned, which he put away,
And dogs that ate it after swelled and died.

Bothwell. The devil is in their lips ; had I
free way,

Fire should seal up and sear them.

Archbishop. So they talk :
The very children's tongues are hot on you,
And in their plays your shadowy action staged
And phantoms raised of your presented deed ;
Boys that in Stirling streets had made their
game

To act again the slaying of Darnley, so
Were rapt with passion of the pastime feigned
They wellnigh slew the player that took on
him

Your part, my lord, as murderer, and came off
Half hanged indeed and breathless ; this I hear
And more much weightier daily from that part
Pointing the same way on you ; sure it is,
From France and England messengers desire
To have the prince delivered to their charge
As to be fostered for his surety's sake
Of one or other, safer so bestowed
In foreign harborage of a stranger court
Than at the rough breast of his natural land :
Such offer comes there of Elizabeth
To those unquiet lords, but other aid
They must of her not look for to their part
Who stand against their sovereign. Now,
since these

Are dangers evident, and every day
Puts more in them of dangerous, best it were,
I think, to meet them warlike point to point,
Your hands and powers made one, and multi-
plied

By mutual force and faith ; or you must part
And each lose other, and yet be neither saved,
Or presently with one sole face confront
The many-mouthed new menace of the time,
With divers heads deformed of enmities
That roar and ravin in the night of state
Made dim with factions ; only majesty
With light of bared and kindled brows and
eyes

Can face them to consume ; do you but show
Your soul as high as is your crown, and power
As plain as is your cause, you shall enforce
By resolution and a forthright will
The obedience and the allowance of these men
That would constrain you by the fear of them
Within the limit of their leave. I say,
Proclaim at once the fore-ordained divorce
Between his sometime lady and my lord
And hard thereon your marriage, as compelled
By perilous instance of necessity
At once to assure you of a husband's help
And present strength in this your need, who
stand

Fenceless and forceless with no man for stay,
And could desire none truer and worthier trust
Than him whose service done and valiant
name

May warrant your remission of such fault
As men lay on him for the seeming force
With which unwillingly he stood constrained
To save you even for love's sake from their
hands

Whence had not he redeemed you as by might
They had done you worse wrong than he seem-
ed to do.

This shall excuse the speed that you put on
And leave their hands no time to rise that
would

Prevent you, being unmarried ; and your own,
Forestalling them, shall take again and steer
The helm of this land's general weal, else left
To their cross guidance and false pilotage.

Bothwell. By God, well said and counselled.
Queen. And is well,

Or shall, if but one thing be ; and in you
That lies alone of all men. Nay, you know it ;
Wrong me not now to ask.

Bothwell. Wrong you not me,
To cross my wit with riddles, which you know
From no man's lips I love.

Queen. I know not yet
If there be nought on any lips that live
Save mine that you love better: I can tell
Too little of your likings.

Bothwell. Be not wroth
That thus much of them I desire you learn,
And set your heart to it, once being schooled
—fair queen, [here
These are no chambering times, nor sit we
To sing love's catches counter-changed with
words [will,
That cross and break in kisses: what you
Be swift to speak, or silent.

Queen. What I will?
I will be sure there hangs about your heart
No thought that bound it once to one cut off
And yet may feed it with desire to share
What is my treasure and my right to have
With her most undeserving; which in you
Were more than Jason's falsehood was, that
gave

To his new wife such vantage of his old
As you give her of me, whose narrower heart
Holds not a third part of the faith and love
That my obedience bears you, though she
wear

Against my will such vantage in your sight,
By my hard hap; yet would I think not so,
Nor liken you to such a trustless man
And miserable as he was, nor myself
To one so wronged a woman, and being
wrong

In suffering so unpinful as she.
Yet you put in me somewhat of her kind
That makes me like unto her in anything
That touches you or may preserve you mine
To whom alone you appertain, if that
May be called mine by right appropriated
Which should be won by right faithful travail,
yea,

Through only loving of you as God knows
I do and shall do all my days of life
For pain or evil that can come thereof:
In recompense of which and all those ills
You have been cause of to me, and must think
That I esteem no evils for your sake,
Let not this woman with her heartless tears
Nor piteous passion thrust me out of door
Who should sit sole and secret in your heart.
What hath she borne or I not borne for you,
And would not bear again? or by what gift
Have I set store or spared it that might go
To buy your heart's love to me? have I found
Empire or love of friends or pride or peace
Or honour or safe life or innocence

Too good things to put from me, or men's
wrath,
Terror or shame or hatred of mine own,
Or breach of friends, or kingdom's wreck, or
sin, [mine

Too fearful things to embrace and make them
With as good will and joyous height of heart
As hers who takes love in her prosperous arms
And has delight to bridegroom? Have I not
Loved all these for your sake, and those good
things, [keep

Have I not all abhorred them? Would I
One comfort or one harbour or one hope,
One ransom, one resource, one resting-place,
That might divide me from your danger, save
This head whose crown is humbled 't your
foot [I sleep warm

From storm that smote on yours? Would
Out of the wind's way when your sail was set
By night against the sea-beach? Would I
wait

As might your wife to hear of you, how went
The day that saw your battle, and hold off
Till the cry came of fallen or conquering men
To bid me mourn or triumph? Hath my
heart [good

Place for one good thought bred not of your
Or ill thought not depending on your ill?
What hath she done that yours hath place for
her

Or time or thought or pity?

Bothwell. What have I,
That yours should fix on her untimely? Nay,
Last year she was my wife and moved you not,
And now she is turned forth naked of that
name [this heat,

And stripped as 'twere to clothe you, comes
And fear takes fire lest she turn back or I
To trust you forth instead: you are fair and
Beyond all queens and women. [fool

Queen. There spake truth,
For then you said, most loving. But indeed
This irks me yet, this galls with doubt and
fear,

That even her plea to be divorced from you
On some forepast adulterous charge, which
proved [loose

She wins her asking, leaves your hand not
By law to wed again, but your same deed
Frees her from you and fetters you from me:
Then stand we shamed and profitless; me—
seems

God's very hand can loose not us and join,
Who binds and looses; though Buccleuch
make oath

She was contract'd—yea, first, and this
No righteous man—though she might hurt
soul

As she made protest for her hope's sake; yea,
Though you should bring a hundred loves to
swear

They had the meaning of your faith, who kept
No faith with you—keep with me,
God knows, and I will not war with you;
In my love, and here, which now is you,
being

Matched with your conscience, the faith agree
And no proof published in the church's place
Were granted for it, or sought; no help of this.
If your love give not warrant; and therein
If she hath half, or I have less than it

Then have I nothing of you. Speak to him;
Bid him not break his faith, not thus now mine;
Plead for me with him, father, lest he lie
And I too lose him; God shall pardon, say,
What sin we do for love, or what for wrath,
Or to defend us from the danger of men,
But to me, me, say, if he be forsworn,
That God shall not forgive it him nor

Archbishop. Be not too careful to wound
yourself;
Those bonds are broken by God's leave and
law;

Make no fresh bonds of your own fear, to do
What harm these do no more; he hath put
her off:

Rest there content.

Queen. Nay, why should I rest?
He shall not put off me in heart for her

Bothwell. Why, have your choice then
mistrust; God's death!
I had deem'd I had learnt of women's witless-
ness

Some little learning, yet I thought no more
Than that it was but light as air, snow, foam,
And all things light, not lighten. I would
know

What men hold for less yet that hold you wise,
If not your fear.

Queen. Doth she not love you?
Bothwell. Ay

Queen. Hath she not cause to hate, as
doth not hate,

Who sues to be put from you, for your fault
Craves leave to be cut off, as I crave leave
To take you from her hands, her gift?

Bothwell. God be!
She may love, but hate not neither
Or both alike; I know not.

Queen. But I know

That you can love not—Nay, then help me
God!

If I did know that I would kill my life,
Yet to more proof I would I had put you
heart

Ere I gave up to all the might of mine
Which is but for mine—Well, we will go
There is no better counsel. Pardon me
If my fear seems to wrangle with my love;
They are parts of my love, that with it
Strives to be more of my love and joy
Lest either overbear it, and therewith
Put out my life—Come; all things shall I
well

—X.—HOLYROOD.

Enter HERBERT and SIR JAMES MELVILLE.

Herbert. Is the work done?
Melville. They are well fast, and
I think would one of them free himself
Gave right hand she had given him.

Herbert. What, so soon?
Came she as loth into the council-hall
Or with her answers as compelled and strange

Melville. I have not seen for
know
So changed a woman in the face, she,
Sitting with extreme sickness—she
wed

In her old mourning—its end was
As deadly—were
That laughter in its face—
In the eyes and gracious
and others' eyes with some regret
looked as when wine
rose leaf;

So fire between her
in the April of her
And but for want of
They had been rather
in they were

Herbert. And is the grace of
Melville. The good
Was dumb while Adam
all with gra-
lips

Set for the scandal of a few life p
and faith of his present penitence,
who says to come being I her
past place
could estimate th

vil; and
of tw
L. ten
of eye
of hai
indee

the large hall, and with her so flowerlike
 He turned a tower for side and mighty
 well and sh... his
 to the... its
 As... and... at n...
 day... up
 at h... e
 in her...
 and turne...
 A...
 his...
 in a...
 the...
 wanted... and
 As a... came
 As a...
 wickedly wrung forth
 red and forceful breath
 loath it.
 Will you think
 It was not hat... but for show, to wear
 ne not all constrain'd
 willingly enforced
 necessity?
 no part yet of his plot,
 But a... of those lords
 Who... subscribed by
 na...
 The p... his cause
 declared... of hands has Bothwell
 ha...
 Lothian and on the border's march
 keep... and how well it were
 should for sinety wed him whom she
 needs
 wed for honor or perforce live shamed
 By... one upon her.
 No; there hang
 when time shall be to unmask;
 Th... moved her and the mounting will
 Wh... was and battle was to be,
 Now she leapt into the pit alive
 To win and wear the diamond, are no more;
 Hope feels the wounds upon his hands and feet
 That clomb and clung, now halting since the
 hour
 That should have crowned has bruised it. No,
 tis truth;
 She is heart-struck now, and labors with her-
 self,
 As one that loves and trust not but the man

Who makes so little of men's hate may make
 women's love as little; with this doubt
 v-born within her, fears that slept awake,
 shame's eyes open that were shut for love,
 to see in early all hurt to death
 by her own hand, and no man's face her
 friend
 If his be none for whom she casts them off
 And finds no strength against him in their
 hands.
 Herries. Small strength indeed or help of
 or force
 Must now look for of...; and shall find,
 I fear, stay against men's spirits and ton-
 Nor... in the observance of their will
 That... on, committing her own faith
 To the outward face of theirs, as in this act
 Of marriage, and the judgment now enforced
 Again the allowance of the mass, albeit
 With a bruised heart and loathing did she bow
 That royal head and hand imperious once
 To give so much of her self trust away;
 And little shall it
 Melville. So fear I;
 'Tis not the war... affirmed
 Against the rem... with, nor form
 Of this strange war... renew to her
 Men's outworn lov...; nay, and
 strife
 Lies closer to her than from outward;
 these
 Whose swords and sons attend on her new
 lord,
 Both now for fault of pay grown mutinous,
 Even flat revolt they hardly have redeemed
 With the queen's jewels and that English gift
 Of the gold font sent hither for the prince
 That served him not for christening, melted
 now
 To feed base hands with gold and stop loud
 throats,
 Whose strength alone and clamour put such
 heart
 In Bothwell that he swore to hang the man
 Who would not speak their banns at first, and
 now
 But utters them with lips that yet protest
 Of innocent blood and of adulterous bonds
 By force proclaimed, and fraudulent; and this
 Craig
 The townsmen love, and not that for
 craft
 Each day will Bothwell hear men preach, and
 show

To them that speak all favour, and will sit
A guest at burghers' boards unsummoned; yet
Men's hate more swells against him, to behold
How by the queen he rides unbanned
And she rebukes his too much courtesy;
So that their world within doors and without
Swells round them doubtfully toward storm,
and sees

This hot-brained helm-man in his own conceit
Even here in port, who drifts indeed at sea.

Herries. Short time will wind this up: the
secretary, [of him,

Whose blood the queen would see not shed
Is slipped away for Stirling, there to join
With Lindsay and the lords ere this combined,
From whom I may not now divide myself,
On the child's party. Not a hand will stay
Nor heart upon this side; the Hamiltons,
For their own ends that set this marriage on,
Will for those ends with no sad hearts behold
At others' hands her imminent overthrow,

Melville. This was the archbishop's counsel,
that annulled

Last year's marriage to procure the queen's
And even therein betray her. God mend all!
But I misdoubt me lest the sun be set
That looked upon the last of her good days.

SCENE XI.—THE SAME.

The QUEEN and BOTHWELL; MARY BEATON and ARTHUR ERSKINE in attendance.

Queen. Are you yet wroth?

Bothwell. Are you yet wise? to know
If I be wroth should less import than this
Which I would fain find of you.

Queen. By my life,
I think I am but wise enough to know
That witless I was ever.

Bothwell. Ay, but most,
You mean, to wed me, that am graceless more
Than witless you that wedded in men's eyes
Who justliest judge of either; yet, by God,
Had I not grace enough to match with you,
I must have less than in their minds I have
And tongues of them that curse me; but what
grief [that strikes

Wrings now your heart or whets your tongue,
When the heart stirs not?

Queen. Nay, no grief it is
To be cut off from all men's company,
Watched like a thief lest he break ward by
night, [arms,
My chamber door set round with men-at-

My steps and looks espied on, hands and feet
Fettered as 'twere with glances of strange eyes
That guard me lest I stray; my ways, my
words,

My very sleep their subject.

Bothwell. You were wont
To walk more free; I wot you have seen fair
days [sweet tongues

When you lived large i' the sun, and had
To sing with yours, and haply lips and eyes
To make song sweeter than the lute may
now

'Tis hard that you sit here my woeful wife,
Who use you thus despitefully, that yet
Was never queen so mated with a groom
And so mishandled; have you said so?

Queen. I?

Bothwell. Who hath put these words else
in men's mouths, that prate
How you lie fast in prison? I did know
A woman's tongue keen as her faith was light,
But faith so like the wind spake never yet
With tongue so like a sword's point.

Queen. No, my lord?

'Tis well that I should hear so first of you
Who best may know the truth of your worst
word.

Bothwell. Is it no truth that men so
speak, and you,
By speech or silence or by change of face,
By piteous eyes or angry, give them cause
To babble of your bonds? What grace you
show

Toward others is as doubt and hate of me
In these our enemies' sight, who see it and
swear [made,

You are kept in ward here of my will, and
Out of no trust or love but force and fear.
Thrall to my hand. Why, being but two
days wed,

Must there be cause between us of dispute
For such a thing as this man, in whose name
I am crossed and slighted of your wanton will?

Queen. If he be worth no more than you
conceive,

What grace I do him can hurt you?

Bothwell. I conceive?
Why, what worth is he with you, that I
should [hurt,

Conceive the least thought of him? Were I
Assure yourself it would be to his death;
Lay that much to your heart.

Queen. My heart is killed.
I have not where to lay it.

Bothwell. Pray you, no tears;

I have seen you weep when dead men were
alive

That for your eye-drops wept their hearts'
blood out ;

So will not I. You have done me foolish wrong
And haply cast your fame for food to hounds

Whose teeth will strip it hour by hour more
bare

Whereon they have gnawed before.

Queen. What have I done ?
Speak.

Bothwell. Nay, I will, because you know
not : hark,

You are even too simple and harmless ; being
man's wife,

Not now the first time, you should buy more wit
Though with less innocence ; you have given
a gift,

Out of your maiden singleness of soul
And eye most witless of misconstruing eyes,

Where you should not : this is strange truth to
you,

But truth, God help us ! that man's horse who
was

Your husband, and whose chattels, place, and
name

Lie in my hold I think now lawfully
Whence none is like to wring them, have you
given

Out of my hand to one of whom fame saith
That by the witness of a northland witch

He when I die must wed you, and my life
Shall last not half a year ; for in your bed

Must lie two husbands after me, and you
Shall in your fifth lord's lifetime die by fire.

Now, being but third and least in worth of
these,

I would not have you die so red a death,
But keep you from all fresh or fiercer heat

Than of my lips and arms ; for which things'
sake

I am not blithe, so please you, to behold
How straight this lay lord abbot of Arbroath

Sits in your husband's saddle. Pardon me
That with my jealous knowledge I confound

Your virginal sweet ignorance of men's minds,
Ill thoughts and tongues unmannerly, that
strike

At the pure heart which dreams not on such
harm ;

It is my love and care of your life's peace
Makes me thus venturous to wage words with
you,

And put such troublous things in your fair
mind,

Whereof God wot you knew not : and to end,
Take this much of me ; live what life you may

Or die what death, while I have part in you,
None shall have part with me ; nor touch nor
word

Nor eye nor hand nor writing nor one thought
The lightest that may hang upon a look

Shall man get of you that I know not of
And answer not upon him. Be you sure

I am not of such fool's mould cast in flesh
As royal-blooded husbands ; being no king

Nor kin of kings, but one that keep unarmed
My head but with my hand, and have no wit

To twitch you strings and match you rhyme
for rhyme

And turn and twitter on a tripping tongue,
But so much wit to make my word and sword

Keep time and rhyme together, say and slay.
Set this down in such record as you list,

But keep it surer than you keep your mind
If that be changing : for by heaven and hell

I swear to keep the word I give you fast
As faith can hold it, that who thwarts me here

Or comes across my will's way in my wife's,
Dies as a dog dies, doomless. Now, your
pleasure ;

I prate no more.

Queen. Shall I be handled thus ?

Bothwell. You have too much been hand-
led otherwise ;

Now will I keep you from men's hands in
mine,

Or lack the use of these.

Queen. What, to strike me ?
You shall not need ; give me a knife to strike

That I may let my life out in his eye,
Or I will drown myself.

Bothwell. Why, choose again ;
I cross you not.

Queen. Give me a knife, I say.

Arthur Erskine. Make not our hearts bleed,
madam, as they burn

To hear what we hear silent.

Bothwell. Comfort her ;
You were her chamber-knight on David's day.

Arthur Erskine. My lord, the reverence
that the queen's sight bears

And awe toward her make me thus slow to set
My hand to do what work my heart bids ; else

I would not doubt to stand before your grace
And make such answer as her servant may.

Queen. Forbear him, Arthur ; nay, and me ;
'tis I

On whom all strokes first fall and sorest smite,
Who most of all am shieldless, without stay,

And look for no man's comfort. Pray you, sir,
 If it be in your will that I cast off
 This heavy life to lighten your life's load
 That now with mine is laden, let me die
 More queenlike than this dog's death you de-
 nounce
 Against the man that falls into your hate ;
 Though not for love, yet shame, because I was
 A queen that loved you : else you should not
 seem
 So royal in her sight whose eyes you serve,
 Nor she when I am dead with such high heart
 Behold you, nor with such glad lips commend
 As conqueror of me slain for her love's sake
 And servant of her living in your love.
 Let me die therefore queenlike, and your
 sword
 Strike where your tongue hath struck ; though
 not so deep,
 It shall suffice to cleave my heart and end.
Bothwell. Hear you, my queen ; if we
 twain be one flesh,
 I will not have this daintier part of it
 Turn any timeless hand against itself
 To hurt me, nor this fire which is your tongue
 Shoot any flame on me ; no fuel am I
 To burn and feed you ; not a spark you shed
 Shall kindle me to ruin, but with my foot
 Rather will I tread out the light that was
 A firebrand for the death of many a man
 To light the pile whereon they barnt alive.
 What, have I taken it in my hand to scorch
 And not to light me ? or hath it set fire
 To so few lives already that who bears
 Needs not to watch it warily and wake
 When the night falls about him ? Nay, the
 man
 Were twice the fool that these your dead men
 were,
 Who seeing as I have seen and in his hand
 Holding the fire I carry through the dark
 To be the beacon of my travelling days
 And shine upon them ended, should not walk
 With feet and eyes both heedful at what hour
 By what light's leading on what ground he goes,
 And toward what end : be therefore you con-
 tent
 To keep your flame's heat for your enemies'
 bale,
 And for your friend that large and liberal light
 That gave itself too freely, shot too far,
 Till it was closed as in a lantern up
 To make my path plain to me ; which once
 lost,
 The light goes out for ever.

Queen. Yea, I know ;
 My life can be but light now to your life,
 And of no service else ; or if none there,
 Even as you say, must needs be quenched ; and
 would
 The wind that now beats on it and the sea
 Had quenched it ere your breath, and I gone
 out
 With no man's blood behind me.
Bothwell. Come, be wise ;
 Our sun is not yet sunken.
Queen. No, not yet ;
 The sky must even wax redder than it is
 When that shall sink ; darkness and smoke of
 hell,
 Clouds that rain blood, and blast of winds that
 wreck,
 Shall be about it setting.
Bothwell. What, your heart
 Fails you now first that shrank not when a
 man's
 Might well at need have failed him ?
Queen. Ay, and no ;
 It is the heart that fired me fails my heart,
 And as that bows beneath it so doth mine
 Bend, and will break so surely.
Bothwell. Nay, not mine ;
 There is not weight yet on our adverse part,
 Fear not, to bend it.
Queen. Yet it fails me now.
 I have leant too much my whole life's weight
 on it
 With all my soul's strength, and beneath the
 fraught
 I hear it split and sunder. Let me rest ;
 I would fain sleep a space now. Who goes
 there ?
Mary Beaton. A suitor to behold your
 majesty.
Queen. I will not see him. Who should
 make suit to me ?
 Who moves yet in this world so miserable
 That I can comfort ? or what hand so weak
 It should be now my suppliant, or uplift
 In prayer for help's sake to lay hold on mine ?
 What am I to give aid or alms, who have
 Nor alms nor aid at hand of them to whom
 I gave not some but all part of myself ?
 I will not see him.
Mary Beaton. It is a woman.
Queen. Ay ?
 But yet I think no queen ; and cannot be
 But therefore happier and more strong than I.
 Yet I will see what woman's face for grief
 Comes to seek help at mine ; if she be mad,

Me may she teach to lose my wits and woes
And live more enviable than ye that yet
Hlave wit to know me wretched.

Enter JANE GORDON.

Who is this?

Are you my suitor?

Jane Gordon. I am she that was
Countess of Bothwell; now my name again
Is that my father gave me.

Queen. Ay, no more;
You are daughter yet and sister to great earls,
And bear that honour blameless; be it
enough; [come
And tell me wherefore by that name you
And with what suit before me.

Jane Gordon. Even but this,
To look once on you and to bid farewell
Ere I fare forth from sight.

Queen. Farewell; and yet
I know not who should in this world fare
well.

Is the word said?

Jane Gordon. A little leave at last
I pray you give me: that I seek it not
For love or envy toward my sometime lord
Or heart toward you disloyal now my queen,
Let me not plead uncredited. I came
Surely with no good hope to no glad end,
But with no thought so vile of will as this,
To thrust between your hearts the care of me,
Claim right or challenge pity, melt or fret
Your eyes with forced compassion: I did
think [said for sign

To have kissed your hand and something
I had come not of weak heart or evil will,
But in good faith, to see how strong in love
They stand whose joy makes joyless all my
life, [wealth

Whose loving leaves it loveless, and their
Feeds full upon my famine. Be not wroth;
I speak not to rebuke you of my want
Or of my loss reprove you, that you take
My crown of love to gild your crown of gold;
I know what right you have, and take no
shame

sit for your sake humbled, who being born
poor mean woman would not less have been
God's grace royal, and by visible seal
A natural queen of women; but being
crowned

You make the throne imperial, and your hand
Puts power into the sceptre; yea, this head
Of its gold circlet takes not majesty,
But gives it of its own; this may men see,
And I deny not; nor is this but just,

That I, who have no such honour born or
given,

Should have not either, if it please you not,
That which I thought I had; the name I
wore,

The hand scarce yet a year since laid in mine,
The eye that burned on mine as on a wife's,
The lip that swore me faith, the heart that
held

No thought or throb wherein I had no part,
Or heaved but with a traitor's breath, and
beat

With pulse but of a liar.

Bothwell. Ay, swore I so?
Why, this was truth last year ther.

Queen. Truth, my lord?
What does the fire of such a word as this
Between such lips but burn them, as mine
ears

Burn that must hear by your device and hers
With what strange flatteries on her prompted
lips

This dame unwedded lifts her hand unringed
To abash me with its show of faith, and
make

Your wife ashamed at sight of such a love
As yet she bears you that is not your wife?

Bothwell. What devil should prick me to
such empty proof

And pride unprofitable? I pray you think
I am no such boy to boast of such a spoil
As chamberers make their brag of. Let her
speak

And part not as unfriends.

Queen. Madam, and you
That thus renumber and resound his vows,
To what good end I know not, in our ear,
What would you have of him whom your
own will

Rose up to plead against as false, to break
His bonds that irked you and unspeak the
word [pray

That held you hand in hand? Did you not
To be set free from bondage, and now turn
To question with the hand that you put off
If it did well to loose you?

Jane Gordon. Truly, no;
Nor will I question with your grace in this,
Whether by mine own will and uncompeled
I only would have put that hand away
That I will say would yet have held mine fast
But for my frowardness and rancorous mind;
Let all this even be so: as he shall say [will,
Who will say nought but with your queenly
Why, so will I. Yet ere I am gone, my lord—
O, not my lord, but hers whose thrall am I—
My sometime friend and yet not enemy,

If this thing not offend you, that I crave
 So much breath of you as may do me right,
 I pray you witness for me how far forth
 And for what love's sake I took part with you
 Or gave consent to our devised divorce,
 And if this were for hate; for you should know
 How much of old time I have hated you,
 How bitter made my heart, what jealous edge
 Set on mine envy toward you; spare not then
 To say if out of cold or cankered heart
 I sought, or yielded shamefully for spite,
 To be divided from you. Nay, forbear;
 Speak not, nor frown on me; you cannot say
 I was your loveless or disloyal wife,
 Or in my void bed on disconsolate nights
 Sought comfort but of tears: nor that I held
 Mine honor hurt of that which bruised my
 heart,

And grudged to help you to mine own most
 wrong

And lend you mine own hand to smite myself
 And make you by mine own mouth quit of me.
 This that I did, and wherefore I did this,
 And if for love's or hate's sake, verily
 You shall not say you know not, and the queen
 Shall blame me not to put you yet in mind,
 Nor think it much that I make record here
 Of this that was between us: wherefore now
 I take no shame at this my leave-taking
 To part as one that has not erred herein,
 To love too little; this shall not be said
 When one bethinks him such a woman was,
 That with poor spirit or with contracted heart
 I gave myself to love you, or was found
 Too mean of mind or sparing of my soul
 To cast for love the crown of love away,
 And when you bade refuse you for my lord,
 Whom, had you bidden, with my whole heart's
 blood

I had thought not much to purchase for my
 love:

But seeing nor blood nor all my body's tears
 Might buy you back to love me, I was fain
 That you should take them and my very life
 To buy new love and life with. Sir, and now
 Ere we twain part—

Queen. What, are ye parted not?
 Between his lover and my lord I stand
 And see them weep and wrangle ere they part,
 And hold my peace for pity!

Jane Gordon. God shall judge
 If with pure heart and patience, or with soul
 That burns and pines, I would have said fare-
 well;

I crave but this much of your grace and God's,

Make me at last not angry.

Queen. Have you held
 No counsel or communion with my lord
 Since—I am shamed that take upon my lips
 Such inquisition. If you have aught yet,
 speak;

I bid not nor forbid you.

Jane Gordon. Nought but this;
 To unpledge my faith, unlight my love, and
 so

Set on his hand the seal by touch of mine
 That sunders us.

Queen. You shall not take his hand.

Jane Gordon. I think not ever then to
 touch it more,

Nor now desire, who have seen with eyes more
 sad

More than I thought with sorrowing eyes to
 see

When I came hither; so this long last time
 Farewell, my lord: and you, his queen, fare-
 well.

[Exit.
 Queen. Hath she made end? while I have
 part in you,

None shall have part with me; was this my
 lord,

Was this not you that said so?

Bothwell.

Come, enough;
 I am bound not to be baited of your tongues.

Queen. Bid her come back.

Bothwell.

What, are you foolish? think
 You twain shall look in either's eyes no more.

Queen. Why should I look in yours to find
 her there?

For there she sits as in a mirror shown
 By the love's light enkindled from your heart,
 That flashed but on me like a fen-fire lit

To lure me to my grave's edge, whence I fall
 Deep as the pit of hell; but yet for shame
 Deny not her to me as me to her,

Me that have known this ever, but lacked
 heart

To put the thing to use I knew; and now
 For both our sakes who have loved you, play
 not false

But with one love at once; take up your love
 And wear it as a garland in men's sight,
 For it becomes you; if you love me not,
 You have lied by this enough; speak truth,
 shake hands,

Loose hearts and leave me.

Bothwell. Vex not me too long,
 Vexing your own heart thus with vanity;
 Take up your wisdom that you have at will,

And wear it as a sword in danger's sight
That now looks hard upon us. Mine you are,
Love me or love not, trust me not or trust,
As yours am I; and even as I in you,
Have faith in me, no less nor further; then
We shall have trust enough on either part
To build a wall about us at whose foot
That sea of iron swayed by winds of war
Shall break in foam like blood; and hurled
once back,

The hearts and swords of all our enemies
fallen

Lie where they fell for ever. Know but this,
And care not what is unknown else; we twain
Have wrought not out this fortune that we
have

Nor made us way to such an hour and power
To let men take and break it, while as fools
We kiss and brawl and cry and kiss again,
And wot not when they smite. For these next
days,

We will behold the triumph held at Leith
And pageant of a sea-fight as set forth
With open face and spirit of joyousness
To fix this faith in all men's eyes and minds,
That while life lives we stand indissoluble:
Then shall you send out for your child again
forth of Lord Mar's good keeping, that your
heart

May here have comfort in his present sight;
So shall all these who make his name their
sword

Lie weaponless within our hand and hold,
Who are drawn in one against us, or prepare,
While we delay, for Stirling; where by this,
I am certified on faith of trusty men,
Argyle is met with Morton, our good friends
That served us for their turn, with some that
helped

To make our match and some that would have
marred,

Once several-souled, now in their envies one,
As Lindsay, Athol, Herries; and to these
Maitland is fled, your friend that must not
bleed,

Your counsellor is stolen away and lives
To whet his wit against you; but myself,
When we have shown us to the people, and
seen

What eye they turn upon our marriage feast,
Will ride to Melrose, and raise up from sleep
Their hardy hearts whom now mine unfriends
there

Hold in subjection; Herries nor Lord Hume
Nor Maxwell shall have power to tie them up

When I shall bid them forth, and all the march
Shall rise beneath us as with swell o' the sea
And wash of thickening waters when the wind
Makes the sea's heart leap with such might of
joy

As hurls its waves together; there shall we
Ride on their backs as warriors, and our ship
Dance high toward harbor. Put but on the
spirit

You had in all times that beset your peace,
Since you came home, with danger; in those
wars

That made the first years clamorous of your
reign,

And in this past and perilous year of ours
Where you lacked never heart. Be seen again
The royal thing men saw you; these your
friends

Shall look more friendly on our wedded faith
Seeing no more discord of our days to be,
And our bold borderers with one heart on fire
Burn in your warlike safeguard, once to strike
And end all enemies' quarrel. When we part,
At Borthwick Castle shall you look for me,
Where I will gather friends more fain of fight
Than all our foes may muster.

Queen. Sir, so be it;
But now my heart is lower than once it was,
And will not sit I th' again so high

Though my days turn more prosperous than I
deem.

But let that be. Come, friends, and look not
sad

Though I look sadder; make what cheer we
may,

For festival or fight, or shine or shower,
I will not fail you yet. God give me heart,
That never so much lacked it; yea, he shall,
Or I will make it out of mine own fears
And with my feebleness increase my force
And build my hope the higher that joy lies low
Till all be lost and won. Lead you, my lord,
And fear not hut I follow; I have wept
When I should laugh, and laughed when I
should weep,

And now live humbler than I thought to be;
I ask not of your love, but of mine own
I have yet left to give. Come, we will see
These pageants or these enemies; my heart
Shall look alike on either. Be not wroth;
I will be merry while I live, and die

When I have leave. My spirit is sick; would
God

We were now met at Borthwick, with men's
spears

And noise of friends about us ; friend or foe,
I care not whether ; here I am sore at heart,
As one that cannot wholly wake nor sleep
Till death receive or life relieve me. Come ;
We should be glad now ; let the world take
note

We are glad in spite and sight of enmities
That are but worth the hour they take to quell.

SCENE XII.—STIRLING CASTLE.

MAITLAND and LINDSAY.

Lindsay. Is there such breach between
them ? why, men said,
When they would ride through Edinburgh and
he

Bare-headed at her bridle, she would take
By force and thrust his cap upon his head
With loving might and laughing ; and at Leith
They saw the false fight on the waters join
And mid-May pageants that shone down the
sun,

As with glad eyes of lovers newly wed
Whose hearts were of the revel ; and so soon
Are hearts and eyes divided ?

Maitland. Not an hour
May she draw breath but in his eye, nor see
But whom he shall give entrance : in her sight
He thought to have slain me, but she came
between

And set for shield her bosom to his sword
In her own chamber ; so each day and night
By violent act or viler word than deed
He turns her eyes to water-springs of tears,
Who leaves not yet to love him ; such strong
hold

By flesh or spirit or either made one fire
Hath such men's love on woman made as she,
For no foul speech I think nor strokes nor
shame

Would she go from him, but to keep him fast
Would burn the world with fire ; and no force
less

Shall burn their bonds in sunder.

Lindsay. We will bring
And kindle it in their sight. They are south-
ward fled

To meet at Borthwick ; thither we design,
To raise the Merse with Hume, and with Lord
Mar

And with the Douglas' following bind them
round

And take them in one snare, whence one of
these

Shall creep not forth with life or limb that feels
No hound's fang fasten on it ; and his mate
Shall see their feet smoke with his slaughtered
blood.

SCENE XIII.—BORTHWICK CASTLE.

*The QUEEN and BOTHWELL ; MARY BEATON
in attendance.*

Queen. You should be hence again : since
you came in

From Melrose with no levies at your back,
We have heard no news of friends, and hear
but now

That we are ringed with Morton's folk about ;
How shall he not have laid unhappy hand
Upon your messenger that bare our word
Of summons to the archbishop and your friend
Balfour to be with Huntley at our side ?

Bothwell. Ay, he is trapped that bore my
letters hence,

I doubt not ; none have feet to run aright,
Eyes to see true, hands to bring help, but they
That move them to our ruin. This Balfour,
Whom I laid trust on since our fiery night

As on a true man bound of force to me,
Has fallen in conference and device of plots,
I hear, with that lean limb of policy
That loves me not, James Melville, by whose
mouth

Being warned I meant to take out of his hand
The castle-keys of Edinburgh and give
To one my closer kinsman for more trust,
He has made him friends of ancient foes, and
seeks,

By no less service than pursuit of them
Who slew the king your husband, to deserve
Their favor who are risen of honest heart
But to chastise these slayers, of whom God
wot

Themselves were none, nor he that hunts with
them

Upon the trial of treason. O, your lords
Are worthy friends and enemies, and their
tongues

As trusty as their hands are innocent,
When they see time to turn.

Queen. I would their lives
Lay all between my lips, and with one breath
I might cut all theirs off ! nor tongue nor hand
Should rise of them against us, to deny
Their work disclaimed when done. What slaves
are these

That make their hands red with men's secret

blood
And with their tongues would lick them white,
And wash
The sanguine grain out with false froth of
words
From lying lips that kissed the dead to death
And now c. vengeance for him? But, my lord,
Make you haste hence to-night ere they be here
That if we tarry will beset us; I
Should hang but as a fetter on your foot,
Which should pass free forth to Dunbar, and
raise
With sound even of its tread and forward
speed
The force of all the border.

Bothwell. Where I go,
There shall you not be far to find; to-night
I will sleep here.

Queen. God give you rest and strength,
To make that heart which is the lord of mine
Fresh as the spirit of sunrise! for last night
You slept not well.

Bothwell. No; I had dreams, that am
No natural dreamer; I will sleep apart,
With Cranston's son to lie at hand, or wait
If I lack service.

Queen. Nay, let me be there;
I will not weary you with speech, nor break
Your sleep with servile and officious watch,
But sit and keep it as a jewel is kept
That is more dear than eyesight to its lord,
Or as mine eyes can keep not now their own,
Now slumber sits far from them. Let me wake.

Bothwell. No, not with me.

Queen. What, lest I trouble you?
Should my being there put dreams in you again,
To cross your sleep with me?

Bothwell. Belike it might.

Queen. Nay, I was no part of your dreams,
I think;
You dream not on me waking nor asleep,
But if you dream on no face else nor mine,
I will be yet content.

Bothwell. Well, so it was,
I dreamt at once of either; yet I know not
Why I should tell my dream; your lord that
was,
They say, would prattle of his fears by night
And faces of false peril; I was never
So loth by day to face what fear I might
As to be sick in darkness; but this dream
I would not see again. Yet was it nought;
I seemed to stand between two gulfs of sea
On a dark strait of rock, and at my foot
The ship that bore me broken; and there came

Out of the waves' breach crying of broken
men

And sound of splintering planks, and all the
hull

Shattered and strewn as; and my head
Was as my feet and are, and the storm
Blew hard with all it upon me; then
Came you, a face with wailing eyes, and hair
Half glimmering with a broken crown that
shone

Red as of molten iron; but your limbs
Were swathed about and shrouded out of
sight,

Or shown but as things shapeless that the bier
Shows ready for the grave; only the head
Floated, with eyes fast on me, and beneath
A bloodlike thread dividing the bare throat
As with a needle's breadth, but all below

Was muffled as with cerecloths; and the eyes
Wept; then came one we wot of clad in black
And smiling, and laid hands on me more cold
Than is a snake's kiss or the grave's, and thrust
Between that severed head, weeping and
crowned,

That mourned upon me, and mine eyes that
watched,

Her own strange head wrapped widow like
and wan

In habit of one sorrowing, but with lips
That laughed to kiss me; and therewithal
once

Your face as water flowed out of my sight,
And on mine own I felt as drops of blood
Falling, but if your tears they were or hers
Or either's blood I knew not; on mine eyes
The great dead night shut doorwise like a wall,
And in mine ears there sprang a noise of chains
And teeth ground hard of prison-grates that
jarred

And split as 'twere with sound my heart, which
was

As ice that cleaves in sunder: for there came
Through that black breathless air an iron note
Of locks that shut and sounded, and being
dumb

There left me quick entombed in stone, and
hid

Too deep for the day's eyeshot; then I woke
With the sea's roaring and the wind's by night
Fresh in my sense, and on my travelling heart
A weight of walls and floors and upper earth
That held me down below the breach o' the
sea

Where its tide's wash kept witness overhead
How went the scornful days and nights above

Where men forgot me and the living sun
As a dead dog passed over.

Queen.

What, alone?
She went not with you living underground
To sit in chains and hear the sea break? nay,
She would not cast you off. This was your
love,

Your love of her and need of her sweet sight,
That brought her so upon your sleep, and
made

Your sense so fearful of all things but this,
And all else heard and seen so terrible
But her face only: she should comfort you,
Whom I should bring to wreck; why, so she
said,

Saying how she had loved you whom I loved
not; yea,

Her eyes were sad, she said, that saw forsooth
So little love between us: this sweet word,
This word of hers at parting, this it was
Of which your dream was fashioned, to give
sign

How firm she sits and fast yet in your heart,
Where I was never.

Bothwell.

Well, how be it soe'er,
I would not dream again this dead dream out
For less than kingly waking: so good night,
For I will sleep alone.

Queen.

No, with my heart,
That lies down with you though it sleeps not.
Go,

And dream of no less loving prayer than mine
That calls on God for sleep to comfort you
And keep your heart from sense of aught
more hard

Than her great love who made it. *[Exit*
BOTHWELL.

'Tis a night

That puts our France into my mind; even here
By those warm stars a man might call it June,
Were such nights many: their same flower-
bright eyes

Look not more fair on Paris, that mine own
Again shall hardly look on. It is not strange
That in this grey land and these grievous hours
I should so find my spirit and soul transformed
And fallen in love with pain, my heart that
was

Changed and made humble to his loveless
words

And force as of a master? By my faith,
That was till now fixed never and made as fire
To stand a sunlike star in love's live heaven—
A heaven found one in hue and heat with hell—
I had rather be mishandled as I am

Of this first man that ever bound me fast
Than worshipped through the world with
breaking hearts

That gave their blood for worship. I am
glad

I'll sometime should misuse me; else I think
I had not known if I could love or no.

If you could love man with my heart as now,
You would not mock nor marvel.

Mary Beaton.

No, not then.

Queen. It is not in your heart: there lies
not power

In you to be for evil end or good

The strange thing that is I.

Mary Beaton.

There does not, no,
Nor can lie ever: could I love at all,

It were but as mean women, meanly; so
I do the best to love not.

Queen.

Hark! what noise?
Look forth and see.

Mary Beaton. A sound of men and steeds;
The ring is round us; hark, the cry of Hume,
There Lindsay, and there Mar.

Queen.

Call up my lord:
I will not go to vex him; but do you
Haste and awake them. *[Exit MARY BEATON.*

Be it not in mine eyes

That he first sees death risen upon his sleep,
If we must die; being started out of rest,
If he should curse me, were my heart not slain
With the opening of his eyes in wrath on
mine?

Re-enter MARY BEATON.

Mary Beaton. My lord is raised and fled;
but in the press

The Lord of Cranston's son that slept with
him

Is fallen by flight into the enemy's hands,
Who cry out for him yet as hounds that quest,
And roar as on their quarry.

Queen.

Fled, and safe?

Mary Beaton. Ay, past their hands' reach
that had rent him else;

Be sure he is forth, and free, or you should
hear

More triumph in these cries.

Queen.

God, thou art good!
Fling wide the window I will know of them
If they be come to slay me.—What, my lords!
Are all these men of mine that throng by
night

To make such show of service, and present
Strange offices of duty? Where are ye

That are chief ushers to their turbulent love
Who come thus riotously to proffer it?
Which is first here? a bold man should he be
That takes unbidden on him such desert—
Let me not say, a traitor.

Lindsay (without). Where is he,
The traitor that we seek? for here is none
But in your bosom.

Queen. Here then ends your search,
For here am I; and traitors near enough
I see to pierce the bosom that they seek,
Where never shall be treason till its blood
Be spilt by hands of traitors that till now
Durst never rise so near it.

Lindsay. Give him forth,
Or we will have these walls down.

Queen. What, with words?
Is there such blasts of trumpets in your breath
As shook the towers down of the foes of God
At the seventh sounding? yet we stand and
laugh
That hear such brave breath blown and storm-
like speech

Fly round our ears: is it because your war,
My lords, is waged with women, that ye
make

Such woman's war on us?

Mar (without). Madam, we come
To take you from his hand that is your shame,
And on his shameful head revenge that blood
Which was shed guiltless; hither was he fled,
We know, into your shelter: yield him up,
Ere yet worse come than what hath worst
come yet.

Queen. There is none here to die by you
but I,

And none to mock you dying. Take all your
swords:

It is a woman that they came to slay,
And that contemns them; go not back for
fear;

Pluck up your hearts; one valiant stroke or
twain,

And ye are perfect of your work, and I
For ever quit of treason: and I swear,
By God's and by his mother's name and mine,
Except ye slay me presently, to have
Such vengeance of you and my traitors all
As the loud world shall ring with; so to-night
Be counselled, and prevent me, that am here
Yet in your hands; if ye dare slay me not,
Ye are dead now here already in my doom:
Take heart, and live to mock it.

Mar. He is fled.
Here boots us not to tarry, nor change words

With her that hath such vantage as to know
We have missed our prize and purpose here,
which was

To take the traitor that is fled, and bring
Whither we now ride foiled, to Edinburgh.
Thence to return upon them.

Lindsay. Hear yet once;
You, madam, till our day be set of doom,
Look to the adulterer's head that hence is
flown,

Whose shame should now stand redder in your
face

Than blushes on his hand your husband's
blood,
And cleave more fast; for that dead lord's
revenge

Will we make proclamation, and raise up
The streets and stones for vengeance of your
town

That sits yet sullied with bloodguiltiness
Till judgment make it clean; whose walls to-
night

Myself for fault of better ere I sleep
Will scale though gates be fastened, and there-
in

Bring hack and stab justice that shall be
A memory to the world and unborn men
Of murder and adultery.

Queen. Good my lord,
We thank you for the care you have and pains
To speak before you smite; and that so long,
The deed can follow not on the swift word
For lack of spirit and breath to mate with it;
So that they know who hear your threat be-
times

What fear it hears and danger, and for fear
Take counsel to forestall it. Make good speed;
For if your steed be shod but with fleet speech,
Ere you shall stride the wall of our good town
Its foot may trip upon a traitor's grave.

Mary Beaton. They ride fast yet; hear
you their starting cry?

Queen. For each vile word and venomous
breath of theirs

I will desire at my lord's hand a head
When he shall bring them bound before my
foot.

If thou hast counsel in thee, serve me now:
I must be forth, and masked in such close w
As may convey me secret to his side
Whence till our wars be done I will not part
Nor then in peace for ever: in this shape
I should ride liable to all eyes and hands
That might waylay me flying; but I will play
As in a masque for pastime, and put on

A horseboy's habit or some meaner man's
That wears but servant's steel upon his thigh
And on his sleeve the badge but of a groom,
And so pass noteless through toward Hadding-
ton

Whither my lord had mind to flee at need
And there expect me. Come ; the night wears
out ;

The shifting wind is sharper than it was,
And the stars falter. Help me to put off

This outward coil of woman ; my heart beats
Fast as for fear a coward's might beat, for joy
That spurs it forth by night on warriors' ways
And stings it with sharp hope to find his face
That shall look loving on me, and with smiles
Mock the false form and cheer the constant
heart
That for his love's sake would be man's in-
deed.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

JOHN KNOX.

ACT IV.

TIME: JUNE 15 AND 16, 1567.

SCENE I.—CARRBERRY HILL.

*The QUEEN, BOTHWELL, and SOLDIERS.**Queen.* I would this field where fate and
we must cross

Were other than it is ; but for this thought,
On what ill night some score of years ago
Here lay our enemy's force before that light
Which made next day the face of Scotland red
And trod her strength down under English feet,
I would not shrink in this wide eye of dawn,
In the fair front of such a summer's day,
To meet the mailed face of my traitors' host
And with bared brows outbrave it.

Bothwell. Keep that heart,
For fear we need it ; look beyond the bridge
There at this hill's foot on the western bank
How strong they stand under the gathering
light ;

I have not seen a battle fairer set
Or in French fields or these our thirstier lands
That feed unslaked on blood.

Queen. They grow now green,
These hills and meadows that with slain men's
lives

Have fed the flocks of war, come ten years
yet,

And though this day should drench them with
more death

Than that day's battle, not a stain shall stand
On their fresh face for witness. Had God
pleased

To set a strong man armed with hands to fight
And on his head his heritage to keep,

Sworded and crowned a king, in my sad stead,
To fill the place I had not might to hold,

And for the child then bitterly brought forth,
Unseasonable, that being but woman born
Broke with the news her father's heart, who
died

Desperate in her of comfort, had he sent
The warrior that I would be, and in time
To look with awless eye on that day's fight

17

That reddened with the ruin of our hopes
The hour that rocked my cradle, who shall say
The scathe of Pinkie Cleugh and all that blood
Had made the memory so unfortunate
Of that which was my birth-time ? Being a
man,

And timelier born to better hap than mine,
I might have set upon that iron day
Another mark than signs it in our sight
Red with reproach for ever.

Bothwell. Ay, my queen ?
These four nights gone you met me soldier-
like

Escaped from Borthwick, whence I brought
you in,

Three darkling hours past midnight, to Dun-
bar,

Where you put off that sheath of fighting
man

For this poor woman's likeness yet you wear,
Wherein you rode with your six hundred men
To meet at Haddington but two days since
These sixteen hundred border folk I led
And pass with me to Seyton ; did you find
Your life more light in you or higher your
heart

Inside that habit than this woman's coat
That sits so short upon you ?

Queen. By my life,
I had forgot by this to be ashamed
Of the strange shape I ride in, but your
tongue

Smites my cheek red as is this scanted weed
Wherein I mask my queenship ; yet God
knows

I had liefer ride thus forth toward such a
day

Than hide my sick heart and its fears at
home

In kinglier garments than this mask of mine,
Thus with my kirtle kilted to the knee

Like girls that ride in poor folks' ballads
forth

For love's sake and for danger's less than mine.

Yet had I rather as your henchman ride
At your right hand and hear your bridle ring
Than sit thus womanly to wait on strike.

Bothwell. There will be fighting first; I
have word of this.

That they set forth at heaviest of the night
From Edinburgh to cross our march betimes,
And by the French ambassador your friend
At Mussellburgh were overtaken, whence
We look for news by him what hearts they
bear,

What power and what intent; he hath ta'en
on him

To stand between our parts as mediator
And bear the burden of our doubtful peace;
We must fight mouth to mouth ere hand to
hand,

But the clean steel must end it.

Queen. Now would God
I had but one day's manhood, and might stand
As king in arms against this battle's breach
A twelve hours' soldier, and my life to come
Be bounded as a woman's; all those days
That must die darkling should not yet put out
The fiery memory and the light of joy
That out of this had lightened, and its heat
Should burn in them for witness left behind
On those pile-ashes of my latter life.
O God, for one good hour of man, and then
Sleep or a crown for ever!

Bothwell. By God's light,
The man that had no joy to strike for you
Were such a worm as God yet never made
For men to tread on. Kiss me; by your eyes
And fiery lips that make my heart's blood hot,
I swear to take this signet of your kiss
As far into the fight as man may bear,
And strike as two men in mine arm and stroke
Struck with one sense and spirit.

Queen. If I might change
But this day with you in your stead to strike
And you look on me fighting, as for me
You have fought ere this last heat so many a
prize,

Or for your own hand ere your own was mine,
I would pray God for nought again alive.
But since my heart can strike not in my hand,
Fight you for me; put on my heart to yours,
And let the might of both enforce your arm
With more than its own manhood and that
strength

Which is your natural glory.

Bothwell. Sweet, I think,
When we have rid through this day's wrath, if
God

Shall give us peace and kingdom and long life
And make them fruitful to us, we shall bring
forth

A brood of kings as lions. Now in brief
If this shall be or shall not may we know,
For look where yonder facing to the sun
Comes up to usward from the under field
One with a flag of message; in mine eye
It is the Frenchman.

Queen. I will meet him here;
Here will I sit upon this rock for throne
And give such audience as my fortune may;
Either the last that shall salute me queen
Or first of my new reign, that from this day
Shall fearfully begin for them whose fear
Till now has held me shackled, and my will
Confined of theirs unqueeneely.

Bothwell. I meantime
Will see our line in order; for this truce
Must hold not long; I would our hosts should
meet

Before the heat strikes of the middle day
And this June sun drop on our soldier's heads
Or shoot their eyes out. *[Exit.]*

Queen. If God give us peace!
Yet though he give and we twain see good
days,

I would not lose for many fortunate years
And empire ringed with smooth security
The sharp and dangerous draught of this de-
light

That out of chance and peril and keen fear
Springs as the wine out of the trampled grape
To make this hour sweet to my lips, and bid
My dancing heart be like a wave in the sun
When the sea sways between the sun and wind
As my sense now between the fears and hopes
That die to-day for ever. O, this doubt
That is not helpless but has the armour on
And hands to fight with, has more joy withal
And puts more spirit into the flesh of life,
More heart into the blood and light in the eyes,
Than the utter hour of triumph, and the fight
More than the prize is worth man's prizing;
yea,

For when all's won all's done, and nought to do
Is as a chain on him that with void hands
Sits pleasureless and painless. I had rather
Have looked on Actium with Mark Antony
Than bound him fast on Cydnus. O my hour,
Be good to me, as even for the doubt's sake
More than safe life I love thee; yet would
choose

Not now to know, though I might see the
end,

If thou wilt be good to me ; do thy work,
Have thine own end ; and be thou bad or good,
Thou shalt nor smite nor crown a queen in
heart
Found lesser than her fortune.

Enter DU CROC.

Now, my lord,
What is their will who by such sovereign show
Should be my lords indeed ? if you that came
'Twixt crown and crown ambassador pass now
Between our camps on message : but this day
Shall leave in Scotland but one sovereignty
To see that sun sink.

Du Croc. Madam, from the lords
I come on errand but for love and fear
That move me toward your highness ; on whose
part

I reasoning with them of their faith to you
And bond wherein their loyalties should live,
By counsel of the Laird of Lethington,
Was charged to bear you from them present
word

For what they stand against your sight in
arms,
And will not but by force of yours dissolve
Till it be granted.

Queen. Speak, my lord ; I know
Your heart is whole and noble as their faith
Is flawed and rotten : — 'Tis a loyal word
Shall make your tongue bold in mine ear,
speaking for them.

Du Croc. This is their demand ;
That from the bloody hands they hold your
own

You pluck it forth and cast from your
sight
To judgment who now stands through you
secure

And makes his weapon of your wounded name
And of your shame his armor ; and to him
They offer fight with equal hand to hand
Of noble seconds in what sum he will
To match in blood and number with his own,
If so he list to meet their chosen of men
In personal battle, backed with less or more
Or singly sworded ; but this much they swear,
They had rather make their beds in the earth
alive

Than yet sit still and let this evil be.
And on your own part I beseech your grace
Set not your heart against the hearts of these
Lest it be broken of them, but betimes
Call yet to mind what grief and shame will be

Among your friends in France and all our
part

To see you so with this man's hap inwound
That in his fall you cast yourself away
And hand in hand run on with him to death.

Queen. They are all forsworn that seek his
death ; all they

With these blown tongues now questing for
his blood

By judgment set him free as innocence,
And now take back the doom they gave, and
turn

On their own heads the lie : devise such shame
As lewd folk loathe, to gird themselves withal
And wear it for a jewel ; seek and set

The name of liar upon them like a crown,
And bind about them as a coat and cloak
Plain treason and ungilded infamy,

Bare as a beggar ; let them sue for grace,
Kneel here and ask me favor ; save as thus
I treat not with them. Say how I sit here
In this mean raiment, on this naked stone,
Their queen to judge them, and with heart to
weigh

Their fault against my mercy ; which yet once,
Though hardly their submission may deserve,
Say, haply they may find.

Re-enter BOTHWELL.

Bothwell. Good day, my lord.
You look far off upon me ; by your brow
And strange-eyed salutation I may read
The burden of your this day's embassy.
Is it but I whom all these ranked in arms
Are come against to battle ?

Du Croc. Ay, my lord ;
No hand raised there dangerous to the queen
Nor thought of but not loyal.

Bothwell. Why to me ?
What hurt have I done to them ? none of
these

But would be glad in my place, who had
The heart to seek it ; 'tis the braver man
That ever fortune follows : what I hold
I have won not basely, hut from forth her
hand

Have ta'en it manlike, and with spirit as good
Have girt me to maintain it. For my part,
I seek no bloodshed, but in single field
Will meet with whom their lot shall fall upon
That shall be found fair champion on their
part

To bear the general quarrel ; and to this
My state and present name shall be no bar,

But the queen's consort as her man shall fight
In any good cause simply with God's help
With any sword that shames not mine to meet.

Queen. It is my cause; me must they
strike, or none,
Myself am all the quarrel; let them yield
Or give me battle.

Bothwell. Then, no need of words;
Let but your excellency stand here by
And see the show as once that envoy bound
Twixt Hannibal and Scipio; by God's grace
This too shall be worth sight and good report
If he not fail us.

Du Croc. Madam, with rent heart
Must I take leave then of you.

Queen. Sir, farewell:
I pray you say not that you saw me weep;
These tears are not to turn the sword's edge
soft

Nor made of fear nor pity; but my heart
Holds no more rule on my rebellious eyes
Than truth on those my traitors; yet I trust
Again to bring both under. [*Exit Du Croc.*]

Bothwell. We must fight;
Yet had I rather take it on mine hand
Than dare the general field.

Queen. No, for God's love.
Bothwell. God hath not so much love of us
to serve;

Nor would I wager on his head to-day
That he shall fight upon our side. Look there;
They are at point to cross; even now you see
The first glint on them stirring of the sun
As they set forth to make by the eastern bank
Along the meadows edgeways towards Dal-
keith

Before they turn in wheel and take the hills;
I see their bent of battle; yet we keep
The slopes and crest here with our covering
lines

If they stand fast.

Queen. What, have you fear of that?
Bothwell. I cannot tell; the day grows
fiery hot:

I would we might close in at once and strike
Before the noon burn; all the pause we make
Who stand here idle watchers till they join
Takes off some heart from us for weariness
And give us doubt; I would the field were
set.

Queen. Why should not we that wait for
them and chafe
Break rather on them coming, and brush off
Their gathering muster from the hillskirts
there

With one sheer stroke of battle as from heaven
Right on them hurling down with all our host
Out of these heights ere they made head be-
low?

Bothwell. No, my sweet captain; we must
hold this fast,
This height of vantage, and keep close our
ranks

As I have ranged in order: see again,
How they sweep round and settle fast in file
There on the ridge of Cowsland, with their
backs

Turned on the sun that climbs toward noon
too fast,

And in their front that hollow gap of hill
Three crossbow-shots across; so far apart
We look upon each other for a breath
And hold our hands from battle; but you see
How soon both sides must lash together: yea,
I would we might not hold off yet an hour
But close at once and end.

Queen. That burgh below,
Is it not Presk Cairns? These hills are set
As stages for the show of such high game
As is played out for God's content on earth
Between men's kings and kingdoms; yet I
think

He that beholds hath no such joy of the game
As he that plays, nor the joy he knows
Save of man only, that man has to play
When the die's throw rings death for him or
life.

How clear the wind strikes from the mounting
sun—

I am glad at heart the day we have of fight
Should look thus lively on both sides that
meet

Beneath so large an open eye of heaven.
The wind and sun are in my blood; I feel
Their fire and motion in me like a breath
That makes the heart leap. Dear, I too have
read

The tale of Rome whence lightly you chose out
A likeness for us; but the parts we bear,
We are to play them with a difference, take
A fairer end upon us though we fall
Than they that in their hazard were most like
To this our imminent fortune: had I been
She for whose lips love let the round world
fall

And all man's empire founder, on that day
When earth's whole strengths met on the
warring sea

And side with side clashed of the kingdomed
world,

I had not given my galleys wings for fear
To bear me out of the eye of battle, nor
Put space of flight between me and my love,
More than I think on this wave's edge that
foams

To leave our chance unshipwrecked, or forsake
My more imperial Antony.

Bothwell. Would that now
We stood less near their hazard; on our
part

I fear to see the lines already melt
If we hold longer off, and this firm front
Unfix itself and with no stroke dissolve
As snows in summer: half my folk by this
For thirst are fallen upon the wine-casks there
We brought from Seyton; and for those that
stand,

We have not half their hearts upon our side
Whose hands are armed to uphold it. I must
fight

With whom they choose and take upon my
hand

The day with all its issue; if our course
Be set upon the general cast of fight,
It is but lost. Let messengers be sent
To know of the enemy if his challenge hold
Which I stand armed to answer; but no Scot
Shall bear the message and betray our need:
Two Frenchmen of your guard shall cross, and
bring

Their fighter's name back that my sword must
know

And we twain meet and end it in fair field
Between these ranks; and for my single part,
I am glad the chance should hang I at on my
hand

And my sole stroke determine the dim war
That flags yet in the dark and doubt of fate
Till mine arm fix it fast, and in God's sight
Confirm and close the chapter of it. Come,
Choose you your envoys.

Queen. Nay, choose you the man
That you will fight with; let him be not one
Who had no part with us in Darnley's blood,
So God shall strike not on his unjust side
Who fights against you.

Bothwell. 'Faith, if God were judge,
He should not do us right to approve their
cause

Who helped us to that slaying, and in its name
Take on them now to accuse us, and appeal
As guiltless to him against their proper deed
And this right hand that wrought but with
their will;

Wherefore so far forth as it hangs on God

From such a champion I should bear the bell,
If he be righteous; which to assure you of,
That even for God's sake you may feel no fear,
Let Morton meet me.

Queen. O, that two-tongued knave!
The worst of all my traitors, whom I spared
And should have slain when you had brought
him home

To help despatch his friend that had been!
Nay,

Him shall you meet not: he shall die no death
So brave as by your sword; the axe thinks
long

To clasp his cursed neck; your hand, dear lord,
Shall not redeem it.

Bothwell. Come, content you, sweet;
Him I must meet, or other; and myself
Care not if one that struck with us it be
Or one that struck not; only for your ease,
To make you trustful for God's judgment's
sake

And confident of justice, I thought well
To choose a man of counsel with us then
And on this challenge fight with him, that God
Might witness with us of his treacherous cause
If I should win the field; but by this hand,
I put more trust in it and in my sword
Than in God's hand or judgment. Have no
fear;

What is our cause you know, and in what right
We stand here armed; vex not your constant
heart

To seek for help or warrant more than this,
Which if it cannot stand us yet in stead
It shall avail not to devise fresh means
To underprop with prayer and trust in God
And stay our soul with footless faith or hope
That other might will aid our right than ours.
Here shall we try it: and you, sustain your
spirit

Still at its height and poise of fortitude
Firmly to front this infirm face of things
That changes on us gazing, and each hour
Shifts as the wind that shapes it; fear nor hope,
Bethink yourself, shall make or unmake fate,
Nor faith unbuild or build it, but that end
Will be at last that will be. So, keep heart;
Choose you two messengers for trust and speed
While I go form again these lines of ours
That break and loosen in the enemy's sight,
If time shall let reshape their ranks, and mend
The breach of their defection; in short space
Shall we have answer back whom I must meet,
And when my sword shall take this day's
chance up

And ease us of its trouble. Nay, make haste ;
Too long I stand yet here ; send off at once
Our message, and bid speed their word again
Before our battle melt out of our hands
And we be ta'en with no man at our back.

SCENE II.—THE CAMP OF THE LORDS.

MORTON, LINDSAY, DU CROC, KIRKALDY of
GRANGE, and others.

Morton. Will she not let him fight ?

Kirkaldy. With no mean man,
Or lesser than himself ; he shall not mate
With me nor Tullibardine ; we must find
One equal to make protter of his hand,
And by these messengers again returned
That brought her first word and took back our
own

Himself now bids you forth by name to take
This justice on your sword.

Morton. And by my hand,
I am as glad as of his present death
That I should be the man of all chosen out
To lay his death upon him. Let him know,
I am armed by this for answer.

Lindsay. Nay, my lord ;
Who fights with Bothwell on this general plea
For all the land's sake, should not only bear
The right upon his sword of this large cause,
But stand in the eye of all the land so far
From all men's charge or any man's conceit
That might repute him touched or mixed at
all

With Bothwell's works, or once but on his
part

Suspected in time past or glanced upon
Of enemies' eyes as parcel of his act,
That no sharp tongue on earth might find the
mean

To tax his victory with unrighteousness
If he should conquer,—as were yours the
sword

I doubt not it should surely—not dispute
The justice and pure truth that on our side
Took up this challenge. You, they know,
were one

Of that dead man once wronged, and sworn,
they say,

To turn his treacheries on his head alive
And with his own lie pierce him as a sword ;
He never did me wrong, nor gave men cause
To deem his death a thing that I should seek
As just and natural part of my desire ;
So shall none hold it questionable or strange

If I should stand against his slayer in arms
As to do battle on the dead man's part
That was toward me no traitor.

Morton.

Well, my lord,
Take you then this upon you ; to your hand
I shall not grudge to yield that honor up
Which none more noble in the world might
wield

Nor heart more true deserve ; in sign whereof
Here from mine own side I ungird the sword
Which was my grandsire's, whose two-handed
stroke

Did suchlike service as shall you to-day
To Scotland, in his hand that belled the cat,
When other slaves that clung about the throne
Made the land foul as this doth ; to which er
I gird you with it, that its edge again

May lop as high a dangerous head away
And shear a weed as poisonous. This it was
That drove to death even with its lift and
flash

The crew of Cochrane, as in scorn to smite
Their necks that craved the halter, and were
bowed

Before the light and wind but of its stroke
Down to the dust and death ; and this again
Struck with one blow to hell by Fala brook
Spens of Kilsplindie, who being overblown
With favor and light love of the fourth James
Gave with his life all these to Douglas up
At the first change of sword-play ; from such
hand

By heritage I have it, as from mine
You now, my lord, by gift ; and I well think
That in those great dead hands of Bell-the-Cat
It did no worthier work than ere we sleep
This land in yours shall see it.

Lindsay.

Sir, with glad heart
I take the burden to me thankfully
That this great gift lays on ; as with my hands
I strip this armor off and take from yours
To gird my body left else weaponless
This the most prosperous and most noble steel
That ever did truth right, so from my soul
God witness me that I put off all thought
Save of his justice to be served and shown,
And keep no memory more to enforce my
hand

That he for whose dead sake I am girt to fight
With one that slew him was of my kindred
blood.

Nor this mine own foe that I seek to slay,
But only that I stand here single-souled
For this land's sake and all its noble brood,
To do their judgment on his murderous head

Who is their general traitor ; and I pray
Here on my knees before these warlike lines
[*Kneeling.*

That God on whom I call will equally
This day preserve and punish in men's sight
The just and unjust that he looks upon,
With blameless hand dividing their just doom
To one and other ; yea, as thou art Lord,
With eye to read between our hearts, and
hand

To part between us punishment and grace,
Hear, God, and judge : and as thy sentence is
So shall man's tongue speak ever of this day
And of his cause that conquers.

Morton. Laird of Grange,
While these that twice brought message from
the queen [hear,
Bear now this last news back of what they
Lest when the traitor knows whom he shall
meet

His foul heart fail him and his false foot flee
By what way forth is left him toward Dunbar,
Take you two hundred horse, and with good
speed

Cross to the right beyond this hollow ground
And cut him off ; so though he fain would fly
And she stand fast or follow, yet we hold
As in one toil the lioness and the wolf
That clomb by night into the lion's bed,
Who stand now staked about with nets and
ringed [bay

With pikes and hounds of hunters, glare at
With eyes and teeth that shine against us yet,
But the fierce feet are trammelled in our toils
Nor shall the tongues lap life again of man.

Du Croc. Ay, lion-like, my lord, she bears
herself, [away
As who should shake all spears or shafts
Like leaves that fell upon her, and all fears
As grains of dust brushed off ; but he too
makes

Such gallant show at need of such good heart
As in this utter peril where he stands
Might win for one that had no unjust cause
Pity and praise of enemies, and for him
At least such mingled and discoloured fame
As falls not on a coward ; nor can men
Report him in his end and sore extreme
But as a soldier tried of hand and brain,
Skillful and swift, with heart to match his eye
And wit to serve them ; could these yet avail
To ransom him by spirit of soldiery
And craft with courage tempered as with fire
To wield with fiery cunning the wide war,
He should not fall but mightily, nor cease

But with a strife as earthquake.

Morton. Well, my lord,
With no such strife we think to win him.—

Go,
And if they send again to treat with us
Speak you with her and bring us once more
word.

SCENE III.—THE QUEEN'S CAMP.

The QUEEN and BOTHWELL.

Queen. Are we quite lost ?

Bothwell. Ay, if I fight not ; but
I will not die and fight not.

Queen. What, no help ?
Is there not left a score of manlike men [ring
To stand and strike round us that in their
May fight enclosed and fall where none shall
fly ? [troop
Are all our strengths slid from us ? not one
That has not piecemeal dropped with shame
away ? [die

Not some twelve friends to back us yet and
As never men died nobler ?

Bothwell. No, not three :
My levies there of Lothian and the Merse
Are slipped away like water ; of your men
Not yet four hundred lie along the heights,
Nor half will stay of these a half-hour hence.
Look too where yonder rides about the hill
The Laird of Grange between us and Dunbar
As to make onset with two hundred horse
Thence where the way is smooth, while those
in front

Charge up the hill right on our unfenced
camp
And their trap's teeth shut on us. This re-
mains

Of all our chance, this one way to make end,
That while they yet refuse me not a man
To bear the day's weight on his sword and
mine

I go to meet whom they soever choose
With no more question made ; and this I will,
If yet they grant me but their meanest man
For opposite as equal.

Queen. Have they hearts,
That have you for their fiery star of fight
To see and not to follow ? That I could
But give mine own among all these away
And with the parcels of it portioned out
Divide myself into a hundred hearts
Of manlier-spirited blood, to raise us up
For these a tribe of soldiers ! Speak to them,

And they will hear and hunger to go on
Full of your words to death : yea, all as I
Will thirst to die around you. O my God !
What is their blood that it can kindle not
To be so called of such a chief to die,
To hear his words and leap not ? Has, thou
made

Such stuff of man's flesh as we take for man,
And mixed not soul enough to serve the bound
Who gives for love his life up ? These go back,
These that might die, they start aside from
death,

They have no joy to close with it, but fear,
These that I deemed, come what might worst
on us,

Should fall with face and heart one fire of joy
To ride on death and grapple him and die.
Have I not heard of men once in the world ?
I see none only but mine only love,
Who finds not one to follow. You shall fight,
And if we thrive not shame them with your
end

As I with mine ensuing. That I might stand
Your second, and my sword be page to yours,
As on your death my death should wait at need
And halt not after ! No, you shall not die.
O miserable white hanging hands, that rest
Baffled and bloodless ! let your kingdom go
Let all things pass together : what of price
Should ye keep back that could not fight for
him

Who fails for lack of second ? Nay, the fault
Comes all of me that fail him, I it is
Bring down, that high head to the earth with
mine,

That helmless head, for my sake ; O, for love's,
Kiss me, and kill me ! be not wroth, but strike,
For if I live I shall but deal more death
And where I would not shall the more destroy,
Living and loving ; yea, whom I would save,
Him shall I slay the surelier ; save then me,
Lest I do this and dying abhor myself,
Save me and slay ; let not my love again
Kill more than me, that would have shed my
blood

To spare the blood I shed ; make me now sure ;
Let me cease here.

Bothwell. Peace, and give heed ; you see
Whither the day has brought us, and what
hope

Holds anywhere of rescue ; this one lot
Lies in my hand by fortune to be drawn,
That yet by God's and by our enemies'
grace

I may fight singly though my whole world fail

And end no less than soldier. Now, my
queen,

As you are highest of woman's hearts that live
And nobler than your station stands your soul—
As you had never fear, and in this past
As ever you have loved me—by such sign
And in such name I charge you, put me not
In this great need to shame ; let me go forth
As should yourself being king, had you the
cause

That our linked loves put on me ; by that
heart

That is so fair within you to be man's,
Make me not meaner than the man I am
Nor worthless of the name ; think with what
soul

Would you stand up to battle in my stead,
And wrong me not to pluck that prize away
Which were you I you would not yield to me
Nor I would ask of you ; desire not this,
To have me for your sake so vile a thing.
When I should rise up worthiest, that no man
Could bear such name and live ; bid me not be,
Because you love me that are first on earth
And crowned of queens most royal, such a
slave

As might not seek and be not spit upon
The foulest favor that is given for gold
From lips more vile than all things else but I
Who durst not fight for you ; make me not
this :

Let me die rather such a man as might,
Having your love, had fortune loved him too,
Have lived beside you kinglike, and not left
Less memory than a king's.

Queen. O, you shall go :
Look how I hold you not ; yes, you shall fight,
And I sit strengthless here.—You shall not yet ;
If I did know that God were with my heart,
Then should you go indeed ; could I sit sure
My prayer had power upon him, and my cause
Had made him mine to fight for me, and take
My charge and this field's issue in his hand,
I would not doubt to send you. Nay, my-
self

Will speak to those my soldiers ; they will
fight ;

They shall not choose for shame who hear me
speak

But fear to fight not. O, for all this yet,
If they were men about me, they would sweep
Those traitors from the hill-side as a wind
And make me way to live. What, if I speak.
If I kneel to them, each man by his name,
Bid him fight for me though I be not king,

His king to lead him—as, had I been born
My father's son, they should have fought, and
found

A king to fight for an I a sword to lead
Worth many a good sword's following—nay,
but these

That will not fight for you whose sword they see
Worth all their swords to follow, for no king's
Would they take heart to strike. Love, you
shall go ;

Send out a flag to bid one come and say
Who dares of all fight with you. Why, methought

This march-folk loved you and your sword's
bright name

That burned along their borders ; is there left
No such fierce love of theirs and faith at need
To do us soldier's service ?

Bothwell. Look, and see ;
Their ranks unknit themselves and slide more
fast

From the bare slopes away whereon they stand
Than the last leaves or the last snows that
fade

From off the fields or branches ; and this thaw
Speaks not our spring, but winter. Let them
pass :

If I may stand but in mine enemy's face,
One foot of ours shall slip not, and one hand
Be reddened on our side. I will go send
Word with your flag of truce by Ormiston,
To bid their spokesman to us. [*Exit.*

Queen. What am I worth,
That can nor fight nor pray ? my heart is
shut

As a sealed spring of fire, and in mine ears
This air that holds no thunder but fair day
Sounds louder than a stricken brazen bell
That rings in a great wind, or the blown sea
That roars by night for shipwreck.

Re-enter BOTHWELL with KIRKALDY.

Bothwell. Here is he
That bring our lords' will with him, and shall
show

But in your private ear ; I while you please
Will wait apart upon you. [*Retires.*

Queen. Is it you,
Is it my friend of France, my knight and
friend,

Comes on such errand in mine extreme need
To me that honored him ? Sir, time has been
That had one asked me what man most on
earth

I would for trust have sought the service of
In such sore straits as this, I had found no
name

But yours to leap the first upon my lips,
On whom I have seen my father the French
king

Point with his hand, saying, *Yonder goes there
one*

Of the most valiant men in all our age,
And ever would he choose you on his side
In all his pastimes for your manhood's sake
And might in jousts of men and gallant games,
And when they shot for mastery at the butts
Would make you shoot two arrows still for
one,

And took delight beyond all shots of theirs
To see how far forth would your great shaft fly,
And for his pleasure ; and my heart grew
great

For my land's sake whereof your strength was
made,

That bore such men for honor ; and the best
Who served my father Henry in his wars
Looked reverently upon you horsed at head
Of your brave hundred men that rode with you,
And never the great constable of France
Would speak to you uncovered as to one
Less than his own place worthy ; and your
hand

Here on these marches hath not lost its praise
For many as fair a stroke as overthrew
Between our ranks and the English in mid
field

Lord Rivers' brother, fighting for this land
That with a tongue as true and serviceable
You strove in speech to save the freedom of,
That by no policy it should be subdued
To a French province ; so for faith and love,
For valor, wisdom, and for gentleness,
I wist no Scot had worthier name alive :
Shall I say now I have no deadlier foe ?

[*KIRKALDY kneels.*

I do not bid you kneel ; speak, and stand up ;
I have no help or comfort of men's knees,
Nor pleasure of false worship ; well I know,
For all knees bowed, how hearts, and hands
are bent

Of mine own men against me. Speak, I pray ;
I am as their servant bound who speak in you
And open-eared to hear them.

Kirkaldy. From the lords,
Madam, no word I have to bring but one,
That from this field they will not part alive
Without the man in bonds they came to seek ;
Him will they take, or die : but on your part

They have no thought that is not set to serve
And do you honor, would but you forsake
The murderer of your husband, who to you
Can be no husband, being but lately wed
To the earl of Huntley's sister and your friend
By your own mean and favor.

Queen (to Bothwell). Hold, my lord;
Let not your man give fire.—Sir, guard your-
self;

See you not where one stands to shoot at
you?—

You will not do me this dishonor, seeing
I have given my faith he should come safely
through

And go back safe?

Bothwell. Why, let him then, and say
That I will yet maintain my proffered cause
To fight with any that shall challenge me
Of the king's murder.

Kirkaldy. Sir, the first was I
To let you wit myself would fight with you
Upon that quarrel; and the first refused,
As being not earl nor lord nor mate of yours,
But a poor baron only; the like word
You sent to Tullibardine; in whose place
Stands now my lord of Lindsay, if your heart
Yet fail you not to meet him, as it seems
Now to grow cold in the shadow of his sword
That hangs against you in the air advanced,
Darkening your sight and spirit.

Bothwell (to the Queen). Shall this be said,
This shame go forth for ever through the world
Of one that held you by the wedded hand
And loosed it even for fear? Now, let me go:
There is no way now but the best, and this
You shall no more forbid me: one last time
I do implore you make not of your love
The branding-iron that should sign me slave
In sight of all men always, and on you
Stamp the vile name of wife to no true man
But harlot of a coward: who shall spare
To throw that name and shame on such a
love

As came to such an end as ours shall come
If here its sun set bloodless, but more red
With shame than blood could brand it?

Queen. I have thought
And set my heart against all chance to come,
Of blame or blood that ever shall mark me;
Alone I take it on mine only hand,
And will not yield this one thing up to yours,
Who have yielded all things else, and this I
would,

But that I may not with my soul alive.
Sir, if my lords within whose hand I am

Shall stand content to let my husband go,
Into their ward will I give up myself
On what good terms shall please them to call
good,

So he may pass forth freely with such friends
Of these that have not hands enough to fight
As shall cleave to him; I pray you make good
speed,

And let this day have end.

Kirkaldy. Madam, I go. [Exit

Queen. Do not speak yet: a word should
burst my heart;

It is a hollow crystal full of tears

That even a breath might break, and they be
spilt

And life run out with them; no diamond now,
But weaker than of wax. Life of that heart,

There is but one thing hath no remedy,
Death; all ills else have end or hope of end

And time to work their worst before time
change;

This death has none; there is all hope shut fast,
All chance bound up for ever: change nor time
Can help nor comfort this. You shall not die;
I can hold fast no sense of thought but this,
You shall not.

Bothwell. Well, being sundered, we may live,
And living meet; and here to hold the field
Were but a deadly victory, and my hand
The mockery of a conqueror's; we should pass
No less their prisoners from the field thus won
Than from these lists defeated. You do well;
They dare not urge or strain the power they
have

To bring me prisoner where my witness borne
Might show them parcel of the deed and guilt
For which they rise up to lay hold on me
As upright men of doom, and with pure
hands

To hale me to their judgment. I will go,
Till good time bring me back; and you that
stay,

Keep faith with me.

Queen. O, how does one break faith?
What are they that are faithless? by my love,
I cannot tell or think how I should lie,
Should live and lie to you that are my faith,
My soul, my spirit, my very and only God,
My truth and trust that makes me true of
heart,

My life that feeds and light that lightens me,
My breath and blood of living. Doth God
think

How I shall be without you? what strange
breath

Shall my days draw, what strange blood feed
my life,
When this life that is love is gone from them
And this light lost? Where shall my true life
go,
And by what far ways follow to find love,
Fly where love will? Where will you turn
from me?

Bothwell. Hence will I to Dunbar, and
thence again
There is no way but northward and to ship
From the north islands; thence betimes
abroad

By land or sea to lurk and find my life
Till the wheel turn.

Queen. Ah God, that we were set
Far out at sea alone by storm and night
To drive together on one end, and know
If life or death would give us good or ill
And night or day receive, and heaven or
earth

Forget us or remember!—He comes back;
Here is the end.

Bothwell. But till time change his tune;
No more nor further. We shall find our day.

Queen. Have we not found? I know not
what we shall,
But what had been and is, and whence they
are,
God knows if now I know not. He is here.

Re-enter KIRKALDY.

Kirkaldy. Madam, the lords return by me
this word,
With them must you go back to Edinburgh
And there be well entreated as of friends;
And for the duke, they are with one mind
content

He should part hence for safe and present
flight;

But here may tarry not or pass not free.

This is the last word from them by my mouth.

Queen. Ay is it, sir; the last word I shall
hear—

Last in mine ear for ever: no command
Nor threat of man shall I give ear to more,
That have heard this.—Will you not go, my
lord?

It is not I would hold you.

Bothwell. Then, farewell,
And keep your word to me. What, no breath
more?

Keep then this kiss too with the word you
gave,

And with them both my heart and its good hope
To find time yet for you and me. Farewell.
[Exit.]

Queen. O God! God! God!

Cover my face for me;
I cannot heave my hand up to my head;
Mine arms are broken.

Is he got to horse?
I do not think one can die more than this.
I did not say farewell.

Kirkaldy. My lord is gone.

Queen. Whomspake I to? I have no woman
here.

All these men's eyes have seen my naked face
Wrung without tears for anguish, and no hand
Hide my blind eyes if haply they might weep
Great drops of blood and fiery.—Laird of
Grange,

I yield myself upon such terms to you
As in these lords' name you rehearsed to me;
Have here my hand for sign.

Kirkaldy. Upon this hand
I lay the loyal witness of my lips

For duteous heart and service, and crave leave
That I may lead your highness through these
ranks

Where at the hill's foot we may find your
friends

Who shall come forth to meet you as their
queen

With all fair reverence.

Queen. Lead me to my lords;
For one so poor a servant as I am
Here are too many masters. I could pray,
But that they lack my service and should
chafe

If I dwelt long upon my prayer and let
My duty sleep or slacken toward them; else
I could pray God to shut up from these lands
His hand and eye of favor, that no dew
Might breed herefrom and no bloom break
again

Nor grass be glad for ever; rain nor sun
Comfort their cankered face and hardening
heart,

Nor hand that tilled or foot that trod of man
Pass and not curse them. Let me look but
once

Upon this hill whereon till this ninth hour
Mine enemies' hands have crucified my heart.
The sun burns yet and the stream runs; nor
eye

Nor ear have these nor pity. Come, I talk,
Who had no mind; God will not heed me;
come. [Exit.]

SCENE IV.—THE CAMP OF THE LORDS.

MORTON, HUME, LINDSAY, &c.

Morton. What, is the Frenchman gone?

Lindsay. With heavy cheer,

By this to set sad foot in Edinburgh.

Morton. There should we be by nightfall ;
and you see

How the day reddens downward, and this hill

Hath all its west side fiery ; he hath done

The queen and us small service, to put off

Her hour of yielding. Look, the last spears

left

Begin to move in sunder ; there he flies.

The traitor, with his heartless handful backed

That yet for fear cling to him : and on this

side

Grange leads her down the hill between our

horse,

Who comes not like one captive.

Enter the QUEEN and KIRKALDY.

Queen.

Tell me, sirs,

Are they my doomsmen whom I come to find
And those your headsman who stand sworded
there

And visored soldier-like, that cry on me

To burn and slay me ? let me have quick doom,
And be beyond their crying.

Morton.

Madam, I think

You cannot fear of us a deadly doom,

Nor shall you find. Silence those throats, I

say.

Queen. I have not said I feared ; nor shall
there come

For you that lying breath upon my lips.

What will ye do with what of me ye have

If not what these tongues cry for ?

Morton.

Some man ride--

You, Laird of Grange, with two or three at

back,

And with the flatlong stroke of your good

swords

Smite their mouths dumb. Madam take you

no heed ;

They shall not hurt you.

Queen.

Sir, no heed have I ;

I think these common haters shall not hurt

Indeed, nor smite me but with tongues ; 'tis

you,

My good lords only, from whose noble hands

I look to take my death, who would not lose

Nor lack this royal office. For my sake
Do them no hurt, I pray, who are but your
mouthsAs you their hands ; I see no choice of you,
Or them the lesser traitors.

Hume.

I will go :

Ride you that way, sir, by their ranks who
shout,

As I this side ; for every way men hear

How the field rings that all the hills roar back

With noise of names and cries to burn the
whoreAnd murderess of her husband : spare no
strokes

To shame or smite them silent.

Queen.

You, my friends,

Good servants that have care of my good name,

And loyal lovers—of your love and grace,

May it please you show me whither I must go

To find what face of death ? or if yet none,

And yet ye have not the hardy hearts to slay,

To uncrown and slay me, I require you then

Deliver me into my kin-men's hands

Of the house of Hamilton, in whose good
ward

I am content to abide men's evil will

With honorable surety ; which refused,

Of life nor honor shall I hold me sure

For all your vows and voices, but esteem

My life to be as all your honors, dead.

Morton.

Madam, with nooks you cannot
make us mad,To bring you to their trustless hands whose
wardShould be to you but dangerous, and to us
And all this kingdom's hope in heritageAnd all men's good most mortal. You must
goWith us to Edinburgh, and being made safe
Abide the judgment there that shall not fallBy fierce election of men's clamorous mouths
Whose rage would damn you to the fire-clad
death,But by their sentence who shall do no wrong,
If justice may with honor make them sure

And faith defend from error.

Queen.

Ay, my lord ?

I shall be doomed then ere I die, and stand
Before their face for judgment who should
kneelTo take my sentence as a scourge, and bear
What brand my tongue set on them ? Nay, ye
are mad ;Kings have been slain with violence and red
craft

Or fallen by secret or by popular hands,
But what man heard yet ever of a king
Set to the war of his own men to plead
For life with rebels' reasons, and wage words
With whoso dare of all these baser born
Rise up to judge him? Surely I shall die,
Be rent per chance in pieces of men's fangs,
But of their mouths not sentenced: in fair
field

That only steel that bids a king's neck stoop
Is the good sword that in a warlike hand
Makes his head bow and cuts not off his crown
But with the stroke of battle; who hath seen
By doom of man a king's head kingdomless
Bow down to the axe and block? so base an
edge

Can bite not on such necks. Let me bleed
here,

By their swift hands who ravin for my blood,
Or be assured how if ye let me live
I live to see you die for me as dogs:
Ye shall be hanged on crosses, nailed on rows,
For birds to rend alive; ye shall have doom,
A dog's doom and a traitor's, and the cord
Strangle the sentence in your laboring lips
And break the plea that heaves your throat and
leaves

Your tongue thrust forth to blacken; ye shall
wage

Words and try causes with the worms and
flies

Till they leave bare your bones to sun and
wind

As shame shall leave your titles. Was it you
[To LINDSAY.

That were to fight before me with my lord?
Give me your hand, sir; by this hand of yours
I swear for this thing yet to have your head,
And so thereof assure you.

Morton. Bid the camp
Strike and set forth behind us. Sirs, to horse:
And, madam, be not yet so great of speech
As utterly to outwear your spirit of strength
With pain and passion that can bear no fruit
But wind and wrath and barren bitterness.
Vex not yourself more than your foes would vex,
Of whom we would be none that ride with you
From them to guard you that would lay red
hands

On you yet faint and weak from this fierce day.
Queen. My body and head wax faint, but
not my heart;

I have yet there fire enough for all of you,
To burn your strengths up that my feeble
limbs

Can make my heart not yield to nor bow
down,
Nor fear put out its fires. Come, worthy
lords,
And lead me to my loving town again
That bears your heads not yet above its gates
Where I shall see them festering if I live.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.—EDINBURGH. A ROOM IN THE
PROVOST'S HOUSE.

Enter MAITLAND and PROVOST.

Maitland. Are the gates fast?

Provost. Ay; but the street yet seethes
With ebb and flow of fighting faces thronged
And crush of onset following on her heel
Where she came in and whence at her own call
You drove them off her; and above the ranks
Flaps the flag borne before her as she came
Wrought with the dead king's likeness; and
their cry

Is yet to burn or drown her. It were but
A manlike mercy now for men to show
That she should have some woman's hand of
hers

To tend her fainting who should be nigh dead
With fear and lack of food and weariness.

Maitland. Nay, if she die not till she die
for fear,
She must outlive man's memory; twice or
thrice

As she rode hither with that sable flag
Blown overhead whereon the dead man lay
Painted, and by him beneath a garden tree
His young child kneeling, with soft hands held
up

And the word underwritten of his prayer
Judge and avenge my cause, O Lord—she
seemed

At point to swoon, being sick with two days'
fast,

And with faint fingers clung upon the rein
And gasped as one athirst with foodless lips
And fair head fainting; but for very scorn
Was straightway quickened and uplift of heart,
And smote us with her eyes again, and spoke
No weaker word but of her constant mind
To hang and crucify, when time should be,
These now her lords and keepers; so at last
Beneath these walls she came in with the
night,

So pressed about with foes that man by man
We could but bring her at a foot's pace through

Past Kirk of Field between the roaring streets,
Faint with no fear, but hunger and great rage,
With all men's wrath as thunder at her heel,
And all her fair face foul with dust and tears,
But as one fire of eye and cheek that shone
With heart of fiery heart and unslaked will
That took no soil of fear.

Provost.

What shall be done
When sentence shall pass on her?

Maitland.

By my will
She shall not die nor lose her royal name,
Wherein the council only shall bear rule
And take to its own hand the care to wreck
On her false lord now fled our general wrong,
Who being but overtaken of its sword
Shall be divorced at once from her and life.

Provost. But this shall not content the
common will,

Nor theirs who hind and loose it with their
tongues

And cry now for her blood; the town is loud
With women's voices keener than of men
To call for judgment on her and swift death
Sharp as their anger.

Maitland.

Ay, the time is mad
With noise of preachers and the feminine spleen
That of mere rage and blind mobility
Barks in brute heat for blood; but on these
tongues

The state yet hangs not, nor the general weal
Is swayed but by the violent breath of these.
Here sits she safe.

Provost.

I would I knew it; her mood
Is as a wind that blows upon a fire,
And drives her to and fro: she will not eat,
But rages here and there and cries again
On us for traitors, on her friends for help,
On God for comfort of her cause and crown
That of his foes and hers is violated,
And will not stint her clamors nor take rest
For prayer nor bidding.

Maitland.

I will speak with her
Ere I go hence; though she were mild of mood,
The task were hard with Knox for opposite
To bend the council to such policy
As might assure her but of life, which thus
She whets the weapon in his tongue to take.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VI.—ANOTHER ROOM IN THE SAME.

The QUEEN and an Attendant.

Queen. Wilt thou be true? but if thou have
not heart,

Yet do not, being too young to sell man's blood
Betray my letter to mine enemies' hands
Where it should be a sword to smite me with
If thou hast heart, I say, being but a boy,
Swear not and break thine oath; but it thou
have,

Thou shalt not ask for this mine errand done
The thing I will not give thee. At Dunbar
Bring but this letter to my husband's hand;
Spare for no speed; if it were possible,
I would it might be with him ere day dawn
On me condemned of men. I have no hope,
Thou seest, but in thee only; thou art young
And mean of place, but be thou good to me
And thou shalt sit above thy masters born
And nobles grey in honor. Wilt thou go?
Have here mine only jewel, and my faith
That I plight to thee, when my hand may
choose,

To give thee better gifts. Hasten, and so thrive
As I by thee shall.

[*Exit Attendant.*]

Though thou play me false,

Thou dost no more than God has done with
me

And all men ere before thee; yet I could not
But write this worthless one word of my love
Though I should die for writing it in vain,
And he should never read it.

Enter MAITLAND.

Come you not

To tell me of my commons and your friends
That by their will despite you I must die?
It were no stranger now than all things are
That fall as on me dreaming.

Maitland.

Madam, no;
I come to plead with you for your own life,
Which wrath and violent mood would cast
away.

Queen. What is my life to any man or me
As ye have made it? If ye seek not that,
Why have ye torn me from my husband's
hand,

With whom ye know that I would live and
die

With all content that may be in the world?

Maitland. For your own honor have we
sundered you;

You know not him, who late writ word—my-
self

Can show this letter—to the Lady Jane,
She was his wife and you his concubine,
No more but sport and scandal in his sheets,

And loved for use but as a paramour
 And for his ends to rise and by your lips
 Be kissed into a kingdom ; and each week
 Since they were first but as in show divorced
 And but of craft divided, on some days
 Have they held secret commerce to your
 shame
 As wedded man and wife.

Queen. There is one thing
 That I would ask of even such friends as
 you—

To turn me with my lord adrift at sea
 And make us quit of all men.

Maitland. For yourself,
 You drive on no less danger here of wreck,
 Seeing for your life if England take no care
 France will nor strike nor speak ; and had
 you not

In your own kindly kingdom yet some friends
 Whose hearts are better toward you, these
 wot well

You had none left you helpful in the world.
 Yet what we may will I and all these do
 To serve you in this strait ; so for this night
 Let not your peril, which can breed not fear,
 For that breed anger in you ; and farewell.

[*Exit.*]

Queen. None but such friends ? O yet my
 living lord,

O still my comfort, hadst thou none but me
 As I save thee have no man, we would go
 Hand fast in hand to dreadless death, and see
 With such clear eyes as once our marriage-
 bed

Fire, or the sword's light lifted to make end
 Of that one life on both our lips that laughed
 To think he could not sunder them who
 smote,

Nor change our hearts who chilled them ; we
 would kiss,

Laugh, and lie down, and sleep ; but here in
 bonds

I will not tamely like a dumb thing die
 That gives its blood and speaks not. If I
 find

No faith in all this people, yet my curse
 Shall through this casement cry in all their
 ears

That are made hard against me.—Ho there,
 you,

All that pass by, your queen am I that call,
 Have I no friend of all you to turn back
 The swords that point on this bare breast,
 the hands

That grasp and hale me by the hair to death,

By this discrowned rent hair that wore too
 soon

The kingdom's weight of all this land in gold?
 Have I no friend ? no friend ?

Voice without. Ay, here was one ;
 Know you yet him ? Raise up the banner
 there,

That she may look upon her lord, and take
 Comfort.

A Woman. What, was not this that kneels
 the child

Which hung once at that harlot's breast now
 bare [milk ?]

And should have drunk death from its deadly
 Hilde it for shame ; bind up the wanton baner,

Cover the poisonous bosom ; here is none
 To kiss the print of that adulterer's head

Which last lay on it.

Another voice. Whither is he flown,
 Whose amorous lips were bloody, and left
 red [shame ?]

The shameless cheek they fed on as with
 Where is your swordsman at your back to
 guard [hand]

And make your sin strut kinglike ? where his
 That made this dead man's child kneel fa-
 therless [blood ?]

And plead with God against you for his
 Where is your king-killer ?

Queen. The day shall be
 That I will make this town a fire, and slake
 The flame with blood of all you : there shall
 stand

No mark of man, no stone of these its walls,
 To witness what my wrath made ruin of
 That turned it first to smoke, and then put out
 With all your blood its ashes.

Enter PROVOST.

Hear you, sir,
 How we are handled of our townsfolk there,
 Being yet in ward of you ? but by my head.
 If now by force it fall not, you as these
 Shall buy this of me bloodily, and first
 Shall bleed of all whose lives will pay not me.

Provost. Madam, as you desire to see that
 day, [blow]

Contain yourself ; this flame whereon you
 Will fasten else untimely on your hand
 And leave it harmless toward us. I beseech
 you,

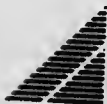
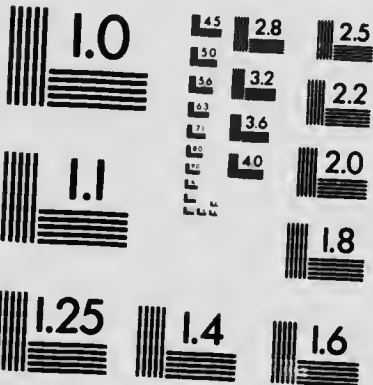
Though but for hate of us and hope to hurt,
 Eat, and take rest.

Queen. I will not ; what are ye



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That I should care for hate of you to live
 Who care not for the love's sake of my life?
 If I shall die here in your hateful hands,
 In God's I put my cause, as into them
 I yield the spirit that dares all enemies yet
 By force to take it from me. Die or live
 I needs must at their bidding; but to sleep,
 Eat, drink, weep, laugh, speak or keep silence,
 these

They shall not yet command me till I die.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VII.—THE HIGH STREET.

A crowd of CITIZENS.

First Citizen. Who says she shall not die?

Second Citizen. Even he that stands

First in this city, Morton; by his doom,

Death shall not pass upon her.

First Citizen.

Will he say it?

Yet is this man not all the tongue or hand

That Scotland has to speak or smite with.

Third Citizen.

Nay,

When he so spake against their honest voice

Who called for judgment, one arose and said—

I know not who, but one that spake for God—

That he who came between God's sword and
 her

Should as a stayer of justice by the sword

Be stricken of God's justice.

First Citizen.

What said he?

Third Citizen. No word, but frowned; and
 in his eye and cheek

There sprang a fire and sank again, as 'twere

For scorn that anger should have leave to
 speak,

Though silently; but Maitland writhed his lip

And let his teeth grin doglike, and between

There shot some snarling word that mocked
 at God,

And at the servants of his wrath, who wait

To see his will done on her, and men's hands

Made ministers to set it forth so broad

That none might pass and read not.

Second Citizen.

Why, by this

Part hangs of it already in men's sight;

I have word here from Dunbar of one that was

An officer of Bothwell's, and alive

Laird of Blackadder; whom they seized at sea

Flying from death to deathward, and brought
 back

To be nigh rent in pieces of their hands

Who haled him through the streets to hang,
 and left

Not half a man unbroken or unbruised

To feel the grip o' the gallows.

First Citizen.

They did well;

Shall we do worse, than have within our hand

The heart and head of all this evil, her

By whom all guilt looks guiltless till she die

A whore's death or a murderer's, burn or
 drown,

And leave more [free the common doom of
 man

To pass on lesser sins? While she doth live,

How should it speak for shame to bid men die

For what sin done soever, who might say

she lives and laughs yet in God's face and eye

And finds on earth no judgment as do these

Whose bloodiest hands are whiter than her
 soul?

Let her die first.

Third Citizen. Ay shall she, if God put

Upon those lips that never lacked it yet

His fire to burn men's hearts, and make that
 tongue

His sword that hath been ever. Yesternight

Came Knox to Edinburgh, and here should
 speak

By this among us of the doom to fall

On us or her, that if it bruise her not

Must glance aside against us.

Second Citizen.

He is here.

Draw nigh, but make no noise.

Enter JOHN KNOX.

First Citizen.

Nay, all the press

Heaves round about him silent.

Others.

Sirs, give place;

Make way for Master Knox to stand and speak

Here in your midst; here is it higher; give
 way.

Make room to hear him. Peace there, and
 stand still.

John Knox.

What word is this that ye re-
 quire of man?

Ye that would hear me, what speech heard of
 mine

Should lift your hearts up if they sit not high,

If they lack life, should quicken? for this day

Ye know not less than I know that the Lord

Hath given his enemy to you for a prey,

His judgment for a fire; what need have ye,

Or he what need of other tongues to speak

Than this which burns all ears that hear on
 earth

The blast of this day's justice blown in
 heaven—

As where is he that hears not? In your hand

Lies now the doom of God to deal, and she
 Before your face to abide it, in whose mouth
 His name was as a hissing; and had I
 The tongues in mine of angels, and their
 night,
 What other word of mightier should I seek
 Than this to move you? or should ye wax
 cold
 What fuel should I find out to kindle you?
 God ye hear not, how shall ye hear me?
 Or if your eyes be sealed to know not her,
 If she be fit to live or no, can I
 With words unseal them? None so young of you
 But hath long life enough to understand
 And reason to record what he hath seen
 Of hers and of God's dealings mutually
 Since she came in. Then was her spirit made
 soft,
 Her words as oil, and with her amorous face
 She caught men's eyes to turn them where she
 would,
 And with the strong sound of her name of
 queen
 Made their necks bend; that even of God's
 own men
 There were that bade refuse her not her will,
 Deny not her, fair woman and great queen,
 Her natural freedom born, to give God praise
 What way she would, and pray what prayers:
 though these
 Be as they were, to God abominable
 And venomous to men's souls. So came there
 back
 The cursed thing cast forth of us, and so
 Out of her fair face and imperious eyes
 Lightened the light whereby men walk in hell.
 And I that sole stood out and bade not let
 The lightning of this curse come down on us
 And fly with feet as fire on all winds blown
 To burn men's eyes out that beheld God's
 face,
 That being long blind but now gat sight, and
 saw
 And praised him seeing—I that then spake and
 said,
 Ten thousand men here landed of our foes
 Were not so fearful to me on her side
 As one mass said in Scotland—that withstood
 The man to his face I loved, her father's son,
 Then mastered by the pity of her, and made
 Through that good mind not good—who then
 but I
 Was taxed of wrongful will, and for hard heart
 Miscalld of men? And now, sirs, if her
 prayer

Were just and reasonable, and unjust I
 That bade shut ears against it—if the mass
 Hath brought forth innocent fruit, and in this
 land
 Wherein she came to stablish it again
 Hath stablished peace with honor—if in her
 It hath been found no seed of shame, and she
 That loved and served it seem now in men's
 sight
 No hateful thing nor fearful—if she stand
 Such a queen proven as should prove honor-
 able
 The rule of women, and in her that thing
 Be shown forth good that was called evil of
 me,
 Blest and not curst—then have I sinned, and
 they
 That would have crossed me would have cross-
 ed not God:
 Whereof now judge ye. Hath she brought
 with her
 Peace, or a sword? and since her incoming
 Hath the land sat in quiet, and the men
 Seen rest but for one year? or came not in
 Behind her feet, right at her back, and shone
 Above her crowned head as a fierier crown,
 Death, and about her as a raiment wrapt
 Ruin? and where her foot was ever turned
 Or her right hand was pointed, hath there
 fallen
 No fire, no cry burst forth of war, no sound
 As of a blast blown of an host of men
 For summons of destruction? Hath God
 shown
 For sign she had found grace in his sight, and
 we
 For her sake favor, while she hath reigned on
 us,
 One hour of good, one week of rest, one day?
 Or hath he sent not for an opposite sign
 Dissensions, wars, rumours of wars, and
 change,
 Flight and return of men, terror with power
 Triumph with trembling? Hath one foot stood
 fast,
 One head not bowed, one face not veiled it-
 self,
 One hand not hidden? Was this once or
 twice
 That ye beheld, this brief while of her reign,
 Strong men one day make mouths at God, the
 next
 Lie where his foes lie fallen? or since she came
 Have ye seen raised up of them and cast
 down

But one or two that served her? Which of these,

Which of them all that looked on her and loved,
And men spake well of them, and pride and hope

Were as their servants—which of all them now
Shall men speak well of? How fared he the first

Hailed of his own friends and elect her lord,
Who gave her kinsmen heart and godless hope
By him to reign in her and wield this land,
Yet once with me took counsel and sought grace,
And suddenly God left him, and he stood
Brain-smitten, with no bride-bed now nor throne

To conquer, but go senseless to his grave,
The broken-witted Hamilton—what end,
Think ye, had this man, or what hope and hap
The next whose name met on men's lips with hers

And ballads mourned him in his love's sight slain,

Gordon, that in the dawn of her dark day
Rose northward as a young star fiery red,
Flashed in her face, and fell, for her own breath

Quenched him? What good thing gat they for her sake,

These that desired her, yet were mighty lords,
Great in account of great men? So they twain
Perished; and on men meaner far than these
When this queen looked, how fared they?
folk that came

With wiles and songs and sins from oversea,
With harping hands and dancing feet, and made

Music and change of praises in her ear—
White rose out of the south, star out of France,
Light of men's eyes and love! yea, verily,
Red rose out of the pit, star out of hell,
Fire of men's eyes and burning! for the first

Was caught as in a chamber snare and fell
Smiling, and died with *Farewell, the most fair*
And the most cruel princess in the world—
With suchlike psalms go suchlike souls to God

Naked—and in his blood she washed her feet
Who sat and saw men spill it; and this reward
Had this man of his dancing. For the next,
On him ye know what hand was last year laid,

David, the close tongue of the Pope, the hand
That held the key of subtle and secret craft
As of his viol, and tuned all strings of state

With cunning finger; not the foot o' the king
Before God's ark when Michal mocked at him
Danced higher than this man's heart for confidence

To bring from Babelon that ark again
Which he that touches, he shall surely die,
But not the death of Uzzah; for thereon
God's glory rests not, but the shadow of death,
And dead men's bones within it: yet his trust
Was to lift up again and to relume
The tabernacle of Moloch, and the star
Of Remphan, figures which our fathers made,
That such as he might go before, and play
On timbrels and on psalteries and on harps,
On cornets and on cymbals; and the Lord
Broke him; and she being wroth at God took thought

How they that saw might call his place of death

The breach of David, and her heart waxed hot

Till she should make a breach upon his foes
As God on him, and with a dire new name
And a new memory quite put out that name
And memory of his slaying; yea, all this land,
That hath seen evil of many men before
And sins of many years, hath seen till now
No sin as hers, nor on her forefathers
Whose hands were red and their hearts hard
hath seen

The note of such an evil as in her heart
Became a fire conceiving, and brought forth
The deed that in her hand was as a sword
New tempered in that fire; for no such deed
Was this as all theirs who play false or slay,
Take gifts for whoredom or lay snares to kill,
But she gave gifts to hire her lover's knife
That it might pierce her husband; even this land,

This earth whereof our living limbs are made,
This land renewed of God, this earth redeemed,
With all souls born therein to worship him
That call it mother, was the hire she gave
To see the adulterer's hand when it should rise
Against her lord to slay him; yea, all of you,
And each part of this kingdom, and each man
That but draws breath within her range of reign,

Were parcel of this hire, as counted coins
To make the sum up of her goodly gift.
And he that of their hands was bought and sold,

Her wedded husband, that had bowed his head

Before her worshipped idol—think ye not

That by her hand God gave him all his wage
 Who was a less thing in his eyes than she
 And viler than her service? for the fire
 Tell not from heaven that smote him, yet not
 less
 Was kindled of God's wrath than of man's
 hate
 And in a woman's craft his will put forth
 To make her sin his judgment; but of these,
 The slain and slayer, the spoiler and the
 spoiled,
 That each have lain down by her wedded side,
 Which will ye say hath slept within her bed
 A sleep more cursed, and from more evil dreams
 Found a worse waking? he that with a blast
 Which rent the loud night as a cry from hell
 Was blown forth darkling from her sheets, or
 he
 That shared and soiled them till this day
 whereon
 God casts him out upon the track of Cain
 To flee for ever with uncleansed red hands
 And seek and find not where in the waste
 world
 To hide the wicked writing on his brow
 Till God rain death upon him? for his foot,
 Be sure, shall find no rest, his eye no sleep,
 His head no covert and his heart no hope,
 His soul no harbor and his face no light,
 But as a hound the wolf that bleeds to death
 God's wrath shall hunt him through the dark,
 and fear
 Shall go before him as a cloud by day,
 By night a fire, but comfort not his head
 By day with shadow, nor with shine by night
 Guide lest his foot be dashed against a stone,
 But in fair heaven before the morning's face
 Make his air thick with thunder, and put out
 All lamplike eyes of stars that look on him
 Till he lie down blind in the dust and die.
 Or if God haply give his lightnings charge
 They hurt him not, and bid his wind pass by
 And the stroke spare him of the bolted cloud,
 Then seeing himself cast out of all that live
 But not of death accepted, everywhere
 An alien soul and shelterless from God,
 He shall go mad with hate of his own soul,
 Of God and man and life and death, and
 live
 A loathlier life and deadlier than the worm's
 That feeds on death, and when it rots from
 him
 Curse God and die. Such end have these
 that loved;
 And she that was beloved, what end shall she?

What think ye yet would God have done with
 her,
 Who puts her in our hand to smite or spare
 That hath done all this wickedness for these,
 What were they but as shadows to the sun
 Cast by her passing, or as thoughts that fled
 Across her mind of evil, types and signs
 Whereby to spell the secret of her soul
 Writ by her hand in blood? What power had
 they,
 What sense, what spirit, that was not given of
 her,
 Or what significance or shape of life
 Their act or purpose, formless else and void,
 Save as her will and present force of her
 Gave breath to them and likeness? None of
 these
 Hath done or suffered evil save for her,
 Who was the spring of each man's deed or
 doom
 And root for each of death, and in his hand
 The sword to die by and the sword to slay.
 Shall this be left then naked in the world
 For him that will to stab our peace to death?
 What blood is this drips from the point? what
 sign,
 What scripture is enamelled on the blade?
 Lo, this fair steel forged only to divide
 This land from truth and cut her soul in twain,
 To cleave the cords in sunder that hold fast
 Our hope to heaven and tie our trust to God,
 Here by the hilt we hold it, and well know
 That if we break not, this now blunted edge
 Being newly ground and sharpened of men's
 hands
 That watch if ours will yet loose hold of it
 Shall pierce our own hearts through. Ay, be
 ye sure,
 If ye bid murder and adultery live,
 They live not stingless; not a Scot that
 breathes,
 No man of you nor woman, but hath part
 In each her several sin and punishment
 That ye take off from her. But what are these
 That with their oaths or arms would fence
 her round
 And hide her from God's lightnings? Know
 they not,
 —Or if they know not, will ye too be blind?—
 What end that Lord who hath bowed so many
 a head,
 So many and mighty, of those her former
 friends,
 Hath power to make of these men? Shall
 they stand,

Because they have done God service while they would,

And cease to serve him? or their good deeds past

Who served not God as Job forsooth for nought
Sustain their feet from falling? Strength nor craft,

Nor praise nor fear nor faith nor love of men,
Shall be for buckler to them, nor his name
A helm of vantage for the Douglas' head
If he make stiff against the yoke of God
Too proud a neck, that for the curb cast off
May feel the weight and edge that iron hath,
To check high minds and chasten; nor his wit
Nor subtle tongue shall be for Lethington
But as a pointless and unfeathered shaft
Shot heavenward without hurt, that falls again
In the archer's eye to pierce it; and his lips
That were so large of mockery when God spake,

By present organ of his works and wrath
And tongueless sound of justice audible,
Shall drink the poison of their words again
And their own mocks consume them; and the mouth

That spat on Christ, now pleading for his foes,
Be stricken dumb as dust. Than shall one say,
Seeing these men also smitten, as ye now
Seeing them that bled before to do her good,
God is not mocked; and ye shall surely know
What men were these and what man he that spake

The things I speak now prophesying, and said
That if ye spare to shed her blood for shame,
For fear or pity of her great name or face,
God shall require of you the innocent blood
Shed for her fair face's sake, and from your hands

Wring the price forth of her bloodguiltiness.
Nay, for ye know it, nor have I need again
To bring it in your mind if God ere now
I have borne me witness; in that dreary day
When men's hearts failed them for pure grief
and fear

To see the tyranny that was, and rule
Of this queen's mother, where was no light
left

But of the fires wherein his servants died,
I bade those lords that clave in heart to God
And were perplexed with trembling and with tears

Lift up their hearts, and fear not; and they heard

What some now hear no more, the word I spake

Who have been with them, as their own souls know,

In their most extreme danger; Cowper Moor,
Saint Johnston, and the Crag of Edinburgh,
Are recent in my heart; yea, let these know,
That dark and dolorous night wherein all they
With shame and fear were driven forth of
this town

Is yet within my mind; and God forbid
That ever I forget it. What, I say,
Was then my exhortation, and what word
Of all God ever promised by my mouth
Is fallen in vain, they live to testify
Of whom not one that then was doomed to death

Is perished in that danger; and their foes,
How many of these hath God before their eyes

Plague-stricken with destruction! lo the thanks
They render him, now to betray his cause
Put in their hands to stablish; even that God's
That kept them all the darkness through too
see

Light, and the way that some now see no
more,

But are gone after light of the fen's fire
And walk askant in slippery ways; but ye
Know if God's hand have ever when I spake
Writ liar upon me, or with adverse proof
Turned my free speech to shame; for in my lips

He put a word, and knowledge in my heart,
When I was fast bound of his enemies' hands
An oarsman on their galleys, and beheld
From off the sea whereon I sat in chains
The walls wherein I knew that I there bound
Should one day witness of him; and this pledge
Hath God redeemed not? Nay then, in God's name,

If that false word fell unfulfilled of mine,
Heed ye not now nor hear me when I say
That for this woman's sake shall God cut off
The hand that spares her as the hand that shields,

And make their memory who take part with her
As theirs who stood for Baal against the Lord
With Ahab's daughter; for reign and end
Shall be like Athaliah's, as her birth
Was from the womb of Jezebel, that slew
The prophets, and made foul with blood and fire

The same land's face that now her seed makes
foul

With whoredoms and with witchcrafts; yet they
say

Peace, where is no peace, while the adulterous blood

Feeds yet with life and sin the murderous heart

That hath brought forth a wonder to the world
And to all time a terror; and this blood
The hands are clean that shed, and they that spare

In God's just sight spotted as foul as Cain's.
If then this guilt shall cleave to you or no,

And to your children's children, for her sake,
Choose ye; for God needs no man that is loth

To serve him, and no word but his own work
To bind and loose their hearts who hear and see

Such things as speak what I lack words to
First Citizen. She shall not live.

Second Citizen. If by their mouths to-day
She be set free from death, then by our hands
She dies to-morrow.

Voices in the crowd. Nay, to fire with her!
Fire for the murderess! cast her bones in the lake!
Burn, burn and drown! She shall not live

SCENE VIII.—A ROOM IN THE PROVOST HOUSE.

The QUEEN, ATHOL, and MORTON.

Queen. I will not part from hence; here will I see
What man dare do upon me.

Athol. Hear you not
How the cry thickens for your blood? this night
Scarce has time left to save you.

Queen. I will die.

Morton. Madam, your will is no more now the sword

That cuts all knots in sunder: you must live,
And thank the force that would not give you leave

To give your foes the blood they seek to
Here every hour's is as an arrow's flight
Winged for your heart; if in these clamorous walls

You see this darkness by the sun cast out,
You will not see his light go down alive.

Queen. What men are ye then, that have made my life

Safe with your oaths, that walled it round with words,

Fenced it with faith and fortified it with air

Made of your breaths and honours? When ye swore,

I knew the lie's weight on your lips, and took
My life into mine hand; I had no thought
To live or rove among you but to death,
And whither ye have led me to what end
Nor I nor God knows better than I knew
Then when ye swore me safe; for then as now

I knew your faith was lighter than my life,
And my life's weight a straw's weight in the wind

[to this,
Of your blown vows. Pledge me your faith
That I shall die to-night if I go forth
And if I stay live safe, and I will go
In trust to live, being here assured to die.

Morton. We swore to save you as you swore again

To cast the traitor from you, and divorce
Your hand for ever from the blood on his;
And with that hand you wrote to him: last night
Vows of your love and constant heart till death
As his true wife to serve and cleave to him.
The boy that should have borne your letter lacked

Faith to be trusty to your faithless trust,
And put it in our hand.

Queen. Why, so I thought;
I knew there was no soul between these walls
Of child or man that had more faith than ye
Who stand their noblest; nor shall one soul breathe,

If here ye put not out my present life, [earth
When I come back, that shall not burn on
Ere hell take hold of it.

Morton. It is well seen,
Madam, that fear nor danger can pluck forth
Your tongue that strikes men mad with love or scorn,

Taunted or tempted; yet it shall not wrest
Death from men's hands untimely; what was sworn,

[it may,
That you should live, shall stand; and that
To-night must ye part hence; this lord and I
Will bring you through to Holyrood afoot
And be your warders from the multitude
As you pass forth between us; thence to Leith,

And there shall you take water and ere dawn
Touch at Burntisland, whence some twenty miles

Shall bear you to Lochleven and safe guard
On the Fife border; he that has your charge
Is one not trusted more than tired of us,
Sir William Douglas, in whose mother's ward

At Kinross there shall you abide what end
 God shall ordain of troubles : at this need
 No kindlier guard or trustier could secure
 The life we pluck out of the popular mouth
 That roars agape to rend it. You must go.

Queen. Must I not too go barefoot ? being
 your queen,

Ye do me too much grace : I should be led
 In bonds between you, with my written sins
 Pinned to my forehead, and my naked shame
 Wrapt in a shameful sheet : so might I pass,
 If haply I might pass at all alive
 Forth of my people's justice, to salute
 With seemly show of penance her chaste
 eyes

Whom ye have chosen for guard upon her
 queen

And daughter of the king her paramour,
 Whose son being called my brother I must call,
 Haply, to win her favor and her son's
 And her good word with him as mediatrix,
 My father's harlot mother. Verily,
 Ye are worthy guardians of fair fame, and
 friends

Fit to have care of reputation, men
 That take good heed of honor ; and the state
 That hath such counsellors to comfort it
 Need fear no shame nor stain of such re-
 proach

As makes it shrink when with her lords' good
 will,

Advised of all tongues near her and approved,
 A queen may wed the worthiest born of men
 Her subjects, and a warrior take to wife
 One that being widow

Were such a thing as ! I and help
 my lord

I held my kingdom ; now my hand lacks his
 What queen am I, and what slaves ye, that
 throng

And threat my life with vassals, to make vile
 Its majesty forgone with abject fear
 Of my most abject ? yet though I lack might
 Save of a woman friendless and in bonds,
 My name and place yet lack not, nor the state
 And holy magic that God clothes withal
 The naked word of king or queen, and keeps
 In his own shadow, hallowed in his hand,
 Such heads unarmed as mine, that men may
 smite

But no man can dishallow. In this faith,
 Not to your faith I yield myself for fear,
 But gladly to that God's who made of me
 What ye nor no man mightier shall unmake,
 Your queen and mistress. Lead me through
 my streets

Whose stones are tongues now crying for my
 blood

To my dead fathers' palace, that hath oped
 On many kings and traitors : it may be
 I shall not see these walls and gates again
 That cast me out : but if alive or dead
 I come back ever to require my part
 And place among my fathers, on my tomb
 Or on my throne shall there stand graved for
 aye

The living word of this day's work and that
 Which is to wreak me on it : and this town
 Whence I go naked in mine enemies' hands
 Shall be the flame to light men's eyes that read
 What was endured and what revenged of me.

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

THE QUEEN.

ACT V.

TIME: FROM JULY 20, 1567, TO MAY 16, 1568.

SCENE I.—HOLYROOD.

MORTON and MAITLAND.

Morton. I know not yet if we did well to
lay

No public note of murder on the queen
In this our proclamation that sets forth
But the bare justice of our cause, and right
We had to move against her; while her act
Stands yet unproven and seen but by surmise,
Though all but they that will not seem to
know

May know the form and very life of it,
She hath a sword against us and a stay
In the English hearts and envious hands that
wait

To strike at us, and take her name to gild
And edge the weapon of their evil will
Who only are our enemies, and stand
Sole friends of hers, on earth; for France, we
see,

Will be no screen nor buckler for her, though
Fire were now lit to burn her body, or steel
Ground sharp to shear her neck; from Cath-
erine's mouth

Had Murray not assurance, and from him
Have we not word that France will stir no
foot

To save or spill her blood? England alone
By her new-lighted envoy sends rebuke
Made soft and mixed with promise and with
pledge

Of help and comfort to her against our part
Who by this messenger imperiously
Are taxed and threatened as her traitors; this
Must we now answer with a brow as free
And tongue as keen, seeing how his queen in
him

Desires the charge and wardship of our prince
Which we must nowise grant.

Maitland. For fear's sake, no,
Nor for her threats, which rather may pluck on
More present peril, of more fiery foot,

To the queen's life; yet surer might we stand
Having the crown's heir safe and girt about;
With foreign guard in a strange land, than
here

Rocked in the roar of factions, his frail head
Pillowed on death and danger; which once
crushed,

And that thin life cut off, what hand puts forth
To take the crown up by successive right
But theirs that would even now dip violent
hand

In the dear heart's blood of their kinswoman,
That it might take this kingdom by the throat
When she were slain? and rather by our mean
Would they procure her slaying than by their
own

Make swift the death which they desire for her,
And from our hands with craft would draw it
down

By show of friendship to her and threat of
arms

That menace us with mockery and false fear
Of her deliverance by their swords, whose light
Being drawn and shining in our eyes should
scare

Our hearts with doubt of what might fall if she
Stood by their help rekingdomed, and impel
Even in that fear our hands to spill her blood
That lag too long behind their wish, who wait
Till seeing her slain of us they may rise up
Heirs of her cause and lineage, and reclaim
By right of blood and justice and revenge
The crown that drops from Stuart to Hamilton
With no more let or thwart than a child's life
Whose length should be their pleasure's; and
with these

Against our cause will England league herself
If yet the queen live prisoner of our hands
And these her kin draw swords for her; but
they,

Though England know not of it, nor have eye
To find their drift, would mix their cause with
ours,

If from the queen's head living we should pluck

The royal office, and as next in blood
 Instate them regents ; who would reign indeed
 Rather by death's help if they might, and
 build

On her child's grave and hers their regency,
 Than rule by deputation ; yet at need
 Will be content by choice or leave of us
 To take the delegated kingdom up
 And lack but name of king : which being
 installed

I doubt they think not long to lack, or live
 Its patient proxies ever. So the land,
 Shaken and sundered, looks from us to these,
 From these again to usward, and hears blown
 Upon the light breath of the doubtful hour
 Rumors of fear which swell men's hearts with
 wrath

To hear of southern wars and counsels hatch-
 ed

That think with fright to shrink them up,
 and bind

Their blood's course fast with threats. Let
 England know,

Her menace that makes cold no vein of ours
 May heat instead the centre and the core
 Of this land's pulse with fire, and in that flame
 The life we seek not and the crown it wears
 Consume together. France will rest our friend
 Whether the queen find grace to live in
 bonds

Or bleed beneath our judgment ; he that comes
 On errand thence to reconcile with us

Her kin that stand yet on the adverse part
 Hath but in charge to do her so much good

As with our leave he may, and break no bond
 That holds us firm in friendship ; if we will,

She may be held in ward of France, and
 live

Within the bound there of a convent wall
 Till death redeem her ; but howe'er he speed
 Who hath commission with what power he
 may

To make of our twain factions one such league
 As may stand fast and perfect friend with
 France,

And in what wise by grace of us he may
 To do our prisoner service and entreat
 That grace to drop upon her, this main
 charge

He needs must keep, to hold allied in one
 Scotland and France, and let our hand not
 plight

Fresh faith instead with England ; so for us
 From France looks forth no danger though
 she die,

For her no help ; and these void English
 threats,

That bring no force to back them but their
 own

And find not us unfriended, do hut blow
 The embers that her life still treads upon
 Which being enkindled shall devour it.

Morton. Ay,
 And each day leaves them redder from the
 breath

That through the land flies clamorous for her
 blood

From lips which boast to bear upon them
 laid

The live coal burning of the word that God
 Gives them to speak against her ; the south
 towns

Are full of tongues that cry on our delay
 To purge the land plague-stricken with her life ;

He first who never feared the face of man,
 John Knox, and Craig his second, till men's
 ears

With words as arrows edged and winged to
 slay ;

And all the wide-mouthed commons, and more
 loud

The women than their men, stretch their shrill
 throats

With cries for judgment on her ; and herself,
 As parcel of the faction for her death,

Takes part with them against her friends, and
 swears

To the English envoy who was charged by
 stealth

To plead with her for mercy on her life
 And privly persuade her, as we find,

To cast out Bothwell from her secret thought,
 She would die first ere so divorce her soul

From faith and hope that hangs on him and
 feeds

Her constant spirit with comfort which sus-
 tains

His child alive within her ; for she thinks
 Haply to move men's hearts even by the plea

That hardens them against her, being be-
 lieved,

For the false fruit's sake of her fatal womb,
 The seed of Bothwell, that with her should
 born

Rather than bring forth shame, and in this
 land

Become a root of wars unborn and fire
 Kindled among our children.

Maitland. Nay, this plea
 Can be but sometime to defend her life

And put back judgment: never could she
think,
Though love made witless whom the world
found wise,
His seed might reign in Scotland.

Morton. We are not
So barren of our natural brood of kings
As to be grafted from so vile a stock
Though he were now cut off who grows yet
green

Upon the stem so shaken and pierced through
With cankers now that gnaw the grain away;
Nor if the child whom whatsoever he be
We for the kingdom's comfort needs must
seem

To take for true-begotten, and receive
As issued of her husband's kingly blood,
Should live not to take up with timely hand
The inheritance whereto we hold him born,
Should the crown therefore by his death derive
To the queen's kin, or hand of Hamilton
Assume the state and sway that slides from his:
His father hath a brother left alive,
The younger son of Lennox, who might put
More hopefully his nephew's title on
Than leave it for the spoil of hungry hands
That would make war upon our present state,
Unseat the rule of established things, unmake
The counsel and the creed whereby we stand,
And Scotland with us, firm of foot and free
Against the whole face of the weaponed world:
But this boy's crown shall be a golden ring
To hoop and hold our state and strength in
And with the seemly name of king make
The rent bulk of our laboring commonwealth
And solder its flawed sides; his right of reign
Is half our gift who reign in him, and half
His heritage of blood, whose lineal name
Shall not by note of usurpation strike
With strangeness or offence the world's wide
ear

That hears a Stuart our prince's uncle crowned
In the dead child's succession, and this state
Made safe in him and stable to sustain
What chance abroad may range or breed at
home

Of force to shake it.

Maitland. While the child lives yet,
A nearer hope than of his father's kin
Looks fairer on us; yet in that life's wreck
This rope might hold at need.

Morton. Ay, or we fall,
Who stand against the house of Hamilton
In this man's name; his kinsman Ruthven,
Mar,

Myself and Athol, who sustain his cause
Against their part alone.

Maitland. So do you well;
Yet had I rather on the queen's appeal,
In her father's and her young child's
name

Pleading for life, with proffer to resign
Her kingdom to the council's hands or his
Whom it may mark for regent, she might live
Even yet our titular queen, and in her name
The council govern of our trustiest heads,
While in safe ward of England or of France
Far from his kindred might her son grow safe,
And under strange and kinder suns his
strength

Wax ripe to bear a kingdom; to this end
Save Bothwell's life I see no present let,
Who lives her shame and danger, but being
slain

Takes off from her the peril of men's tongues
And her more perilous love that while he lives
It seems will never slacken till her life
Be made a prey for his, but in his death
Dies, or lives stingless after; wherefore most
It now imports us to lay hand on him
And on that capture to proclaim divorce
Between them ere he die, as presently
His death should seal it and his blood sub-
scribe.

So might she live and bring against our cause
No blame of men or danger.

Morton. In my mind
Better it were to crown her son for king
And send her for safe keeping hence in guard
To live in England prisoner while we stand
As safe from her as blameless of her blood
Who reigning but in name on the world reign
Indeed, all our enemies' hopes and turn
From the hopeless hearts of half our friends
For the name's sake of her seeming reign
And the false-faced empire.

Maitland. As I think,
The council will not bend
To a name on our parts proposed
For the name's sake or titular reign,
Nor the strength of our advice be blown
Beside the wind; if the queen consent
That her name be hallowed with her
crown

And here she bare before him, she shall live,
And that the record of her secret hand,
The proof of scriptures in her casket locked
That seal her part in Darnley's bloodshedding,
Shall yet lie in darkness; else, I dread,
She shall be by witness in them writ

And each word there be clamorous on men's
tongues

As the doom uttered of her present death.
And not more instant should her judgment be
Than her swift execution ; for they think,
I know, to find no safety while she lives ;
So that in no case shall she pass alive
Out of this realm while power is in their lips
To speed or stay her.

Morton. They shall never think
To set before all eyes the whole tale forth
In popular proof and naked evidence
To plead against her ; Balfour, that betrayed
Her counsels to us, should then have done
more scathe

Than ever he did service ; they must know
It were not possible to let this proof
Stand in the sun's sight, and such names be read
For partners of her deed and not her doom
As Huntley's and Argyle's. Have they not
heard

What should suffice to show if there be cause
To seal some part yet of this secret up,
How dearly Bothwell held those privy scrolls
Preserved as witness to confound at need
The main part of his judges, and abash
Their sentence with their clear complicity
In the crime sentenced ? yea, so dear a price
He set on these, that flying for life he sends
Dalglish his trustiest servant from Dunbar
To bring again from Balfour's hands to his
The enamelled casket in whose silver hold
Lay the queen's letters and the bond sub-
scribed

Which at Craigmillar writ a live man dead.
This was a smooth and seasonable hour
For one of so soft spirit and tender heart
To send and seek for love of good days gone
A love-gift that his lady brought from France
To hold sweet scents or jewels ; and the man
That to his envoy so delivered it
And sent our council warning to waylay
And where to intercept it, this was one
Meet for such trust and amorous offices,
Balfour, that yielding us the castle up
Yields likewise for a sword into our hands
To take by stroke of justice the queen's life
His witness with what words she tempted him
From her own lips, how lovingly and long,
To kill her husband ; yet he durst not ; then
How at her bidding he might well take heart,
She said, to do it ; yet he stood fearful off ;
Whereat she brake into a glimmering wrath
That called him coward and bade him live
assured

If his tongue ever let this counsel forth
By her sure mean and suddenly to die.

Maitland. This were a sword to drink her
life indeed

But that my hope is better of the lords
Than that their heart is fixed upon her death ;
And for the commons and their fiery tongue,
The loud-lipped pilot of their windy will,
This famine of their anger shall feed all
And slake its present need but with the spoil
Made of the piteous remnants of her faith
By the stout hand here of their friend Glen-
cairn,

Who from this chapel of her palace rends
All holy ornament, grinds down with steel
The images whereon Christ dies in gold,
Unsancities for sovereign sanctuary,
Unmoulds her God and mints and marks him
new,
And makes his molten chalices run down
Into strange shape and service ; this should
ease,

Meseems, the hunger of the hate they bear
That creed for which they held her first in hate ;
And for the secular justice to be done
For his death's sake whom all these loathed
alive,

It should content them that the trial has past
On those we held in hand, and by this test
The man whose marriage masque on that loud
night

Was pretext for the queen to lie apart
From the near danger of her husband's bed,
Sebastian, stands approved as innocent
And no part of her purpose ; while the twain,
Who bore the charge that was to load with
death

The secret house, and to the monster's hand
Consigned the mean of murder have endured
The perfect proof of torture, and confessed
In the extreme pang of evidence enforced
The utmost of their knowledge.

Morton. These may serve
To allay men's instant angers ; but much more
His face should profit us whom France detains
With snit and proffer from the queen-mother
With all their force and flower of war or craft
To help him to the crown of his own land
Or throne at least of regency therein,
If he will take but France for constant friend
And turn our hearts with his from England ;
this

Would Catherine give him for his friendship's
sake

Who gives her none for all this, but his hope

Cleaves yet to England, though for fraud or fear

Again it fail him; so being foiled and wroth,
He hath, she tells him, a right English heart,
And in that faith withholds him craftily
From his desired departure and return,
Which should be more of all this land desired
Than of himself; this Elphinstone that comes
For him from Paris, in his master's name
To plead as in her brother's for the queen,
Bears but the name of Murray in his mouth,
Whose present language, whose spirit
and mind,

Our need of him appears. When their intent
Shall by the lords in council be made known
To him that stands here for Elizabeth,
How in her name will he receive the word
That but from Murray's lip she thinks to hear,
And then determine with what large response
For peace or war she may resolve herself?

Maitland. If she shall find our council one
in will

To shed by doom of judgment the queen's
blood,

Even by Throgmorton's mouth I am certified
That she will call on France to strike with her
For this their sister's sake, and join in one
Their common war to tread our treason down;
Or if she find not aid of France, from Spain
Will she seek help to hold our French allies
With curb and snaffle fast of Spanish steel,
For fear their powers against her lend us might
That would not lend against us; she mean-
time,

While Philip's hand hath France as by the
hair,

Shall loosen on us England, to redeem
That forfeit life which till the day of fight
Her trust is but in Murray to preserve,
Seeing he spake never word in English ear
Against this queen his sister.

Morton. Being returned,
He shall bear witness if his heart be bent
Rather to this queen's love or that queen's fear
Than to the sole weal of his natural land
That hath more need he should take thought
for her

Than one of these or the other. If the lords
Be purposed, as I guess, to bid the queen
Ere this month end make choice of death or
life,

To live uncrowned and call her young son
king

Or die by doom attainted, none but he
By her submission or her death must rise

Regent of Scotland; and each hour that flits
With louder tongue requires him, and rebukes
His tardiness of spirit or foot to flee
By swift and private passage forth of France
To where our hearts wait that have need of
him.

SCENE II.—LOCHLEVEN CASTLE.

The QUEEN and MARY BEATON.

Queen. I would I knew before this day be
dead

If I must live or die. 'Why art thou pale?
It seems thou art not sad though I sit here
And thou divide my prison; for I see
Thine eye more kindled and thy lip more calm
And hear thy voice more steadfast than it was
When we were free of body; then the soul
Seemed to sit heavy in thee, and thy face
Was as a water's wearied with the wind,
Dim eye and fitful lip, whereon thy speech
Would break and die untimely. Do these walls
And that wan wrinkling water at their foot
For my sake please thee? Thou shouldst love
me well.

Or hate, I know not whether, if to share
The cup wherein I drink delight the lip
That pledges in it mine.

Mary Beaton. If I be pale,
For fear it is not nor for discontent
Here to sit bounded; I could well be pleased
To shoot my thoughts no further than this wall
That is my body's limit, and to lead
My whole life's length as quiet as we sit
Till death fulfilled all quiet, did I know
There were no wars without nor days for you
Of change and many a turbulent chance to be
Whence I must not live absent.

Queen. Hast thou part,
Think'st thou, as in time past, predestinate
In all my days and chances?

Mary Beaton. Yea, I know it.

Queen. If thou have grace to prophesy, per-
chance

Canst thou tell too how I shall fare forth hence,
If quick or dead? I had rather much know
Than if thou love or hate me.

Mary Beaton. Truly then
My mind forecasts with no great questioning
You shall pass forth alive.

Queen. What, to my death?
Mary Beaton. To life and death that comes
of life at last;

I know not when it shall.

Queen. I would be sure
If our good guardian know no more than thou ;
I think she should ; yet if she knew I think
I should not long desire to know as much,
But the utmost thing that were of her fore-
known

Should in mine eye stand open.

Mary Beaton. She is kind.

Queen. I would she were a man that had
such heart ;

So might it do me service.

Mary Beaton. So it may.

Queen. How ? in her son ? Ay, haply,
could I bring

Mine own heart down to feed their hearts with
hope,

They might grow great enough to do me good.
I tell thee yet, I thought indeed to die

When I came hither. 'Tis but five weeks
gone—

Five, and two days ; I keep the count of days
Here ; I can mind the smell of the moist air

As we took land, and when we got to horse
I thought I never haply might ride more,

Nor hear a hoof's beat on the glad green ground,
Nor feel the free steed stretch him to the way

Nor his flank bound to bear me ; then meseem-
ed

Men could not make me live in prison long ;
It were unlike my being, out of my doom ;

Free should I live, or die. Then came these
walls

And this blind water shuddering at the sun
That rose ere we had ten miles ridden ; and
here

The black boat rocked that took my feet off
shore,

And set them in this prison ; and as I came
The honey-heavy heather touched my sense

Wellnigh to weeping ; I did think to die
And smell nought sweeter than the naked

grave.

Yet sit we not among the worms and roots,
But can see this much—from the round tower
here

The square walls of the main tower opposite
And the bare court between ; a gracious sight.

Yet did they not so well to let me live,
If they love life too ; I will find those friends

That found these walls and fears to fence me
with

A narrower lodging than this seven feet's space
That yet I move in, where nor lip nor limb

Shall breathe or move for ever.

Mary Beaton.

Do you think

You shall not long live bound ?

Queen. Impossible.

I would have violent death, or life at large ;
And either speedy. Were it in their mind

To slay me here and swiftly, as I thought,
Thou wouldst not here sit by their leave with

me ;
They get not so much grace who are now to
die

And could not need it ; yet I have heard it
said

The headsmen grants what sort of grace he
may—

A grievous grace—to one about to bleed
That asks some boon before his neck lie

down ;
Thy face was haply such a boon to me,
Being cradle-fellows and fast-hearted friends,

To see before I died, and this the gift
Given of my headsmen's grace ; what think'st

thou ?

Mary Beaton. Nay,
That I know nought of headsmen.

Queen. Thou hast seen—
It is a sharp strange thing to see men die.

I have prayed these men for life, thou knowest,
have sent

Prayers in my son's and my dead father's
name,

Their kings that were and shall be, and men
say

One was well loved of the people, and their
love

Is good to have, a goodly stay—and yet
I do not greatly think I fear to die.

I would not put off life yet ; if I live,
For one thing most shall these men pay me

dear,
That I was ever touched with fear of death.

Thou hast heard how seeing a child on the
island once

Strayed over from the shore, I cried to him
Through the pierced wall between five feet of

stone

To bid my friends pray God but for my soul,
My body was worth little ; and they thought

I was cast down with bitter dread of heart ;
Please God, for that will I get good revenge.

I dream no more each night now on my lord,
And yet God knows how utterly I know

I would be hewn in pieces—yea, I think—
Or turned with fire to ashes for his sake ;

Surely I would.

Enter LADY LOCHLEVEN.

Lady Lochleven. Good morrow to your grace.

Queen. Good madam, if the day be good or no

Our grace can tell not ; while our grace had yet The grace to walk an hour in the sun's eye With your fair daughters and our bedfellows About your battlements that hold us fast, Or breathe outside the gateway where our foot Might feel the terrace under, we might say The morn was good or ill ; being here shut up, We make no guesses of the sun, but think To find no more good morrows.

Lady Lochleven. Let your grace Chide not in thought with me ; for this restraint,

That since your late scarce intercepted flight Has been imposed upon me, from my heart I think you think that I desired it not.

Queen. Ay, we were fools we Maries twain, and thought

To be into the summer back again And see the broom blow in the golden world, The gentle broom on hill. For all men's talk And all things come and gone yet, yet I find I am not tired of that I see not here, The sun, and the large air, and the sweet earth, And the hours that hum like fire-flies on the hills

As they burn out and die, and the bowed heaven,

And the small clouds that swim and swoon ? the sun,

And the small flowers. Now should I keep these things

But as sweet matter for my thoughts in French, To set them in a sonnet ; here at home

I read too plain in our own tongue my doom, To see them not, and love them. Pardon me ;

I would have none weep for me but my foes, And then not tears. Be not more discontent

Than I to think that you could deem of me As of one thankless ; who were thankless

found,

Not knowing that by no will or work of yours I sit suppressed thus from the sun ; 'tis mine,

My fault that smites me ; and my masters' will, Not mine or yours it is, that for my fault

Devised this penance ; which on me wrought out

May fall again on them.

Lady Lochleven. Madam, alas, I came on no such errand to your grace As lacked more words to make it sad than those

It was to speak ; and these have I put back Too long and idly. Here are now at gate Three messengers sent from the parliament To speak with you.

Queen. With us to speak ? you know, Nor chamberlain nor herald have we here To marshal men before us. Let them come, Whom all our kingdom left could keep not out From this high presence-chamber. Stay ; I would not

Be stricken unaware, nor find in you That which I thought not ; it were out of kind, Unwomanlike, to give me to their hands Who came to slay me, knowing not why they came ;

Is it for that ?

Lady Lochleven. God's grace forbid it I may—

Queen. I ask if they bring warrant for my death ?

I have seen such things and heard, since leaves bloomed last,

That this were no such marvellous thing to hear. But if this be, before I speak with them, I will know first.

Lady Lochleven. Let not your highness dread—

Queen. I do not bid you put me out of dread. Have you not heard, and hear ? The queen desires

To know of her born subject till she die And keeper of her prison, if these men

Be come to slay her.

Lady Lochleven. They come to bid your grace—

Queen. Bid my grace do their bidding ? that is like :

That I should do it were unlike. I must live, I see, this some while yet. What men are these ?

Lady Lochleven. The first, Sir Robert Melville ; then the lords

Ruthven and Lindsay.

Queen. Bid my first friend in, While one friend may be bidden ; he, I think, Can come but friendlike.

[*Exit LADY LOCHLEVEN.*
What should these desire ?

One head of theirs I swore last month to have, That then beheld me, some day, if that hand

Whereon I swore should take not first my life. And one the son of him that being nigh dead

Rose from his grave's edge to pluck down alive A murdered man before him—what should he

Bring less than murder, being his father's son, In such a hand as his that stabbed my friend ?

Mary Beaton. Perchance they come to take your crown, not life.

Queen. What, my name too? but till I yield it them,

They have but half the royal thing they hold,
The state they ravish : and they shall not have
My name but with my life ; while that sits fast,
As in my will it sits, I am queen, and they
My servants yet that fear to take my life ;
For so thou seest they fear ; and I did ill,
That in first sight of present-seeming death
Made offer to resign into their hands
What here is mine of empire : I shall live,
And being no queen I live not.

Enter SIR ROBERT MELVILLE.

Welcome, sir ;

I have found since ever times grew strange
with me

Good friends of your good brother and yourself,
And think to find. What errand have you here?

Sir R. Melville. Let not your majesty cast
off the thought

Which calls me friend, though I be first to bear
An evil errand. 'Tis the council's mind

That you shall live, and in their hand the
proofs

Shall die that plead against you—

Queen. Is this ill?

I know not well what proof that man could
show

Would prove men honest that make war on
faith,

Show treason trusty, bleach rebellion white,
Bid liars look loyal ; and much less I know

What proof might speak against me from their
lips

Whose breath may kill and quicken evidence,
Or what good change of mind rebuke the lie

That lived upon them ; but that I must live,
And of their proofs unspotted, sounds not worse

Than if a friend had come to bear me word
That I must die belied.

Sir R. Melville. Upon these terms

Are they content for you to live in ward ;

That you yield up as with free hand the crown
And right of kingdom to your son, who straight

At Stirling shall receive it from their hands ;
Else shall your grace be put to trial, and bear

The doom ensuing, with what of mortal weight
May hang upon that sentence.

Queen. Sir, methought

This word of doom for shame's sake now was
dead

Even in their mouths that first it soiled, and
made

Even shamelessness astonished ; not again
We thought to hear of judgment, we that are,

While yet we are anything, and yet must be,
The voice which deals, and not the ear which

takes,
Judgment. God gave man might to murder me,

Who made me woman, weaker than a man,
But God gave no man right, I think, to judge,

Who made me royal. Come then, I will die ;
I did not think to live. Must I die here?

Sir R. Melville. Madam, my errand—

Queen. Ay, sir, is received

Here in my heart ; I thank you ; hut you
know

I had no hope before ; yet sounds it strange
That should not sound, to die at such men's

hands,
A queen, and at my years. Forgive me, sir ;

Me it not comforts to discomfort you,
Who are yet my friend—as much as man on

earth—
If any, you—that come to bid me die.

Sir R. Melville. Be not cast down so deep ;
I have an errand

From the English queen, your friend, and here
ensheathed

By my sword's secret side, for your fair hand
A letter writ from her ambassador

Praying you subscribe what thing my comrades
will,

Since nought whereto your writing was com-
pelled

Can hang hereafter on you as a chain
When but for this bond written you stand free.

Queen. Ay, I know that : how speaks
Elizabeth?

Sir R. Melville. She bids you at all times
account of her

As a sure friend and helpful ; has, I know,
Indeed no mind to fail you.

Queen. This your comfort
Is no small comfort to me ; I had rather

Be bounden to her than any prince alive.
Is it her counsel then that I subscribe

My traitors' writing? I will do it. But, sir,
Of those that sit in state in Edinburgh

Which was it chose you for my comforter?
I know my lord of Morton would send none ;

It was the secretary?

Sir R. Melville. Madam, the same.

Queen. Did I not well then, think you,
when I cast

This body of mine between him and the swords

That would have hewn his body? I did think
He was my friend. Bid now mine enemies in,
And I will sign what sort of shame they will,
And rid them hence.

Enter LINDSAY and the Younger RUTHVEN.

'Tis five weeks gone, my lord,

[To LINDSAY.
Since last we looked on you; for you, fair sir,
[To RUTHVEN.

A year I think and four good months are sped
Since at that father's back whose name you
bear

I saw your face dashed red with blood. My
lords,

Ye come to treat with us ambassadors
Sent from our subjects; and we cannot
choose,

Being held of them in bonds from whom ye
come,

But give you leave to speak.

Lindsay. Thus, briefly, madam.

If you will live to die no death by doom,
This threefold bond of contract that we bring
Requires your hand; wherein of your free will
First must you yield the crown of Scotland up
To your child's hand; then by this second
deed

The place and name of regent through this
realm

To the earl of Murray shall you here assign
Or, if he list not take this coil in hand,
Then to the council; last, this deed empowers
The lords of Mar and Morton with myself
To set the crown upon the young king's head.
These shall you sign.

Queen. These I shall sign, or die.
But hear you, sirs; when hither you brought
these,

Burned not your hearts within you by the way
Thinking how she that should subscribe was
born

King James's daughter? that this shameful
hand,

Fit to sustain nor sword nor staff o' the realm,
Hath the blood in it of those years of kings
That tamed the neck and drove with spurs the
sides

Of this beast people that now casts off me?

Ay, this that is to sign, no hand but this
Throbs with their sole inheritance of life
Who held with bit and bridle this bound land
And made it pace beneath them. What are ye
That I should tell you so, whose fathers fought

Beneath my fathers? Where my grandsire fell
And all this land about him, was there none
That bore on Flodden, sirs, such names as
yours,

And shamed them not? Heard no men past
of lords

That for the king's crown gave their crown of
life

For death to harry? Did these grieve or
grudge

To be built up into that bloody wall
That could not fence the king? Were no dead
found

Of that huge cirque wherein my grandsire lay
But of poor men and commons? Yea, my
lords,

I think the sires that bred you had not heart
As men have writ of them, but sent to fight
For them their vassals visored with their crests,
And these did well, and died, and left your
sires

That hid their heads for ever and lived long
The name and false name of their deeds and
death.

How should their sons else, how should ye,
being born,

If born ye be, not bastards, of those lords

Who gat this lying glory to be called

Loyal, and in the reek of a false field

To fall so for my fathers—how, I say,

Dare sons of such come hither, how stand
here,

From off the daughter's head of all those
kings

To pluck the crown that on my fathers' heads

Ye say they died to save? I will not sign;

No, let some Flodden sword dip in my blood;

Here I sit fast, and die. Good friend that was,

[To SIR R. MELVILLE.

Tell my great sister that you saw my hand

Stirve and leave off to sign; I had no skill

To shape false letters.

Ruthven. Madam, no man here
But knows by heart the height of your stout
words

And strength of speech or sweetness; all this
breath

Can blow not hack the storm yourself raised up
Whose tempest shakes the kingdom from your
hand,

And not men's hate. You have been loved of
men;

All faith of heart, all honor possible,
While man might give, men gave you. Now,
those deeds

Which none against your will enforced you do
Have set that spirit against you in men's minds
That till you die (as then your memory may)
Nor your fair beauty nor your fiery heart
Can lay with spells asleep.

Sir R. Melville (aside). I pray you madam,
Think on mine errand.

Queen. Wherefore should I sign?
If I be queen that so unqueen myself,
What shall it profit me to give my foes
This one thing mine that hallows me, this
name,

This royal shadow? If I be no queen,
Let me bleed here; as being uncrowned I
know

That I shall die of all your promises.

Lindsay. We came not, madam, to put
force on you,

And save your life by violence; but take note,
[Laying his hand on her arm.]

As in this hand your own is fast, and hath
No power till mine give back its power again
To strive or sign, so fast are you in ward
For life or death of them that bid you live
And be no queen, or die.

Queen. I thank you, sir,
That of your love and courtesy have set
This knightly sign upon my woman's flesh
For proof if I be queen or no, that bear
Such writing on my body of men's hands
To seal mine abdication. Sirs, read here;
What need I sign again? here may men see
If she be queen of Scotland on whose arm
Are writ such scriptures as I wist not yet
Men's eyes might read on any woman born.
Yet will I write, being free, to assure myself
This is my hand indeed that wears the sign
Which proves its vassal to the stronger. Sirs,
Take back your papers; and albeit, my lord,
The conquest you have made of me henceforth
Lift up your heart with pride, I pray you yet
Boast not yourself on women overmuch,
Lest being their conqueror called and praised
for that

Men call you too their tyrant. Once and
twice

Have we grasped hands; the third time they
shall cross

Must leave one cold for ever. Nay, I pray,
Who may command not surely, yet I pray,
Speak not, but go; ye have that ye came for;
go,

And make your vaunt to have found so meek
a thing

As would yield all, and thank you.

[Exeunt LINDSAY, RUTHVEN, and SIR R. MELVILLE.]

Hast thou read
Of sick men healed with baths of children's
blood?

I must be healed of this my plague of shame,
This sickness of disgrace they leave with me,
Bathing in theirs my body.

Mary Beaton. In such streams
You have washed your hands already.

Queen. What, in war.
Ay, there I have seen blood shed for me,
and yet

Wept not nor trembled; if my heart shrink
now,

It is for angry pity of myself
That I should look on shame.

Mary Beaton. What shame, my queen?

Queen. Thy queen? why, this, that I, queen
once of Scots,

Am no more now than thine. Call back the
lords;

I will unsign their writing, and here die;
It were the easier end.

Mary Beaton. It is your will—
Forgive me, madam—on this cause again
To grapple with Lord Lindsay?

Queen. True, not yet;
Thou thought'st to make me mad, remember-
ing that;

But it hath made me whole. My wits are
sound,

Remembering I must live. When I have slept,
Say I would gladly see the kindlier face
Again of our dear hostess with her son
To put those angry eyes out of my sight
That lightened late upon me; say, being sad,
And (if thou wilt) being frightened, I must
find

The comfortable charities of friends
More precious to me. 'Tis but truth, I am
fain,

Being tired, to sleep an hour: mine eyes are
hot;

Where tears will come not, fire there breeds
instead,

Thou knowest, to burn them through. Let
me lie down;

I will expect their comforts in an hour.
[Exeunt.]

SCENE III.—HOLYROOD.

MAITLAND and SIR NICHOLAS THROGMOR-
TON.

Throgmorton. Why would your council
give no ear to me
Ere they rode hence so hot to crown their
prince?

Why hear not first one word?

Maitland. One threat the more
From your queen's lips bequeathed by rote to
yours,

Or one more promise? If we run her course,
This queen will leave us in the briars, we
know,

There to lie fast or labor. All the thorns
Have rent our flesh and raiment.

Throgmorton. Sir, take thought
If help were sent not at the siege of Leith,
When France had gasped you by the throat,
and sea

To land gave battle, from that sovereign's
hand

Whom now ye trust not.

Maitland. Ay, for her own ends
She cast the French out and flung back their
power

Which here was deadly to her, and of that
deed

Had recompense with surety: but what aid
Must we now look for of her, on whose will
Hang all our enemies' lopes? I would I had
been

Banished seven years my country, and your
queen

On that condition had but as a friend
Dealt freely with us. Let her now proclaim,
Her own seed failing, this our prince her heir,
And England shall no less have care of him
Than we his lineal servants; else, if hence
We yield him to your keeping, men will say
We have given our natural master to be kept
As among wolves a sheep, and made our hope
The fosterling of danger: and small trust
Should we put in her that has newly dealt
By secret message to subvert our state,
We know, with those indeed of our queen's
kin

From whose report we know

Throgmorton. What have they said?

Maitland. That you brought proffers of her
aid and love

To incite their arms, to quicken the slow snake
Whose sting lies cold yet in their policy,
But watched and warmed of her with hand and
eye

The perfect poison should put forth, and thrust
At once the hot and cloven tongue of war
Even in our face and bosom; but for fear,

It may be, or being yet at heart's roots Scots,—
For this or that cause, through false heart or
true,

So is it, that in doubt of your good mind
Toward them or Scotland, in whose breast
you sought

To make the mutual swords of her own sons
Clash as they crossed once more, drinking her
blood,

They sent us word of all your embassy.

Throgmorton. But you, whate'er these
thought or feigned to think,
Think no such foolish evil as fools may,
Deem not of England as the Scots who deem
She hath no will, no line of life, no hope,
No thought but Scotland's ruin, and our queen
No sense of aught here done—her sister's
doom,

The people's rage, the council's purpose—
nought

But where to find in these a guileful mean
To strike at Scotland? why, these fears are
old,

White-bearded dreams, suspicions long grown
grey,

Dangers and doubts toothless and eyeless now
That fright no babe nor dotard; and your
thought

Finds room for such? What profit should she
have

To turn your swords against each other's throats
And pick some privy chance of vantage up
That fell between your factions at her feet?
Such chance indeed of vantage might there fall
For your own queen, who nowise has been
slow

To nurse the chance and wait on it and serve,
From strifes rekindled and requickening claims
Set each at each in England, whence or craft
Or force might filch or seize for Scotland's
sake

Some no less jewel than her eye ere now
Was fixed so fast on, even the crown that
hangs

In doubt yet of unsure inheritance,
As hangs not yours for us to pluck at, who,
Reign whoso may when this queen's life is
quenched,

In Scotland shall reign never.

Maitland. That I know,
And this no less; that he who reigns shall
reign

Never by right of England's leave or love,
Her ward or servant; as, this queen removed,
Haply ye hope her lineal heir might be,

And in that hope work with these Hamiltons
To strike at us in Mary's name, and pluck
Death from our hands upon her; you your queen,
And they her kinsfolk, all ye seek her death;
No word but of her freedom in your mouths,
No end than this less looked for in your hearts.
Speak to the council as but now to me,
Defy them in her cause, not all the world
For three days' space shall save her.

Throgmorton. Nay, not we
Desire the queen's death at your hand provoked,
But here from Tullibardine's mouth I know
Her kin at secret heart desire no less,
And will ye but allow their house its right
By heritage to reign, no need, they say,
To take more care for her, who privily
May be put out of life, and no man more
In that dead name be troubled; and again
If they with no such promise being assured
Shall not join hands with you, and England
Shall bring the queen back whom ye spared to
slay,

Ye are lost and they not winners. Therefore is it
That of Lord Mar and of yourself I seek
Help for the queen's deliverance, who being
dead

Can profit no man but your foes and ours
That love not England more than they love you
Nor you than they love England: shall not both
With their own cause take part?

Maitland. It is too late;
What part should we take with you, to what
end,
Since all the council knows your traffic now
With their chief foes, and how being there
betrayed

You can but bring us such a friendship back
As they would none of?

Throgmorton. Sir, if yet you fear,
If you suspect yet that our queen desires
To speed the death of yours or make it sure
By pleading for her, or by threat of war
Denounced for her sake, let this letter be
The seal and warrant of our single heart,
Wherein she threatens war—but smile not yet—
If in his mother's name for him discrowned
Ye crown the child that hath but wailed one
year.

This should the lords have seen; but even for
doubt

Lest it should set their spirits on such fire
As but her blood shed presently could slake,
And this be deemed its aim indeed at heart
And privy purpose of her hand who writ,

Your eye alone must read that reads it now
And the lord Murray's; for they know that
send

And with it send me this for secret charge,
They know the truth and heat of fiery will
That urges our queen's heart upon this war,
And for no end but for her sake who sits
Held fast in bonds of her own subjects born,
And with her all the majesty on earth
That walks with monarchs, and no king alive
But wears some shameful parcel of her chain.

Maitland. Though this be truth, yet they
that hold it false

Will join in wrath with them that hold it
true,

Even for the threat's sake and for shame, will
join

To write red answer in the slain queen's blood
Back to the queen that threatens. Nay, her-
self

Who sits in bonds yet of us will not yield
To come forth singly safe, nor give consent
That Bothwell should fare worse than she, or
have:

More harm or danger; and being thus incen-
sed,

A three-edged weapon in the council's hand
Is drawn to smite at need, a treble charge
Whereon to impeach her; on that statute first
Made of this land's religion seven years since,
Which though she signed not, yet its breach in
her

Shall stand for guilt before them; and thretoo
Shall she be challenged of incontinence

With more than Bothwell, who by noteless
nights

Have made her bed adulterous; and of each
The proof that seals her shame in him, they
say,

Lies in their hand; last, of her murdered lord
Their warrant cries against her; and from these
No man may think to quit her nor secure,
Save he that here comes timeliest for such toil
As none beside may take upon his hand.

Enter MURRAY.

Welcome, my lord, and to a land that lacks
As never yet it lacked or looked for you.
What comfort bring you for her wounds from
France?

Besides that present help of hand and head
We heard returned an hour since?

Murray. Sir, thus much;
All of our faith in France will in our cause

Live or die fighting ; gold and men in arms
Will flow thence on us in full stream and free
If Scotland set but open hand or breast:
To greet them coming ; they will buy our
love

At what best price they may.

Thorpington. But you, my lord,
That have loved England ever, and that know
The worth and unworth weighed of either
friend,

French faith or English, will not surely buy
With heavy hate of England the light love
That France and fraud would sell you, nor
for this

Cast off the fortune and the peace unborn
That may bind fast in one strong ring of sea
Two jewels become one jewel, one such land
As from the stout fort of a single heart
Fixed like a sea-rock might look forth and
laugh

Upon the under wars of all the world,
And see not higher the heads of kingdoms
risen

Than of small waves in summer ? will you
pluck

This hope out of the hopeful hand of time
Ere he can gather, this good fruit that grows
On the green present branch of time's grey
tree

To feed the future where the hungry past
Could get but blood for bread, and with bare
steel

Died starved and smitten ?

Murray. Sir, when I came :
By secret flight from France, out of the guard
Wherein I lived inwalled with watch of men
That the court set about me to withhold
My foot from England—when an English boat
Had borne me oversea by secret night
From privy port to port, at the long last
I saw your queen's face darken on mine own
As on a servan' favor-fallen, that came
To take rebuke and speak not ; in her speech
I found no note of favor, no good word,
Nor honor such as late in France I found
And finding fled from : sharply with strange
eyes

She glanced against me ; taxed me with the
bonds

Wherein men held my sister ; half a threat
Was all her promise : I returned but this,
I would be still a Scotsman, and this land
I had more mind to serve and do her good
Than either of these queens ; so parted thence
Unfriendly, yet with no breach openly

Proclaimed of friendship ; and being here, my
mind

Is yet to serve no mistress but alone
This earth my bones were bred of, this kind
land

Which moulded me and fostered ; her strong
milk

Put manhood in my blood, and from my heart
If she that nurtured need it now to drink
I think not much to shed it. If those lords
In whom her power now stands shall with
one mouth

Bid me put on this weight of regency,
For no man's fear shall I deny them ; she,
Your queen that threatens me with ignominy
If I obey their choice and call, must know
That to God only and my heart, those twain
That are one eye to know me and to judge,
Will I refer it ; and of them being known
That with pure purpose and no soiled intent
I take this charge up, I will bear it through
To the right end. Yet ere my mind be fixed,
I will behold her that was queen and see
How sits the spirit within her : how'er,
Till Bothwell in our hands is trapped and
dead

She must not pass forth free ; and we will
hold

No traffic for the bear's skin merchant-like
Before the bear be caught ; but if your queen
Proclaim against us therefore war, be sure
We will not lose our lives, yield up our lands,
And bear repute of rebels through the world,
Who might, how loth soe'er, in all men's
eyes

Make our cause clear as righteousness ; the
proofs

Which in our hands lie darkling yet, but bear
The perfect witness of those ill deeds past
That bring her thus in danger of our doom
And righteous peril of all-judging law,
Must to the world's eye nakedly set forth
What cause is hers, and ours ; when if I stand
In the king's likeness of the state elect,
To him in me shall all knees bend and hearts
Kneel subjected ; for them that hold apart,
No head shall stand of any Hamilton
That shall not bow before my sword or me.

SCENE IV.—LOCHLEVEN CASTLE

The QUEEN and GEORGE DOUGLAS.

Queen. Will he be here to-day ? Alas, my
friend,

I made my hope of this till he should come,
And now he comes I would not look on him.
I know not what put hope into my fear
That this your mother's and and my father's
son

Should do me good for evil.

George Douglas. Madam, I think
The mind can be but good that marshals him
To your fair presence; nay, though even his
soul

Were damned so deep as to desire your death,
He durst not come to show us his purpose
here

Who were not chosen for murderers at his
hire

But guards and servants that would shed their
lives

Ere yours should look on danger.

Queen. That we know,
And have no better wage than love to give,
Which more to give we grudge not, being so
poor,

Than from your queen's hands you disdain to
take:

But what knows he? for aught our brother
knows,

Your mother and yourself are envious guards
That hate me for my faith as for my fault
And hold your hands but till he bids you slay
Or yield me to my slayers. Ah my last knight,
You shall do well to leave me at my need;
He will command you; when this brother
knows

I am not hated, think you then my friend
Shall not be chidden from me?

George Douglas. When my life
Is bidden from my body; not till then
Shall I be found obedient.

Enter LADY LOCHLEVEN.

Queen. Be but wise,
And wisdom shall not let you disobey.
Our noble hostess, you have borne a son,
I dare not say more noble, but I dare
More simple than his elders; and whose heart
Stands fast when fortune stands not, and re-
quires,

As other men do power and glory and gold,
No guerdon but the memory writ of him
To have been most true when fortune was most
false,

And most to have loved whom she most hated:
this

Shall not of them be written. Come you not

To bring one to me that shall never sin
As he by faith and tolly? I would say
Of my great brother and your kingly son
Nothing but good; yet can nor you nor I
Say that he loves me and my fallen estate
More than the power he comes to take from
me,

Or rather from their hands that ere he came:
Had rent it out of mine. Nay, look not sad;
You should be merrier than my mother might,
Were she now living.

Lady Lochleven. God shall witness me
What joy I have of such a guest, or pride
To be so stricken, madam, of your tongue
Chastising me for triumph; if my heart
Exalt itself for this day's sake, God knows,
Who hears you mock me.

Queen. Nay, I said no scorn;
I had rather need to pray you in his name
Scorn not at me. Let him come in; I know
What ceremony my masters should put on
Were but to mock their servant.

Enter MURRAY, ATHOL, and MORTON.

Sirs, you twain
That brought me two months since between
you safe

Out of the town by night that sought my
blood

Myself bid welcome; but she is not I
That in this presence should make welcome
here

My father's son; nor shall my speech usurp
For modesty that office: yet indeed

I am glad, my lord, to see your face, that
must

Bring comfort, or an end of all this life
That yet needs comfort.

Murray. What I may, I will;
Yet haply shall you find not in my words
Or death or comfort; as you give them heed,
Shall they prove comfortable or deadly. Sirs,
I have that to speak and hear that but requires
The Lady Mary's ear and mine; I pray you,
Take not offence that I crave leave to say
We must for some space lack your company.

Morton. My lord, the land that puts her
trust in you

Bids us obey, well knowing that love nor fear
Shall bend you from her service.

Lady Lochleven.

Murray.

Lady Lochleven. I am no parcel of the
sovereign state

Sir—

Your will?

That gives you of its greatness, nor have right
To speak commandingly ; yet ere I go
I would desire you by what name I may,
Look on this lady with such equal eyes
As nor the wrath and hate of violent men,
Nor sense of evil done to this land's peace
By her mischance and evil counsellors,
Nor (what I would not fear to find in you)
Desire of rule with pride of station, may
Invert to do her wrong or glance aside
From the plain roadway of that righteousness
Whose name is also mercy. This at least
Surely by me may be of you required,
That in this house no wrong my word or act,
By deed or threat, may touch her.

Murray. Be assured
No wrong shall ever touch her by my hand ;
And be content to know it.

Queen. Madam, these lords
Know that I thought ere this to find of you
A mediatrix between me and your son ;
I have my hope, and with a humble heart
I take your intercession thankfully.

[*Exeunt all but the QUEEN and MURRAY.*
Murray. I would I had another cause to
speak

Or you to listen, than this bitter theme
That brings us back together, though for tho'
I had died a foreign man.

Queen. I thought not, sir,
When we last parted ere the break of spring,
To meet you thus in summer ; but these
months

Have wrought things stranger on me.

Murray. Say, yourself
Have made of them more strange and perilous
use

Than is the fruit they bear. I am not come
To flatter with you ; that I seek your death
I think you fear not, yet should surely know
The man that seeks were now more like to
speed

Than he that would preserve it. Heaven and
earth

As with the tongue of one same law demand
Justice against you ; nor can pity breathe
But low and fearful, till the right be weighed
That must in pity's spite and fear's be done,
Or this land never thrive. For that right's sake
And not for hatred or rebellious heart
Do men require that judgment pass on you
And bring forth execution ; the broad world
Expects amazedly when we that rule
Shall purge this land of blood, which now looks
red

In the world's eye, and blushing not for shame
Blushes with bloodshed ; in men's general
mouths

The name of Scot is as a man's attain
Of murderous treason, or as his more vile
That for base heart and fear or hire of gold
With folded hands watches the hands that slay
Grow great in murder ; and God's heavy doom
Shall be removed not from us, nor his wrath,
Well may we fear, shall lighten, till the deed
That reeks as recent yet toward the fair heavens
Be thoroughly cleansed with judgment.

Queen. Must I too
Bleed to make Scotland clean of baser blood
Than this she seeks of mine ?

Murray. If you shall die,
Bethink you for what cause, and that sole
thought

Shall seal your lips up from all pride of plea
That would put in between your deed and doom
The name of queen to cover you. No age
That lived on earth red-handed without law
Ever let pass in peace and unchastised
Such acts as this that yet in all men's ears
Rings as a cry unanswered. When your lord
Lay newly murdered, and all tongues of friends
Were loud in prayer to you to save your name
From stain of accusation, and yield up
That head to judgment which the whole world
held

Blood-guilty, first with subtle stretch of time
Did you put back the trial, then devise
To make it fruitless save of mockery ; next,
I cannot say for shame what shame forgone
Moved you to put upon this loathing land
That great dishonor to behold and bear
The man your lover for its lord, and you,
Queen of all Scots and thrall of one most base,
While yet the ring was from his finger warm
That sealed it first, and on his wedded hand
The young blood of your husband, ere the
print

Had cooled of marriage or of murder, you
In the hot circle of his amorous arms
A new-espoused adulteress. Will you say
You were enforced or by false counsels bent
To take him to your bosom ? In what eye
Was not the foregone commerce of your loves
As bare as shame ? what ear had heard not
blown

His name that was your sword and paramour,
Whose hand in yours was now as steel to slay,
Now as a jewel for love to wear, a pledge
Hot from your lips and from your husband's
heart ?

Who knew not what should make this man so
proud
That none durst speak against him of your
friends
But must abide for answer unaware
The peril of the swords that followed him?
Went he not with you where you went, and
bade
Men come and go, do this or do not, stand
Or pass as pleased him, ere that day had risen
Which gave the mockery of a ravished hride
To the false violence of his fraudulent rape
That hardly she could feign to fear, or hide
The sweetness of the hour when she might
yield
That which was his before, and in men's eyes
Make proof of her subjection? Nay, forbear;
Plead not for shame that force was put on you
To bear that burden and embrace that shame
For which your heart was hungry; foe nor
friend
Could choose but see it, and that the food de-
sired
Must be but mortal to you. Think on this,
How you came hither crowned these six years
gone
In this same summer month, and with what
friends
Girt round about and guarded with what hopes,
And to a land how loving; and these years,
These few brief years, have blown from off
your boughs
All blossom of that summer, though nor storm
Nor fire from heaven hath wrecked nor wind
laid low
That stately tree that shadowed a glad land,
But now being inly gnawn of worms to death
And made a lurking-place for poisonous things
To breed and fester at its rotten root,
The axe is come against it. None save you
Could have done this, to turn all hearts and
hands
That were for love's sake laid before your feet
To fire and iron whetted and made hot
To war against you. No man lives that knows
What is your cause, and loathes not; though
for craft
Or hope of vantage some that know will seem
To know not, and some eyes be rather blind
Than see what eyeless ignorance in its sleep,
If but it would, must needs take note of;
none
Whose mind is maimed not by his own mere
will
And made perforce of its own deed perverse

Can read this truth awry. What have you
done?
Men might weep for you, yea, beholding it
The eyes of angels melt; no tide of tears
Could wash from hand or soul the sinful sign
That now stands leprous there; albeit God
knows
Myself for very pity could be glad
By mine own loss to ransom you, and set
Upon your soul again the seal of peace
And in your hand its empire; but your act
Has plucked out of men's hearts that fain
would keep
The privilege of mercy; God alone
Can lose not that for ever, but retains
For all sins done that cry for judgment here
The property of pity, which in man
Were mere compliance and confederacy
With the sin pardoned; so shall you do best,
Being thus advised, to entertain the hope
Of nothing but God's mercy, and henceforth
Seek that as chieftest refuge; for in man
There shall no trust deliver you, nor free
Body nor soul from bonds. Weep not for
that;
But let your tears be rather as were hers
That wept upon the feet of God, and bought
With that poor price her pardon.
Queen. So should I,
If grief more great may buy it than any of
theirs
That had sinned more than I; nay, such have
been
And have been pardoned. I have done ill,
and given
My name for shame to feed on, put mine
honour
Into mine enemies' keeping, made my fame
A prey and pasture for the teeth of scorn;
I dare not say I wist not by what mean
I should be freed of one that marred my life
Who could by no mean else be quit of him
Saves this blind way of blood; yet men there
were
More wise than I, men much less wronged of
him,
That led me to it and left me: but indeed
I cite not them to extenuate by strange aid
Mine own rash mind and unadvisedness
That brought forth fruit of death; yet must
you know
What counsels led me by the hand, and whence
My wrath was fostered; and how all alone,
How utterly uncomfortable, and girt
With how great peril, when the man was slain,

I stood and found not you to counsel me,
And no man else that loved ; and in such need
If I did ill to seek to that strong hand
Which had for me done evil, If evil it were
To avenge me of mine enemy, what did they
That by their hands and voices on his side
Put force on me to wed him? yet I say not
I was indeed enforced ; I will not mock
With one false plea my penitent heart, nor
strive

With words to darken counsel, nor incense
By foolishness your wisdom, to provoke
A judgment heavier than I wait for ; nay,
You have not said that bitter thing of me
That I may dare unsay ; what most I would,
I must deny not ; yet I pray you think,
Even as might God, being just, what cause I
had,

What plea to lighten my sore load of sin,
Mismated and miscounselled, and had seen
Of my sad life not wholly nineteen years
When I came hither crowned ; as yet would
God

Your lord, my brother, had endured for mine
The heaviest of honour, and this hand
The weight of Scotland, that being laid in
mine

Has fallen and left it maimed, and on my
brows

A mark as his whose temples for his crime
Were ringed with molten iron. Take them
now,

Though but for pity of me that pray you take,
And bear them better than I did ; for me,
Though no plea serve me in the sight of man
Nor grace excuse my fault, I am yet content,
If I may live but so much time in bonds
As may suffice for God to pardon me,
Who shall not long put off to pardon, then
Shut eyes and sleep to death.

Murray. I had thought to-night
To speak no more with you, but let that hope
Which only in God's name I gave you bear
What fruit it might with prayer and watching ;

yet
Take comfort, and assure yourself of life,
And, if it may be, honour ; one of these
I may take on me to redeem, and one
So as I may will I preserve from death
Dealt of men's tongues that murder it ; but
you,

Keep these things in your heart ; that if you
raise

Within this realm a faction, or devise
To break these bonds, I shall not keep an hour

This power I have to save you ; nor shall keep,
If France or England be by word of yours
Stirred up to strike at our frail peace ; nor yet
If you shall cleave to him that should for
shame

As from this land be cast out from your heart ;
But if toward God your faults be faithfully
In good men's sight acknowledged, and that
life

You led with your false lord and all sins past
Loathed and lamented, and in days to be
The living purpose in you manifest
Of a more modest habit and a life
More nobly fashioned—if the slaughter
On your dead husband seem of you abhorred
And those ill days mishled wherein your
Drank mortal poison from his murder
hand—

If this be seen, and that your mind live
From counsel of revenge upon those lost
Who sought your reformation, nor with
Nor dangerous forethought of device to
Renews itself to do them some day wrong
Then may you now sit safe, and unrepentant
Expect an end of bondage ; for at large
You cannot think to live yet, who in this
May haply by repentance be restored
And for your prison somewhere here restored
Find yet your throne again, and sit renewed
More royal than men wist who saw the ship
Put in from France that bore you.

Queen.

O my friend,
O brother, found now father. to me too,
Who have raised and rebegotten me from
death,

By how much less I thank you for my life
Think so much more for honour I give thanks
That you raise up the hope in me to have
Which was nigh dead for shame. O, let :

hold

[*Embrace*
My comfort in mine arms, and with due
Kiss you my thanks ; I looked for less than
But yet for comfort of you. One thing more
Having so much, will I require, and cease—
Even for my son's sake and mine own to lay
The charge upon you of this regency
Which none might bear so noble, nor bring
back

Her peace again to Scotland, as I know
Your hand shall bring ; and had I known be-
times

I had not started from its curb aside
Nor set against its strength in no good hour
The feebleness of mine ; but if your heart
Be large enough to let forgiveness in

Of my wrongs done and days of wanton will,
Take this charge too, to keep for me the forts
Of all that was my kingdom; I would have
Nothing of mine lie now not in your hand;
Keep too my jewels; all I had of worth,
What help without you should I have of it,
What profit or what surety? let your heart
Cast her not out who prays you of your grace
Take these in trust and in

Murray. I may not these,
But you that put yourself in my trust
I will not fail.

Queen. Nay, you shall keep them too.

Murray. I would not put my hand forth
uncompelled

To take for life and death the burden up
That burns as fire and bows the back that
bears

As with an iron load; and certainly
He that shall take this kingdom on his hand
I think shall live not long; nor pride nor
hope

But very love and strong necessity
Could only bow me down to obey their will
Who should enforce on mine the task to bear
This grievous office, that if Scotland bid
I for her sake must bear till I may die.
But if I be not bidden, for no love
Or fear or lust of kingdom will I seek
The labor and the grief of that great charge
That I may live and feel not.

Queen. By my lips,
That have no royal right to speak for her
Now, think that yet she bids you, seeing none
else

To undo mine evil done on her, and heal
The wounds mine enemies and myself have
made

In her sweet peace: she hath no stay but you;
Whom other should she seek to? and for me
Again I dare not urge you, but my heart
Is turned into a prayer that pleads with
yours

To lend its weakness comfort of your strength
By taking off its fears; those that break mine
Can bow not yours: O, take from me that
weight

Which were to you but sport and ornament,
The natural honor of a hand so strong
And spirit elect of all men's souls alive
To do a work imperial.

Murray. If not else,
But by me only may this land find peace,
By me then shall it; for your private charge,
Impute not to me for default of love

That I beseech you lay no more on me
Than public need enforces; in my trust
Your treasures were no safer than they stand
Now that I keep them not, and no man's
tongue

Can tax me with them as detained from you
By fraud or usurpation; which mine ear
Were loth to know was muttered.

Queen. But you see
Nor they nor I have surety save in you;
Let it be seen of them that else may doubt
How thankfully I trust you; even for that
Do thus, to do me good in men's report
When they shall see us at one; from mine own
hand

Except you take them shall they not be rent
By craft or force of hidden or harrying hands
That could not wrest from yours what mine
must yield

For fault of you to help me?

Murray. As you will.
I would not cross you where I might content,
Yet willingly I cannot take on me
More charge than needs of privy trusts to keep
That bring men's blame about them; but in
this
My will shall be your servant.

Re-enter LADY LOCHLEVEN and GEORGE DOUGLAS.

For this time
I take farewell; be patient, and seek peace
Whence God may send it.—To your gentler
hand,

While yet the Lady Mary lives in ward,
Behoves not me commend her, being but
bound

As reverently as may beseem your son
In the state's name to charge you that she
find

At all men's hands that guard her now about
Good usage with safe keeping; which to as-
sure

Shall hardly need this young man's service
here,

For whom the state has other use, and I
A worthier work than still to keep such
watch

As porters use or pages.

Lady Lochleven. He and I
Stand at your bidding; yet were nowise loth
The state that gave should take this charge
away

It laid upon us.

Queen. Sir, the grace you brought
And comfort to me sorrowing and afraid
Go ever with you ; and farewell.

Murray. Farewell.

[*Exeunt LADY LOCHLEVEN and MURRAY.*]

Queen. Will you not go ?

George Douglas. Whither you bid, and
when,

I will go swiftly.

Queen. With your lord and mine,
I would have said ; yet irks it me to say
My lord, who had none under heaven, and
was

Of these my lords once lady. Said I not
You should do well to cast off care of me
Whom you must leave indeed now at com-
mand

More powerful of more potent lips than mine ?
I would not have you set your younger will
Against his word imperial ; nor, I think,
Doth he fear that who bids us come and go
And whose great pleasure is that you part
hence

And I sit here : be patient, and seek peace,
You heard him bid me ; patience we must
have

If we would rest obedient ; and for peace,
So haply shall we find it, having learnt
What rest is in submission.

George Douglas. Bid me stay,
And that my will shall part not hence alive
What need I swear ?

Queen. Alas, your will may stay,
Your will may wait on me to do me good,
Your loves and wishes serve me when yourself
Shall live far off ; our lord forbids them not ;
It is the service of your present hand,
The comfort of your face, help of your heart,
That he forbids me.

George Douglas. And though God forbade
Save by my death he should compel me not
To do this bidding ; only by your mouth
Of all that rule in heaven and earth will I
Be willingly commanded.

Queen. You must go.
Nay, I knew that ; how should one stay by
me ?

There was not left me, by God's wrath or
man's,

One friend when I came hither in the world
And from the waste and wilderness of grief
If one grain ripen—from the stone and sand
If one seed blossom—if my misery find
One spring on earth to assuage its fiery lip
How should I hope that God or man will spare

To trample or to quench it ?

George Douglas. I am here
While you shall bid me live, and only hence
When you shall bid me but depart and die.

Queen. There was a time when I would
dream that men

There were to do my bidding ; such as loved
And were beloved again, and knew not fear
Nor hope but of love's giving ; but meseemed
That in my dream all these were cast away,
And by God's judgment or through wrath of
men

Or mine own fault or change and chance of
time

I lived to look for love in vain.

Many that hate me now of men ;

Is there yet that loves ?

George Douglas. If one there were
To for your love's sake should abhor his life,
He should all hope save this, to die for you,
What should he do to die so ?

Queen. If I bade
That for my love's sake he should love his life
And use it strength to cherish me, who knows
If he would heed ? or say I gave command
To do some ill thing or of ill report—

Were it to slay our brother now gone hence—
Would one do that ? I would not have it done,
Though I should bid him. Do not answer me,
As though I questioned with you seriously
Or spake of things that might be thought upon,
Who do but jest with grief as with my friend

That plays again familiarly with me,
And from the wanderings of a joyless wit
Turn to clasp hands with sorrow. You must
go.

George Douglas. Ay, when you bid ; but
were my going from you
Part of your grief, which is more grief to me
Than my soul's going from forth my body
were,

I would not set my face from hence alive.

Queen. I hold it not for no part of my grief
To bid you from me ; yet being here bound
in

As I with walls and waters, we should find
Less help than yet I hope for of your hand
Being hence enlarged. We will take counsel,
sir.

And I, with no large choice to make of
friends,

To whom I shall appoint you, by what mean
To deal for our deliverance : as with one
of my household and this lady's kin
I have bid die. My Maries the last left

Partakes my bonds : the Laird of Ricarton,
My husband's kinsman ; and what readiest
friends

Once more may be raised up, as when I fled
From shame and peril and a prison-house
As hateful as these bonds, to find on earth—
Ah, no such love and faith as yours in man.

SCENE V.—HOLYROOD.

MURRAY and MORTON.

Murray. I am vexed with divers counsels,
and my will

Sees nor its way nor end. This act proclaimed
That seals the charge of murder on the queen
To justify our dealing had to it hands
That here first met ; Kirkaldy with Glencairn,
Balfour with Maitland, Huntley with Argyle,
True man with traitor, all were as one mind,
One tongue to tax her with complicity,
Found art and part with them that slew her
lord ;

Men praised the council for this judgment
given

As from a single and resolute soul ;
Scarce one withstood save Herries, and his
voice

Was as a wind that sings in travellers' ears
Unheeded ; then the doom that gives to death
All that in act maintain the former faith
And writes for Catholic traitor, should have
purged

The state of treacherous or of dangerous
friends

Such as made protest then against this law
And fled from our part to the Hamiltons,
Caithness and Athol, with the bishop called
Of Murray, whom the Assembly met to judge
By one same doom has with Argyle condem-
ned

To stand in sackcloth for adulteries past
At Stirling through the time of service held
Within the chapel royal ; such men's stay
It irks not me to lose, who by their loss
Were fain to win their enemies for my friends
More fast and faithful ; but men's sundering
minds

Nor council nor assembly can reknit,
Though Knox there sit by Maitland, and
Balfour

Touch sides with Craig ; and while the state as
now

Lives many-minded and distraught of will,
How shall its hope be stable ?

Morton.

Have all their will, or more than we that rule
By secular wit and might ; the preachers reign
With heavier hand than ours upon the state,
Who in this late assembly by their doom
Bade your fair sister of Argyle partake
The sackcloth penance of her slippery lord
For scandal to the Kirk done when last year
At the font's edge her arms sustained our prince
For baptism of such hands as served the mass ;
If it have leave long to sit lawgiver,
Their purity will pinch us.

Murray.

Have no fear ;
It shall not Douglas : and we lack their help
Who sway the commons only with their breath,
Now most of all when our high counsels fail
And hopes are turned as 'twere to running
streams

That flow from ours to feed our enemies' hands
With washings of our wreck, waifs of our
strength,

That melts as water from us ; those chief twain
Whose league I sought by marriage, and had
hope

To bind them to us as brethren, when Argyle
With me should knit himself anew, to wed
His brother to the sister of my wife
With happier hope than he exposed mine own,
While Huntley's son should lead my daughter
home,

And with this fourfold knot our loves be tied
And fortunes with each other's growth ingraf-
fed—

Both these look back now toward the Hamil-
tons

To mingle factions with them, being assured
Our hands now lack the secret sword we had
To draw at need against them, since their
names

Set at Craigmillar to the bond of blood

Are with that bond consumed, and no tongue
left

To wag in witness of their part of guilt
Now Bothwell's knaves are hanged that laid
the train

And Hay with them, and one most near his
trust,

His kinsman Hepburn, from whose mouth
condemned

And Ormiston's we have confession wrung
That marks with blood as parcel of their deed
More than Balfour that in the assembly sit

And must partake his surety ; this, my lord,
Craves of us care and counsel, that our names
Be writ not fool or coward, who took in hand

Such trust to work such treason.

Morton. Nay, no Scot
Shall say we fell from faith or treacherously
Let men's hopes fade that trusted us, and sank
Through feebleness of ours; yet have we
strength

To lower the height of heart and confidence
That makes their faction swell, who were but
late

Too faint of spirit, too fearful and unsure,
To be made firm with English subsidies;
Three thousand marks that Scrope by secret
hand

Sent from Carlisle to Herries could not serve
To give or shape or sinew to their plots
Who are now so great their house's heir must
wed

No lowlier than a queen, and Bothwell's wife,
For this divorced or widowed.

Murray. Ay; we know
The archbishop his good uncle with this youth
Hath in Dumbarton fortified himself,
And while they there sit strong and high in
hope

Our prisoner and our penitent late, we hear,
Grows blithe of mood and wanton; from her
sight

Have I dismissed my mother's youngest born,
Lest in her flatteries his weak faith be snared
And strangled with a smile; and for her hand
I have found a fitter suitor than Arbroath
When she shall wed again, within whose veins
Some drops of blood run royal as her own;
Methuen, whose grandsire was the third that
set

His ring on that Queen Margaret's wedded
hand

From the seventh. Henry sent ambassadress
To our fourth James, to bring for bridal gift
Her father's love and England's to her lord
And with the kiss of marriage on his lips
To seal that peace which with her husband's
life

Found end at Flodden from her brother's hand
That split the heart of Scotland. So the queen,
If she wed Methuen, shall espouse a man
Whose father of the same queen's womb was
born

That bore her father; and whose blood as hers
Is lineal from the seed of English kings
Through one same mother's sons, queen once
of Scots

And daughter born and sister, though unqueen-
ed

Of those twain Henries that made peace and
war

With Scotland and her lord; and by this
match

The Hamiltons being frustrate of their hope
Could yet not tax us with a meaner choice
Than they would make for her, who while she
lives

Must stand thenceforth far off from their de-
signs

And disallied from all that in her name
Draw now to head against us; and some help
We need the more to cross them now, that
France,

To whom I thought to seek as to my friend
And thence find aid in this necessity
That else finds none, since England's jealous
craft

Puts in our enemies' hands gold for a sword
More sharp than steel—France, that would
send at need

The choice of all her sons that hold our faith
To live and die beside us here in arms,
Grows chillier toward us than the changing
wind

That brings back winter: for the brood of
Guise,

Our prisoner's friends and kinsmen of Lorraine,
Prevail again on Catherine's adverse part,
Whose hate awhile gives way to them, and
yields

Our cause into their hands that were more like
To help this daughter of their dangerous house
Take up the crown resigned and through their
strength

Renew this kingdom's ruin with her reign,
Than send us aid and arms to guard its peace
From inroad as from treason: which I doubt
We shall hear news of from my brother's tongue

Enter SIR WILLIAM DOUGLAS.

Who comes without a herald.

Sir W. Douglas. Sir, the news
Is dashed with good and evil equally
That here I bring you; for the treasons laid
Have missed their mark and left unwounded
yet

My house's honor that retains in trust
So great a charge. You had word ere this of me
By what strange fortune was their plot made
known

Who thought to fall upon us unaware
And find a ferry for some seventy swords
To cross the lake in mine own barge surprised
And smite those thirty guards that hold the
walls

And make a murderous passage for the queen
To come forth free with feet that walked in
blood;

And how by one a Frenchman of her train
Who being not in their counsel heard some
speech

Of such a preparation, and conceived
This was a plot to take her from your hand
Laid by the fiercer faction of the Kirk
That sought to snare and slay her in your
despite,

To me was all discovered; and betimes
I gave command no barge thenceforth should
pass

Between the main shore and mine island walls
But a skiff only that with single oars
Might be rowed over. Baffled thus, her friends
Were fain to buy the boatman's faith with gold
Whom on suspicion I dismissed, but since
Finding less trust and service in the knave
That had his place, called back and bade take
heed

Of these that would have won to their device
A foundling page within my castle bred
And called by mine own name; who by this plot
Should have seduced for them my sentinels
And oped the gate by night; but yet I find
For all toils set and gins to take their faith
In him and them no treason; yet so near
Was treason to us, that not long since the queen
Had wellnigh slipped beyond our guard by day
In habit of a saundress that was hired
So to shift raiment with her; but being forth
Betimes as was this woman's use to come
In the low light by dawn, at such an hour
As she was wont to sleep the morning out,
The fardel in her hand of clothes brought forth
And on her face the muffler, it befell
That as she sat before the rowers and saw
Some half her free brief way of water past,
By turn of head or lightning of her look
For mirth she could not hide and joyous heart,
Or but by some sweet note of majesty,
Some new bright bearing and imperious change
From her false likeness, she drew their eyes
That one who rowed, saying merrily *Let us see
What manner of dame is this*, would fain pluck
down

Her muffler, who to guard it suddenly
Put up her fair white hands, which seeing they
knew

And marvelled at her purpose; she thereat,
A little wrath but more in laughter, bared
Her head and bade stretch oars and take the
land

On their lives' peril; which regarding not,
They straight put back as men amazed, but swore
To keep fast locked from mine of all men's eyes
The secret knowledge of this frustrate craft,
So set her down on the island side again
With muffled head and hidden hands, to wring
And weep apart for passion, where my watch
Looks now more strict upon her; but I think,
For all her wrath and grief to be by chance
From her near hope cast down and height of
mind

Wherein she went forth laughingly to find
What good might God bring of her perilous
hour,

She hath lost not yet nor changed that heart
nor hope,

But looks one day to mock us.

Murray. So I think;
And in that fear would have you keep fast
watch

By night and day till we take off the charge
Laid on your faith, and or enfranchise her
Or change her place of ward; which, ere the
spring

That holds in chase this winter's flying foot
Be turned to summer, haply shall be done.
What fashion holds our mother with the queen?
Sir W. Douglas. As she was ever tender
of her state

And mild in her own office, so she keeps
Observance yet and reverence more than meet
Save toward a queen, toward this her guest
enforced

Who smiles her back a prisoner's thanks, and
sighs

That she should smile in prison; but 'twixt
whiles

Some change of mood will turn to scorn or
spleen

Her practised patience, and some word take
wing

Forth from her heart's root through her lips
that hath

The gall of asps within it; yet not this
Turns the heart hard or bitter that awaits
Her gentler change, pitying the wrong it bears
And her that wrong it for the sorrow's sake
That chafes and rends her.

Murray. Pity may she give
And be praised for it; but to entertain
Hope or desire that wars against her trust
Should turn that praise to poison. Have you
seen

Since George went thence, or noted ere he
went,

In her no token of a mingled mind
That sways 'twixt faith and such a faithless
hope

As feeds a mother's love with deadly dreams
Of prophesying ambition? for in him
I spied the sickness of a tainted heart
And fever-fired from the most mortal eyes
That ever love drank death of.

Sir W. Douglas.

No, my lord.

Murray. I would fain trust her mind were
whole in this
And her thoughts firm; yet would not trust
too far,

Who know what force of fraud and fire of will
In that fierce heart and subtle, without fear,
That God hath given so sweet a hiding-place,
Make how much more the peril and the power
Of birth and kinglier beauty, that lay wait
For her son's sake to tempt her. We will
hold

More speech of this; here shall you rest to-
night.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VI.—LOCHLEVEN CASTLE.

The QUEEN and MARY BEATON.

Queen. Is it not sunset? what should ail the
day
To hang so long in heaven? the world was
blind

By this time yesternight. The lake gleams yet;
Will the sun never sink, for all the weight
That makes his hour so heavy?

Mary Beaton. While you speak,
The outer gate that stands till nightfall wide
Shuts on the sundown; and they bring the
keys

That soon the page shall put into our hand
To let in freedom.

Queen. I could weep and laugh
For fear and hope and angry joy and doubt
That wring my heart. I am sick at once and
well:

Shall I win past them in this handmaid's dress
If we be spied? My hood is over broad;
Help me to set it forward; and your own
Sits loose; but pluck it closer on your face
For cloak and cover from the keen moon's eye
That peers against us. Twice, thou knowest,
yea thrice,

God has betrayed me to mine enemies' hands
Even when my foot was forth; if it slip now,
He loves nor kings that hold his office here

Nor his own servants, but those faithless
mouths

That mock all sovereignties in earth or heaven.
If here he fail me and I fall again
To sit in bonds a year—by God's own truth,
I swear I will not keep this wall of flesh
To cage my spirit within these walls of stone,
But break this down to set that free from these,
That being delivered of men's wrongs and his
It may stand up, and gazing in his eyes
Accuse him of my traitors.

Mary Beaton. Keep good heart;
Your hope before was feverish and too light,
And so it failed you: in this after plot
There is more form and likeness than in those
That left you weeping; let not passion now
Foil your good fortune twice, or heat of mood
From keen occasion take the present edge
And blunt the point of fortune.

Queen. If I knew
This man were faithful—O, my heart that was
Is melted from me, and the heart I have
Is like wax melting. Were my feet once free,
It should be strong again; here it sinks down
As a dead fire in ashes. Dare we think
I shall find faith in him, who have not found
In all the world? no man of mine there is,
None of my land or blood, but hath betrayed,
Betrayed or left me.

Mary Beaton. Nay, too strange it were
That you should come to want men's faith,
and look

For love of man in vain; these were your
jewels,

You cannot live to lack them; nay, but less;
Your common ornaments to wear and leave,
Your change of raiment to cast off, and bind
A fresher robe about you: while men live
And you live also, these must give you love,
And you must use it.

Queen. So one told me once—
That I must use and lose it. If my time
Be come to need man's love and find it not,
I have known death make a prophet of a man
That living could foretell but his own end,
Not save himself, being foolish; and I too,
I am mad as he was, now to think on him
Or my dead follies. Were these walls away,
I should no more; ay, when this strait is past,
I shall win back my wits and my blithe heart,
And make good cheer again.

Enter Page.

Page.

Here are the keys;

I had wrought instead a ladder for our need
With two strong oars made fast across, for
fear

I had failed at last from under my lord's eye
To sweep them off the board-head ; here they
ring,

As joy-bells here to give your highness note
The skiff lies moored on the island's lee, and
waits

But till the castle boats by secret hands
Be stripped of oars and rowlocks, and pursuit
Made helpless, naimed of all its means ; the
crew

Is ready that shall lend us swifter wing
Than one man's strength to fly with ; and be-
yond

Your highness' friends : upon the further bank
Wait with my master's horses ; never was
A fairer plot or likelier.

Queen. How thy face
Lightens ! Poor child, what knowest thou of
the chance

That cast thee on my fortunes ? it may be
To death ere life break bud, and thy poor
flower

The wind of my life's tempest shall cut off,
And blow thy green branch bare. Many there
be

Have died, and many that now live shall die,
Ere my life end, for my life's sake ; and none
There is that knows, of all that love or hate,
What end shall come of this night's work, and
what

Of all my life-days. I shall die in bonds
Perchance, a bitter death ; yet worse it were
To outlive dead years in prison, and to loathe
The life I could not lose. This will not be ;
No days and nights shall I see wax and wane,
Kindled and quenched in bondage, any more ;
For if to-night I stands not free on earth
As the sun stands in heaven, whose sovereign
eye

Next day shall see me sovereign, I shall live
Not one day more of darkling life, as fire
Pent in a grate, bound in with blackening
bars,

But like a star by God hurled forth of heaven
Fall, and men's eyes be darkened, and the
world

Stand heart-struck, and the night and day be
changed

That see me falling. If I win not forth,
But, flying, be taken of the hands that were
Before laid on me, they shall never th'
To hold me more in fetters, but take

To do what earth saw never yet, and lay
By doom and sentence on their sovereign born
Death ; I shall find swift judgment, and short
shrif

My justicers shall give me ; so at least
Shall I be quit of bondage. Come, my friends,
That must divide with me for death or life
This one night's issue ; be it or worst or best,
Yet have ye no worse fortune than a queen,
Or she than ye no better. On this hour
Hang all those hours that yet we have to live ;
Let us go forth to pluck the fruit of this
That leans now toward our hand. My heart is
light ;

Be yours not heavier ; for your eyes and mine
Shall look upon these walls and waves no
more.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VII.—THE SHORE OF LOCH LEVEN.

GEORGE DOUGLAS, BEATON, RICARTON *with*
Attendants.

George Douglas. I hear the beat of the
oars : they make no haste :
How the stars thicken ! if a mist would take
The heaven but for an hour and hide them
round—

Ricarton. How should they steer then
straight ? we lacked but light,
And these are happy stars that sign this hour
With earnest of good fortune ; and betimes
See by their favor where the prize we seek
Is come to port.

Enter the QUEEN, MARY BEATON, Page, and
a Girl attending.

Queen. Even such a night it was
I looked again for to deliver me,
Remembering such a night that broke my
bonds
Two wild years past that brought me through
to this ;

The wind is loud beneath the mounting moon,
And the stars merry. Noble friends, to horse ;
When I shall feel my steed exult with me,
I will give thanks for each of your good
deeds

To each man's several love. I knew not yet
That I stand here enfranchised ; for pure joy
I have not laid it yet to heart ; methinks
is a lightning in my dreams to-night

It strikes and is not, and my flattered eyes

Must wake with dawn in bonds. Douglas, I pray,

If it be not but as a flash in sleep
And no true light now breaking, tell me you,
That were my prison's friend; I will believe
I am free as fire, free as the wind, the night,
All glad fleet things of the airier element
That take no hold on earth; for even like
these

Seems now the fire in me that was my heart
And is a song, a flame, a burning cloud
That moves before the sun at dawn, and fades
With fierce delight to drink his breath and die.
If ever hearts were stabbed with joy to death,
This that cleaves mine should do it, and one
sharp stroke

Pierce through the thrilled and trembling core
like steel

And cut the roots of life. Nay, I am crazed,
To stand and babble like one mad with wine,
Stung to the heart and bitten to the brain
With this great drink of freedom; O, such
wine,

As fills man full of heaven, and in his veins
Becomes the blood of gods. I would fain feel
That I were free a little, ere that sense
Be put to use; those walls are fallen for me,
Those waters dry, those gaolers dead, and this
The first night of my second reign, that here
Begins its record. I will talk no more
Nor waste my heart in joyous words, nor
laugh

To set my free face toward the large-eyed sky
Against the clear wind and the climbing moon,
And take into mine eyes and to my breast
The whole sweet night and all the stars of
heaven,

But put to present work the heart and hand
That here rise up a queen's. Bring me to
horse;

We will take counsel first of speed, and then
Take time for counsel.

Beaton. Madam, here at hand
The horses wait; Lord Seyton rides with us
Hence to Queen's Ferry, where beyond the
Forth

We reach Claude Hamilton, who with fresh
steeds

Expects us; to Long Niddry thence, and there
Draw rein among the Seytons, ere again
We make for Hamilton, whose walls should see
The sun and us together.

Queen. Well devised.
Where is the girl that fled with us, and gave
These garments for my surety? she shall have

Her part in my good hour, that in mine ill
Did me good service.

Ricarton. Madam, she must stay;
We have not steeds enough, and those we have
May bear no load more than perforce they
must,
Or we not hope to speed.

Queen. Nay, she shall go,
Not bide in peril of mine enemies here
While we fly scatheless hence.

Girl. Most gracious queen,
Of me take no such care: I am well content
They should do with me all they would, and I
Live but so long to know my queen as safe
As I for her die gladly.

Ricarton. She says well;
Get we to horse. I must ride south to rouse
My kinsfolk, and with all our Hepburn bands
Seize on Dunbar; whence northward I may
bear
Good tidings to your lord.

Queen. God made them good
That he shall hear of me, and from his mouth
Send me good words and comfort! You shall
ride

Straight from Lord Seyton's with my message
borne

To all good soldiers of your clan and mine
And wake them for our common lord's dear
love

To strike once more, or never while they live
Be called but slaves and kinless: then to him
For whom the bonds that I put off to night
Were borne and broken. Douglas, of that
name

Most tender and most true to her that was
Of women most unfriended, and of queens
Most abject and unlike to recompense,
Take in your hand the hand that it set free,
And lead me as you led me forth of bonds
To my more perfect freedom. Sirs, to horse.
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VIII.—HAMILTON CASTLE.

The QUEEN, ARGYLE, and HUNTLEY.

Queen. I ever thought to find your faiths
again

When time had set me free; nor shall my
love

To my good friends be more unprofitable
Than was my brother's, from whose promised
hand

Both have withdrawn the alliance of your own

To plight once more with mine : your son,
 my lord,
 And, noble sir, your brother, will not fail
 Of worthier wedlock and of trustier ties
 Than should have bound them to a traitor's
 blood,
 His daughter, and the sister of his wife,
 Whom he so thought to honor, and in them
 Advance his counsels and confirm his cause
 Through your great names allied, who now take
 part
 More worthily with one long overthrown
 And late risen with many a true man's more
 And royally girt round with many a friend's ;
 Nor need we lay upon our kinsmen here
 All our hope's burden, nor submit our hand
 To marriage with our cousin's of Arbroath
 For fault of other stay. For mine own mind,
 I would stand rather on Dumbarton rock
 Walled in with Fleming's spears, than here sit
 fast
 With these six thousand ranged about the
 walls
 That five days' suns have brought to strengthen
 me
 Since I fled hither in these poor same weeds
 That yet for need I wear. Now, by the joy
 I had that night to feel my horse beneath
 Bound like my heart that through those dark-
 ling ways
 Shot sunwards to the throne, I do not think
 Thus to sit long at wait, who have the hands
 Subscribed here of so many loyal lords
 To take no thought but of their faith to me
 Nor let dissension touch their hearts again
 Till I sit crowned as arbitress of all
 When the great cause is gained. Each blood-
 less day
 Makes our foes greater ; from Dunbar Lord
 Hume,
 Who thence with hand too swift cut off our
 friends,
 Brings now six hundred to my brother's flag
 Who hangs hard by us, and from Edinburgh
 Grange leads his hundreds ; all the Glasgow
 folk,
 For love of Lennox, with the Lothian carles,
 Draw round their regent hither : and God
 knows
 These are no cowards nor men vile esteemed
 That stand about him ; better is he served
 Of them than we of Herries, whose false wit
 Works with an open face and a close heart
 For other ends than live upon his tongue
 And fill with protestation those loud lips

That plead and swear on both sides ; he would
 stand
 My counsellor, yet has not craft enough
 To draw those enemies hence that watch us
 here
 By tumult raised along the border side
 For none to quell but Murray, who was bound
 From Glasgow where he lies yet to Dumfries,
 But halts to gather head and fall on us
 When we set forth ; which by my private will
 I would not yet, but that my kinsmen yearn
 To bid him battle and with victory won
 Seize to themselves the kingdom by my hand,
 Which they should wield then at their will, and
 wed
 To their next heir's ; so should ye have their
 seed
 For kings of Scotland, whom were leagued ere
 this
 With our main foes, and to their hands but late
 By composition and confederacy
 Would have given up my life to buy their ends
 Even with the blood whose kinship in their
 veins
 They thought should make them royal.
Argyle. We must fear
 These days that fleet and bring us no more
 strength
 Bring to the regent comfort and good hope
 From England of a quiet hand maintained
 Upon the borders, and such present peace
 As fights against us there upon his side
 While he stands fast and gathers friends, who
 had
 But common guard about him when your grace
 Fled hither first, yet would not at the news
 For dread of our near neighbourhood turn back
 With that thin guard to Stirling ; and by this
 The chiefs of all his part are drawn to him,
 Morton and Mar, Semple with Ochiltree,
 And they that wrung forth of your royal hand
 The writing that subscribed it kingdomless :
 All these are armed beneath him.
Queen. These are strong,
 Yet are our friends not weaker ; twain alone,
 You twain with whom I speak, being on my
 side,
 I would not fear to hide the feud of these ;
 And here are Cassilis, Eglinton, Montrose,
 Ross, Crawford, Errol, Fleming, Sutherland,
 Herries with Maxwell, Boyd and Oliphant,
 And Livingstone, and Beaumont that was
 sent
 To speak for France as with mine uncle's
 tongue

Pleading with those my traitors for that life
Which here he finds enfranchised; and all
these

As one true heart to me and faithful hand,
In God's name and their honour's leagued as
friends

Who till mine enemies be cast down will know
Nought save their duty to me, that no strife
Shall rend in sunder, and no privy jar
Rive one from other that stands fast by me.
This have they sworn; and by my trust in
them,

I will not doubt with favour or with force
To quell the hardest heart set opposite.
Have I not sent forth word of amnesty
To every soul in Scotland free save these,
The top and crown of traitors, Morton first,
And Lindsay, from whose hand I took a
pledge

To be redeemed with forfeit of his head;
Sempie, that writ lewd ballads of my love,
And that good provost whom I swore to give
For one night's prison given me in his house
A surer gaol for narrower resting-place
Than that wherein I rested not; and last
Balfour, that gave my lord's trust up and
mine?

Upon these five heads fallen will I set foot
When I tread back the stair that mounts my
throne; [hearts
All others shall find grace; yea, though their
Were set more stark against me and their
hands [God knows,

More dangerous aimed than these; for this
My heart more honours and shall ever love
A hardy foe more than a coward friend;
And Hume and Grange, mine enemies well
approved,

Could love or recompense reknit their faiths
To my forsworn allegiance, in mine eyes
Should stand more clear than unrevolted men
Whose trustless faith is further from my trust
Than from my veins the nearness of their
blood.

I am not bitter-hearted, nor take pride
To keep the record of wrongs done to me
For privy hate to gnaw upon, and fret
Till all its wrath be wroken; I desire [own
Not blood so much of them that seek mine
As victory on them, who being but subdued
For me may live or die my subjects: this
I care not if I win with liberal words
Or weapons of my friends, for love or fear,
Or by their own dissensions that may spring
And blossom to my profit; and I hold
Nor fear nor grief grievous nor terrible

That might buy victory to me, for whose sake
Peril and pain seem pleasant, and all else
That men thirst after as I thirst for this,
Wealth, honour, pleasure, all things weighed
therewith

Seem to my soul contemptible and vile.
Nor would I reign that I might take revenge,
But rather be revenged that I might reign.
For to live conquered and put on defeat,
To sit with humbled head and bear base life,
Endure the hours to mock me, and the days
To take and give me as a bond slave up
For night by night to tread on—while death
lives

And may be found or man lay hold on him,
I will not have this to my life, but die.
I know not what is life that outlives hope,
But I will never; when my power were past,
My kingdom gone, my trust brought down,
my will

Frustrate, I would not live one heartless hour
To think what death were gentlest; none so
sharp
But should be softer to my bosom found
Than that which felt it strike.

Huntley. You speak as ever
Your own high soul and speech; no spirit on
earth

Was ever seen more kinglike than lifts up
With yours our hearts to serve you for its sake
As these have served that here would speak
with you,

Enter BEATON and MARY BEATON.

To whom our love yields place.

[*Exeunt ARGYLE and HUNTLEY.*
Queen. My chance were ill

If to no better love your loves gave way
Than that which makes us friends.—You are
come betimes,

If you come ready now to ride; here lie
The letters you must bear: the cardinal's this,
Mine uncle's of Lorraine, to whose kind hand
Did I commend the first news of my flight
Sent from Lord Seyton's while our horses
breathed;

By this shall he receive my mind writ large
And turn his own to help me. Look you say
Even as I write, you left me in such mind
As he would know me, for all past faults done
Bent but to seek of God and of the world
Pardon; as knowing that none hut only God
Has brought me out of bonds, and inly fixed
In perfect purpose for his mercy shown
To show a thankful and a constant heart,

As simple woman or as queen of Scots,
In life and death fast cleaving to his Church,
As I would have him that shall read believe
My life to come shall only from his lips
Take shape and likeness, by their breath alone
Still swayed and steered ; to whom you know I
look

For reconciling words that may subdue
To natural pity of my laboring cause
The queen that was my mother and her son
My brother king that in my husband's seat
Sits lineal in succession. Say too this,
That without help I may not hold mine own,
And therefore shall he stand the more my
friend

And do the kindlier the more haste he makes
With all good speed to raise and to despatch
A levy of a thousand harquebusmen
To fill the want up of my ranks, that yet
Look leaner than mine enemies'. This for
France ;

And this to the English queen delivering say,
I look being free now for that help of hers
That in my last year's bonds not once or twice
I had by word of promise, and not doubt
This year to have indeed : which if I may,
When from her hand I take my crown again,
I shall thenceforth look for no other friend
And try no further faith. This private word
In London to the ambassador of Spain
Fail not to bear, that being set round with
spies

I may not write ; but he shall tell his king
The charges that men cast on me are false,
And theirs the guilt that held me in their bonds
Who stand in spirit firm to one faith with him
From whom I look for counsel. I well think
My sister's love shall but desire to hold
A mean betwixt our parties, and pronounce
On each side judgment, as by right and might
Twixt mine and me the imperial mediatrix,
Commanding peace, controlling war, that must
Determine this dark time and make alone
An end of doubt and danger ; which per-
chance

May come before her answer. Haste, and
thrive.

[Exit BEATON.

Now, what say you ? shall fortune stand our
friend

But long enough to seem worth hope or fear,
Or fall too soon from us for hope to help
Or fear to hurt more than an hour of chance
Might make and unmake ? This were now
my day

To try the sooth-saying of men's second sight
Who read beyond the writing of the hour
And utter things unborn ; now would I know,
And yet I would not, how my life shall move
And toward what end for ever ; which to know
Should help me not to suffer, nor undo
One jot that must be done or borne of me,
Nor take one grain away. I would not know
it ;

For one thing haply might that knowledge do,
Or one thing undo—to bring down the heart
Wherewith I now expect it. We shall know,
When we shall suffer, what God's hour will
bring ;

It filled with wrath full from his heavy hand,
Or gently laid upon us. I do think,
If he were wroth with aught once done of me,
That anger should be now fulfilled, and this
His hour of comfort ; for he should not stand,
For his wrath's sake with me, mine enemies'
friend,

Who are more than mine his enemies. Never
yet

Did I desire to know of God or man
What was designed me of them ; nor will now
For fear desire the knowledge. What I may,
That will I foil of all men's enmities,
And what I may of hope and good success
Take, and praise God. Yet thus much would
I know ;

If in your sight, who have seen my whole
life run
One stream with yours since either had its
spring,

My chance to come look foul or fair again
By this day's light and likelihood.

Mary Beaton. In sooth,
No soothsayer am I, yet so far a seer,
That I can see but this of you and me,
We shall not part alive.

Queen. Dost thou mean well ?
Thou has been constant ever at my hand
And closest when the worst part of my fate
Came closest to me ; firm as faith or love
Hast thou stood by my peril and my pain,
And still where I found these there found I
thee,

And where I found thee these were not far off.
When I was proud and blithe (men said) of
heart,

And life looked smooth and loving in mine
eyes,

Thou wouldst be sad and cold as autumn
winds,

Thy face discomfortable, and strange thy speech

Thy service joyless ; but when times grew hard,
And there was wind and fire in the clear
heaven,
Then wast thou near ; thy service and thy
speech
Were glad and ready ; in thine eyes thy soul
seemed to sit fixed at watch as one that waits
And knows and is content with what shall be.
Nor can I tell now if thy sight should put
More faith in me or fear, to trust or doubt
The chance forefigured in thee ; for thou art
As 'twere my fortune, faithful as man's fate,
Inevitable ; I cannot read the roll
That I might deem were hidden in thy hand
Writ with my days to be, nor from thine eyes
Take light to know ; for fortune too is blind
As man that knows not of her, and thyself,
That art as 'twere a type to me and sign
Incognizable, art no more wise than I
To say what I should hope or fear to learn,
Or why from thee.

Mary Beaton. This one thing I know well
That hope nor fear need think to feed upon,
That I should part from you alive, or you
Take from me living mine assurance yet
To look upon you while you live, and trace
To the grave's edge your printed feet with mine.

Queen. Wilt thou die too ?

Mary Beaton. Should I so far so long
Follow my queen's face to forsake at last
And loose my name for constancy ? or you
Whose eyes alive have slain so many men
Want when death shuts them one to die of you
Dying, who had so many loving lives
To go before you living ?

Queen. Thou dost laugh
Always, to speak of death ; and at this time
God wot it should beseem us best to smile
If we must think upon him. I and thou
Have so much in us of a single heart
That we can smile to hear of that or see
Which sickens and makes bleed faint hearts for
fear ;

And well now shall it stand us both in stead
To make ours hard against all chance, and walk
Between our friends and foes indifferently
As who may think to see them one day shift
From hate to love and love again to hate
As time with peaceable or warlike hand
Shall carve and shape them ; and to go thus
forth

And make as I shall neither at my need
Deject me nor uplift in spirit, who pass
Not gladly nor yet lothly to the field
That these my present friends have in my name

Set for the trial of my death or life.
Thou knowest long since God gave me cause
to say

I saw the world was not that joyous thing
Which men would make it, nor the happiest
they

That lived the longest in it ; so I thought
That year the mightiest of my kinsmen fell
Slain by strong treason ; and these five years
gone

Have lightened not so much my life to me
That I should love it more or more should
loathe

That end which love or loathing, faith or fear
Can put not back nor forward by a day. [*Exeunt*]

SCENE IX.—LANGSIDE.

MURRAY, MORTON, HUME, LINDSAY, OCHIL-
TREE, SIR WILLIAM DOUGLAS, KIRKALDY,
and their Forces.

Murray. They cannot pass our place of
vantage here
To choose them out a likelier. Let our lines
Lie close on either side the hollow strait
Flanked as the hill slopes by those cottage
walls,
While here the head of our main force stands
fast

With wings flung each way forth : that narrow
street

Shall take them snared and naked.

Sir W. Douglas. I beseech you,
If you suspect no taint or part in me
Of treason in our kin, that I may have
The first of this day's danger.

Murray. No man here
Of all whose hearts are armed for Scotland
hath

First place in this day's peril, no man last,
But all one part of peril and one place
To stand and strike, if God be good to us,
In the last field that shall be fought for her
Upon this quarrel. Who are they that lead
The main of the queen's battle ?

Kirkaldy. On the left
Lord Herries, and Argyle in front ; with him
Claude Hamilton and James of Evandale
Bring up their turbulent ranks.

Lindsay. Why, these keep none
That crowd against us ; horse and mingled
foot

Confound each other hurtling as they come
Sheer up between the houses.

Murray. Some default

That maims the general strength has in their
need

Hold them an hour delaying ; our harquebus-
men,

Two thousand tried, the best half of our foot,
Keep the way fast each side even to this height
Where stands our strength in the open. We
shall have,

If aught win through of all their chivalry,
Some sharp half-hour of hand to hand at last
Ere one thrust other from this brow. Lord
Hume,

Keep you the rear of our right wing that looks
Toward Herries and his horsemen ; Ochiltree,
Stand you beside him ; Grange and Lindsay
here

Shall bide with me the main front of their
fight

When these break through our guard. Let
word be given

That no man when the day is won shall dare
Upon our side to spill one drop of blood

That may be spared of them that yield or fly.
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE X.—ANOTHER PART OF THE FIELD.

*Enter HERRIES and SEYTON, with their
soldiers.*

Herries. If they of our part hold the hill-
top yet,

For all our leader's loss we have the day

Seyton. They stand this half-hour locked
on both sides fast

And grappling to the teeth. I would to God

When for faint heart and very fear Argyle

Fell from his horse before the battle met

The devil had writhed his neck round : whose
delay

At point to charge first maimed us ; else by
this

We had scattered them as crows. Make up
again

And drive their broken lines in on the rear

While those in front stand doubtful. Charge
once more,

Enter OCHILTREE and HUME, with soldiers.

And all this side is ours.—Lord Ochiltree,
Yield, in the queen's name.

Ochiltree. In the king's I stand
To bid his traitor's battle.

[*They fight : OCHILTREE falls.*]

Herries. Stand thou too,
Or give us place ; I had rather have to-day
At my sword's end thee than a meaner man
To try this cause.

Hume. This edge of mine shall try
Which side and steel be truer.

[*They fight ; HUME is wounded.*]

Seyton. God and the queen !
Set on : this height once ours, this day is too,
And all days after.

Herries. Halt not yet, good friends,
Till with our bright swords we have crowned
the hill

Whereon they stand at grapple. Close again,
And we ride lords at large of the free field
Whence these fall hurled in sunder.

Seyton. To the height !
Our fellows are fast locked yet with our foes ;
Make up there to their comfort.

*Enter LINDSAY, KIRKALDY SIR WILLIAM
DOUGLAS, young OCHILTREE, with soldiers*

Lindsay. Sirs, not yet ;
Ere ye win through there be more spears to
break

Than there in fight are fastened. Stand, or
yield.

Herries. The Highland folk that doubtfully
held off

Are fallen upon our flank : hear you the noise ?
Back, sirs, hear back : we are sped.

[*Exit with his followers.*]

Seyton. The day is gone ;
Let life go after ; for I will not fly
To meet my queen's face as a beaten man.

Enter MURRAY, MORTON, &c., with soldiers.

Murray. Charge once, and then sheathe
swords ; the field is ours ;

They fly now both ways broken. Some one
spur

To bid those knaves that howl upon the rear
Cut short their quest of blood ; they were too
slack

Who are now so hot, when first the hunt was
up ;

They shall not flesh those fangs on flying
men

That in the fight were bloodless.

Seyton. Men, stand fast ;
Let not the currish cry of Highland hounds
Bark on your fugitive quarry : here a man
May fall not like a stag or harried hare,

But die more soldierlike than in the toils
With their loud pack upon him.

Young Ochiltree. Die then here
And pay me for my father, if God please
My life with his shall lie not on thy hand,
But thine on mine as forfeit. *(They fight ;*
SEYTON falls.

Murray. Slay him not ;
I say, put up your sword.

Young Ochiltree. Sir, pardon me ;
These bleed my father yet ; he too shall die,
Murray. Young man, nor he nor any of his
part

When I say, Live. Take up your sword again ;
And by this hand that struck it from your own
Be ruled and learn what loyal use it hath,
Which is not on its prisoner. Send forth word
That none take life of any man that yields ;
Pursue, but slay not ; for the day is won,
And this last battle ended that shall see
By Scottish hands the reek of Scotsmen slain
Defame the face of Scotland. While I live,
If God as on this day be good to her,
Her eyes shall look on her own blood no more.

(Exeunt.)

SCENE XI.—THE HEIGHTS NEAR LANGSIDE.

THE QUEEN, MARY BEATON, FLEMING, BOYD,
and young MAXWELL.

Queen. This is the last time I shall look on
world ;
Upon this day I know my fate is set
As on a sword's point. Does the fight stand
still,

That we see nothing on that hill's brow stir
Where both sides lashed together ?

Fleming. If the light
Tell mine eyes truth that reel with watching,
both

Stand with spears crossed and locked so hard,
and points

So fast inwound with such inveteracy,
That steel can thrust not steel an inch away
Nor foot push foot a hair's breadth back that
hangs

On the hill's edge and yields not. Hark ! the
noise

Grows sharper and more various in its cry
Than first it was ; there comes upon the day
Some change for good or ill ; but for my charge,
I would not say *Would God my hand were*
there,

But take its chance upon it.

Queen. Be content
To stand this day our soldier at her side :
Who will not live to lay such charge again
On them that love her. Lo there, on the left
They charge again from our part.

Maxwell. There it is
My father fights ; his horse are they that make
The hill's length rock and lighten as a sea ;
Look where the waves meet as that wind of
steeds

Sweeps them together ; how they reel and fall
There with the shock from under of the storm
That takes in rear and breaks their guard and
leaves

The right wing of the rebels cloven in twain,
And in the cleft their first men fallen that
stood

Against the sea-breach. O, this gallant day
Shows us our fortune fair as her fair face
For whom we came to seek it, and the crown
That it gives back more glorious.

Queen. If we knew
How fares our van—Nay, go not from me
one,

lest we be scattered.

Boyd. Hear you not a cry
As from the rear, a note of ruin, sent
Higher than the noise of horsemen ? and
therewith

A roar of fire as though the artillery there
Spake all at once its heart untimely out ;
Pray God our powder be not spent by chance
And in its waste undo us.

Queen. My heart is sick,
Yet shall it not subdue me while my will
Hath still a man's strength left. I was not
thus—

I will not think what ever I have been.
The worst day lasts no longer than a day,
And its worst hour hath but an hour of life
Wherein to work us evil.

Mary Beaton. Here comes one
Hot-spurred with haste and pale with this hour's
news :

Now shall we know what work it had to do
And what the next hour may.

Enter GEORGE DOUGLAS.

George Douglas. The day is lost.
There is but one way with us ; here we stand
As in death's hand already. You must fly,
Madam, while time be left or room for flight,
As if there be I know not.

Fleming. Is the van
Broken ?

George Douglas. Look up where late it stood so fast

That wellnigh for an hour the grappling ranks
Were so enlinked in front, the men behind
That fired across the rank of them before
And hurled their pistols in their enemies' face
Above their comrades' heads that held the van
Saw 'em yet reeking on the spear-shafts
lodged!

That caught them flatlong fallen athwart the staves

Fixed opposite and level, till a shot
Slew him that led behind the artillery up
As the first round was ended on our part,
And straight a gunner's linstock dropped and gave

Fire to the powder-wagon.

Maxwell. But the horse—
We saw my father's with Lord Seyton's horse
Hurl up against the left side round the hill
And break their right wing in the rear.

George Douglas. Ye saw? But not who brought them rescue, and bore back

Your father's force with might and ruin; Grange
And Lindsay, with my brother third, who fights

With the more bitter heart and hate to-day
For our name's sake to purge him of my deed
And wreak him on my friends; and would to God,

But for the service' sake I had to do,
He had met me whom perchance he sought,
and slain,

Ere I had borne this news out of the fight
To bid you fly.

Queen. Where will God set mine end?
I am wearied of this flying from death to death
That is my life, and man's: where'er I go,
From God and death I fly not: and even here

It may be they must find me.

Mary Beaton. Nay, not yet;
Take heart again, and fly,

Queen. O, this I knew,
Even by thine eyes I knew it a great while since

As now by mine. Our end of fear is come,
That casts out hope as well. Let us make hence.

Perchance our help is in Dumbarton yet
Upon the rock where I would fain at first
Have set my feet; how say you, Fleming,
now?

May we there make us fast?

George Douglas. The ways are thronged
With arms and noise of enemies; everywhere
The land is full of death and deadly cries
From throats that gape for blood; the regent's horse

Hold all the highway; and the straiter lanes
Stand thick with peasant folk whose hands are armed

With staves and sickles in their rage caught up
To strike at you for fault of sword or pike
Wherewith to charge us lying: no way is left
But south to Galloway and Lord Herries' land,
Where you may breathe but for a doubtful day
In the sea's sight of refuge.

Maxwell. In God's name
Take his good counsel, madam; as you know
The noble Douglas wise and true, believe
So shall you find my father's men and mine
In this great need.

Queen. Come, help me then to horse;
If I must ride some hundred miles to breathe,
As we must fly no less, I think, or fall
Among our foes that follow, in my mind
The worst it were not nor the unkindliest death

To die in saddle. I will not give again,
So please it God, into mine enemies' hands
My body up for bondage; twice or thrice
I have ridden hard by stars of March or May
With false or true men to my left and right
The wild night through for death or kingly life,
And if I ride now with few friends at hand
I have none false of them; or if as once
One ride with me that had my hate alive
Who rode with me to his own grave, and now
Holds me in chase toward mine—O, thou that wast

My hate and husband, whom these men to-day
Take on them to revenge, and in thy name
Turn all men's hearts against me that were born

Mine and all swords that served me, if thou be
A shadow at hand, a ghost unreconciled,
That waits to take his triumph, hear and see
If in this hour that smites me, which is thine,
Thou find one thought in me that bows my heart,

One pang that turns it from the thing it was,
One pulse that moves me to repent or fear
For what was done or shall be; if thou have
But so much power upon me to be called
Less hateful or more fearful, and thy death
With aught of dread have clothed the thought
of thee

That thy life had not; if thou seest me fly,

Then must thou see too that thou shalt not see
In death or life one part of spirit or sense
In me that calls thee master. To God's hand
I give the rest ; but in mine own I hold
The perfect power for good or evil days
To keep the heart I had, and on myself
Lose not one jot of lordship ; so may God
Love me no less and be no slower, I think,
To help my soul than theirs more vile than
mine

And made for chance to mar, whereon their
fate

Has power as on their bodies. If he will,
Now should he help, or never ; for we leave
A field more fatal to us and day more foul
Than ever cast out hope. I am loth to go
More than to die ; yet come what will soe'er,
I shall no more. Thou told'st me not of this,
[To MARY BEATON.]

But yet I learnt it of thee. Come ; we have
One dark day less of doom to see and live
Who have seen this and die not. Stay by me ;
I know thou wilt ; If I should bid thee go.
It were but even as I bade thee stay
Who hast as far to flee from death as I.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE XII.—DUNDRENNAN ABBEY.

The QUEEN and HERRIES.

Queen. Talk not to me of France ; this
man it was
That gave his tongue to serve my kinsmen's
plea
Who fain had seen me plight at Hamilton
To their Arbroath my hand and kingdom ;
nay,
I will not seek my fate at Catherine's hand,
Nor on those lips that were my mother's watch
My life hang weighed between a word and
smile,
Nor on that sleek face of the Florentine
Read my doom writ, nor in her smooth swart
cheek
See the blood brighten with desire of mine.
I will not live or die upon her tongue
Whose hate were glad to give me death or life
More hateful from her giving ; and I know
How she made proffer to my last year's lords
To take me from their bondage to her own
And shut my days up cloistered ; even such
love
Should France afford me now that in men's
sight

I stand yet lower, as fallen from this year's
hope

To live disrowned for ever. Tell him this
Who rode with you behind me from the field,
And bid him bear his mistress word of me
As one that thinks not to be made the mean
For them to weave alliance with my foes,
And with the purchase of my bartered blow
Buy back their power in Scotland.

Herries.

I shall say it ;
Yet this man's friendship, madam, might find
faith

Who hy so wild a way has followed you
To this third day that sees your flight at end,
Where you may sit some forty days secure
In trust and guard of mine.

Queen.

Ay, here I might,
Were I well weary with my two nights' sleep
On this hard earth that was my naked bed
Whom it casts out of kingdom ; but, my lord,
For thirty leagues and more of ridden ground
And two days' fare of peasants' meal and
milk

I am not yet nigher but by two days to death,
Nor spent in spirit for weariness or fear
Nor in my body broken, that may need
Should hold me here in bonds, or on your
faith

Lay a new charge of danger. Here, you say,
And Beaumont with you, I may bide awhile
The levy of my friends whose rallying force
May gather to me, or in their default
Hence to Dumbarton may I pass by sea
Or forth to France with safer sails, and prove
What faith is there in friendship. Now my
mind

Is nowise here to tarry ; your true love
Shall not for guerdon of its trust and care
Be tried again with peril, that as well
May be put by for your faith's sake and mine
So mutually made much of ; nor shall they,
Whose wounds run red yet from their regent's
hand

That on this border laid so sore a scourge
As late their blood bore witness, for my sake
Or give their blood again or lose their faith
That should for me be proven, and being found
true

Bring them to death should we twice fail, or
false

Turn their safe life to shame. This shall
not be ;

But I, content to make no trial of these,
Will hold them true and leave them unessay'd
To live in honor. Friends I yet should have

Whose peace and life lie not in those men's
hands

That would make prey of mine ; their faith is
firm

And their hearts great as mine own hope in
them

Who look toward me from England ; all the
north

No less desires me than I need their love,
To lift our creed and cause up that lies low,

Put wounded not to death. I have their names
Who first I think will meet me face to face

And lay their loyal hands in mine and pledge
Their noble heads for surety ; lord and knight

Whose fathers yielded up their lives for faith
Shall fail not now to seek me cast out hence

And gird me fast with all their following
round

And stalwart musters of their spearmen raised
To do me service of stout heart and steel

For these lords' sake that call me lady ; names
That bear the whole might of this northern

land
Upon their blazon, and the grace and strength
Of their old honor with them to that side

That they shall serve on ; first the two great
earls,

Then Dacre, Norton, Swinburne, Markinfield,
With all their houses, all the border's flower

Of ancient faith and fame ; had I but these
To rise up when I call and do me right

I were not poorly friended, with no more
Than this for trust to lean on ; but I think

To find not such friends only as their name
And cause should make in danger fast to mine,

To link our names in all men's eyes that read
Of faith in man for ever ; even the queen

My sister's self shall fight upon my side,
Being either found my friend for whom she

swore
If I were slain to fill this land with fires,
Or casting off my cause and me stand up

As much their enemy that partake my faith
As mine who lack not friends in all her land

That in this cause cast off will strike at her
For God's sake on my party. But indeed

I look to find not such a foe of her
As should have heart or wit to fight with me

Though she had will who has not ; for her
mind

Still moving like a blown and barren sea
Has yet not ever set so far toward storm

Or so much shifted from its natural tide
As to seem safe or prosperous for their sails

Who traffic for my ruin ; and I fear

No wind of change that may breathe sharp
or so

When once I stand in mine own flame to speak
Before her face and England's. If she will,

By her shall I come back to reign her friend ;
If not by her, then by their loves and hands

Who shall put off her sovereignty for mine.
There is not and there needs no better way

Than here lies fair before my feet, which yet
Are not so tired but they may tread it through

To the good end. My heart is higher again
Than ere that field it was, I know not why,

Which sent me hither. You shall write for me
Word to the warden of Carlisle, and say

Your queen seeks covert for her crownless head
With him the first in England ; and thereon

Ere he send answer or to-morrow set
Will I pass over.

Herries. I would fain believe
His queen were true of heart, and all your

friends
As strong to serve as faithful ; yet may she
Have better will than she has power to make,

As it would be, your servant ; and the land
Is many-minded, rent with doubt in twain,

And full of fears and factions ; you may pass
Even in this hope that now builds up your

heart
To find less help at no less need than here
On darker ways and deadlier : yet your will

Shall if it hold be done.

Queen. Despatch, and write ;
To stand before the gate of days to be

And beat their doors for entrance is more pain
Than to pass in and look on life or death.

Here will I sleep within your ward to-night,
And then no more in Scotland. Nay, make

haste ;
I would those hours were past that hold me

here.

SCENE XIII.—THE SHORE OF SOLWAY
FIRTH.

*The QUEEN, MARY BEATON, HERRIES,
GEORGE DOUGLAS, Page and Attendants.*

Queen. Is not the tide yet full ?
Herries. Come half an hour,

And it will turn ; but ere that ebb begin,
Let me once more desire your pardon, though

I plead against your pleasure. Here you stand
Not yet dethroned from royal hope, not yet

Disrowned of your great name, whose natural
power

Faith here forgets not, nor man's loyal love
Leaves off to honor; but gone hence, your
name

Is but a stranger's, subject to men's laws,
Alien and liable to control and chance
That are the lords of exile, and command
The days and nights of fugitives; your hope
Dies of strange breath or lives between strange
lips,

And nor your will nor only God's beside
Is master of your peace of life, but theirs
Who being the lords of land that harbors you
Give your life leave to endure their empire:
what

Can man do to you that a rebel may,
Which fear might deem as bad as banishment?
Not death, not bonds are bitterer than his day
On whom the sun looks forth of a strange sky,
Whose thirst drinks water from strange hands,
whose lips

Eat stranger's bread for hunger; who lies down
In a strange dark and sleeps not, and the light
Makes his eyes weep for their own morning,
seen

On hills that helped to make him man, and
fields
Whose flowers grew round his heart's root;
day like night

Denies him, and the stars and airs of heaven
Are as their eyes and tongues who know him
not.

Go not to banishment; the world is great,
But each has but his own land in the world.
There is one bosom that gives each man milk,
One country like one mother: none sleeps
well

Who lies between strange breasts; no lips
drink life

That seek it from strange fosters. Go not
hence;

You shall find no man's faith or love on earth
Like theirs that here cleave to you.

Queen. I have found
And think to find no hate of men on earth
Like theirs that here beats on me. Hath this
earth

Which sent me forth a five-years' child, and
queen

Not even of mine own sorrows, to come back
A widowed girl out of the fair warm sun
Into the grave's mouth of a dolorous land
And life like death's own shadow, that began
With three day's darkness—hath this earth of
yours

That made mine enemies, at whose iron breast

They drank the milk of treason—this hard
nurse,

Whose rocks and storms have reared no violent
thing

So monstrous as men's angers, whose wild
minds

Were fed from hers and fashioned—this that
bears

None but such sons as being my friends are
weak,

And strong, being most my foes—hath it such
grace

As I should cling to, or such virtue found
In some part of its evil as my heart

Should fear, being free, to part from? Have I
lived,

Since I came here in shadow and storm, three
days

Out of the storm and shadow? Have I seen
Such rest, such hope, such respite from despair,

As thralls and prisoners in strong darkness
may

Before the light look on them? Hath there
come

One chance on me of comfort, one poor change,
One possible content that was not born

Of hope to break forth of these bonds, or
made

Of trust in foreign fortune? Here, I knew,
Could never faith nor love nor comfort breed

While I sat fast in prison; ye, my friends,
The few men and the true men that were mine,

What were ye but what I was, and what help
Hath each love had of other, yours of mine,

Mine of your faith, but change of fight and
flight,

Fear and vain hope and ruin? Let me go,
Who have been but grief and danger to my
friends;

It may be I shall come with power again
To give back all their losses, and build up

What for my sake was broken.

Herries. Did I know it,
Yet were I loth to bid you part, and find

What there you go to seek; but knowing it
not,

My heart sinks in me and my spirit is sick
To think how this fair foot once parted hence

May rest thus light on Scottish ground no more.
Queen. It shall tread heavier when it steps
again

On earth which now rejects it; I shall live
To bruise their heads who wounded me at heel,

When I shall set it on their necks. Come,
friends,

I think the fisher's boat hath hoisted up sail
That is to bear none but one friend and me ;
Here must my true men and their queen take
leave,

And each keep thought of other. My fair
page,

Before the man's change darken on your chin
I may come back to ride with you at rein
To a more fortunate field : howe'er that may
be,

Ride you right on with better hap, and live
As true to one of merrier days than mine
As on that night to Mary, once your queen.
Douglas, I have not won a word of you ;
What would you do to have me tarry ?

George Douglas.

Die.

Queen. I lack not love it seems then at my
last.

That word was bitter ; yet I blame it not,
Who would not have sweet words upon my
lips

Nor in mine ears at parting. I should go
And stand not here as on a stage to play
My last part out in Scotland ; I have been
Too long a queen too little. By my life,
I know not what should hold me here or turn
My foot back from the boat-side, save the
thought

How at Lochleven I last set foot aboard,
And with what hope, and to what end ; and
now

I pass not out of prison to my friends,
But out of all friends' help to banishment.
Farewell, Lord Herries.

Herries. God go with my queen,
And bring her back with better friends than I.

Queen. Methinks the sand yet cleaving to
my foot

Should not with no more words be shaken off,
Nor this my country from my parting eyes
Pass unsaluted ; for who knows what year
May see us greet hereafter ? Yet take heed,
Ye that have ears, and hear me ; and take
note,

Ye that have eyes, and see with what last
looks

Mine own take leave of Scotland ; seven years
since

Did I take leave of my fair land of France,
My joyous mother, mother of my joy,
Weeping ; and now with many a woe between

And space of seven years' darkness, I depart
From this tempered and unnatural earth
That casts me out unmothered, and go forth
On this gray sterile bitter gleaming sea
With neither tears nor laughter, but a heart
That from the softest temper of its blood
Is turned to fire and iron. If I live,
If God pluck not all hope out of my hand,
If aught of all mine prosper, I that go
Shall come back to men's ruin, as a flame
The wind bears down, that grows against the
wind,

And grasps it with great hands, and wins its
way,

And wins its will, and triumphs ; so shall I
Let loose the fire of all my heart to feed
On these that would have quenched it. I
will make

From sea to sea one furnace of the land
Whereon the wind of war shall beat its wings
Till they wax faint with hopeless hope of rest,
And with one rain of men's rebellious blood
Extinguish the red embers. I will leave
No living soul of their blaspheming faith
Who war with monarchs ; God shall see me
reign

As he shall reign beside me, and his foes
Lie at my foot with mine ; kingdoms and
kings

Shall from my heart take spirit, and at my
soul

Their souls be kindled to devour for prey
The people that would make its prey of them
And leave God's altar stripped of sacrament
As all kings' heads of sovereignty, and make
Bare as their thrones his temples ; I will set
Those old things of his holiness on high
That are brought low, and break beneath my
feet

These new things of men's fashion ; I will sit
And see tears flow from eyes that saw me weep
And dust and ashes and the shadow of death
Cast from the block beneath the axe that falls
On heads that saw me humbled ; I will do it,
Or bow mine own down to no royal end
And give my blood for theirs if God's will be,
But come back never as I now go forth
With but the hate of men to track my way
And not the face of any friend alive.

Mary Beaton. But I will never leave you
till you die.

MARY STUART

A TRAGEDY

ἀντὶ μὲν ἐχθρῶς γλώσσης ἐχθρὰ
 γλῶσσα τελείσθω τυδφειλόμενον
 πρᾶσσουσα δίκην μέγ' αὐτεῖ·
 ἀντὶ δὲ πληγῆς φονίας φονίαν
 πληγὴν τινέτω δράσαντι παθεῖν,
 τριγέρων μῦθος τάδε φωνεῖ.

ÆSCH. *Cho.* 309-315.

I DEDICATE THIS PLAY,
 NO LONGER, AS THE FIRST PART OF THE TRILOGY
 WHICH IT COMPLETES WAS DEDICATED,
 TO THE GREATEST EXILE, BUT SIMPLY
 TO THE GREATEST MAN OF FRANCE:
 TO THE CHIEF OF LIVING POETS:
 TO THE FIRST DRAMATIST OF HIS AGE:
 TO MY BELOVED AND REVERED MASTER
 VICTOR HUGO

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MARY STUART.
 MARY BEATON.
 QUEEN ELIZABETH.
 BARBARA MOWBRAY.
 LORD BURGHELY.
 SIR FRANCIS WALSHINGHAM.
 WILLIAM DAVISON.
 ROBERT DUDLEY, *Earl of Leicester.*
 GEORGE TALBOT, *Earl of Shrewsbury.*
 EARL OF KENT.
 HENRY CAREY, *Lord Hunsdon.*
 SIR CHRISTOPHER HATTON.
 SIR THOMAS BROMLEY, *Lord Chancellor.*
 POPHAM, *Attorney-General.*
 EGERTON, *Solicitor-General.*
 GAWDY, *the Queen's Sergeant.*
 SIR AMYAS PAULET.
 SIR DREW DRURY.

SIR THOMAS GORGES.
 SIR WILLIAM WADE.
 SIR ANDREW MELVILLE.
 ROBERT BEALE, *Clerk of the Council.*
 CURLE and NAU, *Secretaries to the Queen of Scots.*
 GORION, *her Apothecary.*
 FATHER JOHN BALLARD,
 ANTHONY BABINGTON,
 CHIDIACK TICHBORNE,
 JOHN SAVAGE,
 CHARLES TILNEY,
 EDWARD ABINGTON,
 THOMAS SALISBURY,
 ROBERT BARNWELL,
 THOMAS PHILLIPPS, *Secretary to Walsingham.*
 M. DE CHATEAUNEUF.
 M. DE BELLÈVRE.

Conspirators.

Commissioners, Privy Councillors, Sheriffs, Citizens, Officers, and Attendants.
 Time—FROM AUGUST 14, 1586, TO FEBRUARY 18, 1587.

ACT I

ANTHONY BABINGTON

SCENE I.—*Babington's Lodging: A Veiled Picture on the Wall**Enter BABINGTON, TICHBORNE, TILNEY, AB-
INGTON, SALISBURY, and BARNWELL.*

BABINGTON

WELCOME, good friends, and welcome this
good day
That casts out hope and brings in certainty
To turn raw spring to summer. Now not
long
The flower that crowns the front of all our
faiths
Shall bleach to death in prison; now the
trust
That took the night with fire as of a star
Grows red and broad as sunrise in our sight
Who held it dear and desperate once, now
sure,
But not more dear, being surer. In my hand
I hold this England and her brood, and all
That time out of the chance of all her fate
Makes hopeful or makes fearful: days and
years,
Triumphs and changes bred for praise or
shame
From the unborn womb of these unknown,
are ours
That stand yet noteless here; ours even as
God's
Who puts them in our hand as his, to wield
And shape to service godlike. None of you
But this day strikes out of the scroll of death
And writes apart immortal; what we would,
That have we; what our fathers, brethren,
peers,
Bled and beheld not, died and might not win.
That may we see, touch, handle, hold it fast,
May take to bind our brows with. By my
life,
I think none ever had such hap alive
As ours upon whose plighted lives are set
The whole good hap and evil of the state
And of the Church of God and world of men
And fortune of all crowns and creeds that
hang
Now on the creed and crown of this our land,
To bring forth fruit to our resolve, and bear

What sons to time it please us; whose mere
will
Is father of the future.

TILNEY

Have you said?

BABINGTON

I cannot say too much of so much good.

TILNEY

Say nothing then a little, and hear one while:
Your talk struts high and swaggers loud for
joy,
And safely may perchance, or may not, here;
But why to-day we know not.

BABINGTON

No, I swear,
Ye know not yet, no man of us but one,
No man on earth; one woman knows, and I,
I that best know her the best begot of man
And noblest; no king born so kingly-souled,
Nor served of such brave servants.

TICHBORNE

What, as we?

BABINGTON

Is there one vein in one of all our hearts
That is not blown aflame as fire with air
With even the thought to serve her? and, by
God,
They that would serve had need be bolder
found
Than common kings find servants.

SALISBURY

Well, your cause?
What need or hope has this day's heat brought
forth
To blow such fire up in you?

BABINGTON

Hark you, sirs;
The time is come, ere I shall speak of this,
To set again the seal on our past oaths
And bind their trothplight faster than it is
With one more witness; not for shameful
doubt,
But love and perfect honour. Gentlemen,

Whose souls are brethren sealed and sworn
to mine,
Friends that have taken on your hearts and
hands

The selfsame work and weight of deed as I,
Look on this picture; from its face to-day
Thus I pluck off the muffled mask, and bare
its likeness and our purpose. Ay, look here;
None of these faces but are friends of each,
None of these lips unsworn to all the rest,
None of these hands unplighted. Know ye
not

What these have bound their souls to? and
myself,

I that stand midmost painted here of all,
Have I not right to wear of all this ring
The topmost flower of danger? Who but I
Should crown and close this goodly circle up
Of friends I call my followers? There ye
stand,

Fashioned all five in likeness of mere life,
Just your own shapes, even all the man but
speech,

As in a speckless mirror; Tichborne, thou,
My nearest heart and brother next in deed,
Then Abington, there Salisbury, Tilney there,
And Barnwell, with the brave bright Irish eye
That burns with red remembrance of the
blood

Seen drenching those green fields turned
brown and grey

Where fire can burn not faith out, nor the
sword

That hews the boughs off lop the root there
set

To spread in spite of axes. Friends, take
heed;

These are not met for nothing here in show
Nor for poor pride set forth and boastful
heart

To make dumb brag of the undone deed, and
wear

The ghost and mockery of a crown unearned
Before their hands have wrought it for their
heads

Out of a golden danger, glorious doubt,
An act incomparable, by all time's mouths
To be more blessed and cursed than all deeds
done

In this swift fiery world of ours, that drives
On such hot wheels toward evil goals or good,
And desperate each as other; but that each,
Seeing here himself and knowing why here,
may set

His whole heart's might on the instant work,
and hence

Pass as a man rechristened, bathed anew
And swordlike tempered from the touch that
turns

Dull iron to the two-edged fang of steel
Made keen as fire by water; so, I say,
Let this dead likeness of you wrought with
hands

Whereof ye wist not, working for mine end
Even as ye gave them work, unwittingly,
Quickened with life your vows and purposes
To rid the beast that troubles all the world
Out of men's sight and God's. Are ye not
sworn

Or stand not ready girt at perilous need
To strike under the cloth of state itself
The very heart we hunt for?

TICHBORNE

Let not then

Too high a noise of hound and horn give note
How hot the hunt is on it, and ere we shoot
Startle the royal quarry; lest your cry
Give tongue too loud on such a trail, and we
More piteously be rent of our own hounds
Than he that went with huntsman too, and
came

To play the hart he hunted.

BABINGTON

Ay, but, see,

Your apish poet's-likeness holds not here,
If he that fed his hounds on his changed flesh
Was charmed out of a man and bayed to
death

But through pure anger of a perfect maid;
For she that should of huntsmen turn us
harts

Is Dian but in mouths of her own knives,
And in paid eyes hath only godhead on
And light to dazzle none but them to death.
Yet I durst well abide her, and proclaim
As goddess-like as maiden.

BARNWELL

Why, myself

Was late at court in presence, and her eyes
Fixed somewhere on me full in face; yet,
'faith,

I felt for that no lightning in my blood
Nor blast in mine as of the sun at noon

To blind their balls with godhead; no, ye see,
I walk yet well enough.

ABINGTON

She gazed at you?

BARNWELL

Yes, 'faith; yea, surely; take a Puritan oath
To seal my faith for Catholic. What, God
help,

Are not mine eyes yet whole then? am I
blind

Or maimed or scorched, and know not? by
my head,

I find it sit yet none the worse for fear
To be so thunder-blasted.

ABINGTON

Hear you, sirs?

TICHBORNE

I was not fair to hear it.

BARNWELL

Which was he
Spake of one changed into a hart? by God,
There be some hearts here need no charm, I
think,
To turn them hares of hunters; or if deer,
Not harts but hinds, and rascal.

BABINGTON

Peace, man, peace!
Let not at least this noble cry of hounds
Flash fangs against each other. See what
verse

I bade write under on the picture here:
*These are my comrades, whom the peril's self
Draws to it;* how say you? will not all in the
end

Prove fellows to me? how should one fall off
Whom danger lures and scares not? Tush,
take hands:

It was to keep them fast in all time's sight
I bade my painter set you here, and me
Your loving captain; gave him sight of each
And order of us all in amity.

And if this yet not shame you, or your hearts
Be set as boys' on wrangling, yet, behold,
I pluck as from my heart this witness forth

[Taking out a letter.

To what a work we are bound to, even her
hand

Whom we must bring from bondage, and
again

Be brought of her to honour. This is she,
Mary the queen, sealed of herself and signed
As mine assured good friend for ever. Now,
Am I more worth or Ballard?

TILNEY

He it was
Bade get her hand and seal to allow of all
That should be practised; he is wise.

BABINGTON

Ay, wise!
He was in peril too, he said, God wot,
And must have surety of her, he; but I,
'Tis I that have it, and her heart and trust,
See all here else, her trust and her good love
Who knows mine own heart of mine own
hand writ
And sent her for assurance.

SALISBURY

This we know;
What we would yet have certified of you
Is her own heart sent back, you say, for yours.

BABINGTON

I say? not I, but proof says here, cries out
Her perfect will and purpose. Look you,
first

She writes me what good comfort hath she
had

To know by letter mine estate, and thus
Reknit the bond of our intelligence,
As grief was hers to live without the same
This great while past; then lovingly com-
mends

In me her own desire to avert betimes
Our enemies' counsel to root out our faith
With ruin of us all; for so she hath shown
All Catholic princes what long since they have
wrought

Against the king of Spain; and all this while
The Catholics naked here to all misuse
Fall off in numbered force, in means and
power,

And if we look not to it shall soon lack
strength

To rise and take that hope or help by the hand

Which time shall offer them; and see for this
 What heart is hers! she bids you know of me
 Though she were no part of this cause, who
 holds
 Worthless her own weighed with the general
 weal,
 She will be still most willing to this end
 To employ therein her life and all she hath
 Or in this world may look for.

TICHBORNE

 This rings well;
 But by what present mean prepared doth hers
 Confirm your counsel? or what way set forth
 So to prevent our enemies with good speed
 That at the goal we find them not, and there
 Fall as men broken?

BABINGTON

 Nay, what think you, man,
 Or what esteem of her, that hope should lack
 Herein her counsel? hath she not been found
 Most wary still, clear-spirited, bright of wit,
 Keen as a sword's edge, as a bird's eye swift,
 Man-hearted ever? First, for crown and base
 Of all this enterprise, she bids me here
 Examine with good heed of good event
 What power of horse and foot among us all
 We may well muster, and in every shire
 Choose out what captain for them, if we lack
 For the main host a general;—as indeed
 Myself being bound to bring her out of bonds
 Or here with you cut off the heretic queen
 Could take not this on me;—what havens,
 towns,
 What ports to north and west and south, may
 we
 Assure ourselves to hold in certain hand
 For entrance and receipt of help from France,
 From Spain, or the Low Countries; in what
 place
 Draw our main head together; for how long
 Raise for this threefold force of foreign friends
 Wage and munition, or what harbours choose
 For these to land; or what provision crave
 Of coin at need or armour; by what means
 The six her friends deliberate to proceed;
 And last the manner how to get her forth
 From this last hold wherein she newly lies:
 These heads hath she set down, and bids me
 take
 Of all seven points counsel and common care
 With as few friends as may be of the chief

Ranged on our part for actors; and thereon
 Of all devised with diligent speed despatch
 Word to the ambassador of Spain in France,
 Who to the experience past of all the estate
 Here on this side aforetime that he hath
 Shall join goodwill to serve us.

TILNEY

 Ay, no more?
 Of us no more I mean, who being most near
 To the English queen our natural mistress
 born
 Take on our hands, her household pension-
 ers',
 The stain and chiefest peril of her blood
 Shed by close violence under trust; no word,
 No care shown further of our enterprise
 That flowers to fruit for her sake?

BABINGTON

 Fear not that;
 Abide till we draw thither—ay—she bids
 Get first assurance of such help to come,
 And take thereafter, what before were vain,
 Swift order to provide arms, horses, coin,
 Wherewith to march at word from every
 shire
 Given by the chief; and save these principals
 Let no man's knowledge less in place partake
 The privy ground we move on, but set forth
 For entertainment of the meaner ear
 We do but fortify us against the plot
 Laid of the Puritan part in all this realm
 That have their general force now drawn to
 head
 In the Low Countries, whence being home re-
 turned
 They think to spoil us utterly, and usurp
 Not from her only and all else lawful heirs
 The kingly power, but from their queen that
 is
 (As we may let the bruit fly forth disguised)
 Wrest that which now she hath, if she for fear
 Take not their yoke upon her, and therefrom
 Catch like infection from plague-tainted air
 The purulence of their purity; with which
 plea
 We so may stablish our confederacies
 As wrought but for defence of lands, lives,
 goods,
 From them that would cut off our faith and
 these;
 No word writ straight or given directly forth

Against the queen, but rather showing our
will
Firm to maintain her and her lineal heirs,
Myself (she saith) *not named*. Ha, gallant
souls,
Hath our queen's craft no savour of sweet wit,
No brain to help her heart with?

TICHBORNE

But our end—
No word of this yet?

BABINGTON

And a good word, here,
And worth our note, good friend; being thus
prepared,
Time then shall be to set our hands on work
And straight thereon take order that she may
Be suddenly transported out of guard,
Not tarrying till our foreign force come in,
Which then must make the hotter haste; and
seeing

We can make no day sure for our design
Nor certain hour appointed when she might
Find other friends at hand on spur of the act
To take her forth of prison, ye should have
About you always, or in court at least,
Scouts furnished well with horses of good
speed

To bear the tidings to her and them whose
charge

Shall be to bring her out of bonds, that these
May be about her ere her keeper have word
What deed is freshly done; in any case,
Ere he can make him strong within the house
Or bear her forth of it: and need it were
By divers ways to send forth two or three
That one may pass if one be stayed; nor this
Should we forget, to assay in the hour of need
To cut the common posts off; by this plot
May we steer safe, and fall not miserably,
As they that laboured heretofore herein,
Through overhaste to stir upon this side
Ere surely make us strong of strangers' aid.
And if at first we bring her forth of bonds,
Be well assured, she bids us—as I think
She doubts not me that I should let this slip.
Forget so main a matter—well assured
To set her in the heart of some strong host,
Or strength of some good hold, where she may
stay

Till we be mustered and the ally drawn in;

For should the queen, being scatheless of
yet

As we unready, fall upon her flight,
The bird untimely fled from snare to snare
Should find being caught again a narrower
hold

Whence she should fly forth never, if cause
indeed

Should seem not given to use her worse; and
we

Should be with all extremity pursued,
To her more grief; for this should grieve her
more

Then what might heaviest fall upon her.

TILNEY

Ay?

She hath had then work enough to do to weep
For them that bled before; Northumberland,
The choice of all the north spoiled, banished,
slain,

Norfolk that should have ringed the fourth
sad time

The fairest hand wherewith fate ever led
So many a man to deathward, or sealed up
So many an eye from sunlight.

BABINGTON

By my head,

Which is the main stake of this cast, I swear
There is none worth more than a tear of hers
That man wears living or that man might lose,
Borne upright in the sun, or for her sake
Bowed down by theirs she weeps for: nay, but
hear;

She bids me take most vigilant heed, that all
May prosperously find end assured, and you
Conclude with me in judgment; to myself
As chief of trust in my particular

Refers you for assurance, and commends
To counsel seasonable and time's advice
Your common resolution; and again,

If the design take yet not hold, as chance
For all our will may turn it, we should not
Pursue her transport nor the plot laid else
Of our so baffled enterprise; but say

When this were done we might not come at
her

Being by mishap close guarded in the Tower
Or some strength else as dangerous, yet, she
saith,

For God's sake leave not to proceed herein
To the utmost undertaking; for herself

At any time shall most contentedly
Die, knowing of our deliverance from the
bonds
Wherein as slaves we are holden.

BARNWELL

So shall I,
Knowing at the least of her enfranchisement
Whose life were worth the whole blood shed
o' the world
And all men's hearts made empty.

BABINGTON

Ay, good friend,
Here speaks she of your fellows, that some
stir
Might be in Ireland laboured to begin
Some time ere we take aught on us, that
thence
The alarm might sprir right on the part
opposed
To where should grow the danger: she mean-
time
Should while the work were even in hand
assay
To make the Catholics in her Scotland rise
And put her son into their hands, that so
No help may serve our enemies thence; again,
That from our plots the stroke may come, she
thinks
To have some chief or general head of all
Were now most apt for the instant end;
wherein
I branch not off from her in counsel, yet
Conceive not how to send the appointed word
To the earl of Arundel now fast in bonds
Held in the Tower she spake of late, who now
Would have us give him careful note of this,
Him or his brethren; and from oversea
Would have us seek, if he be there at large,
To the young son of dead Northumberland,
And Westmoreland, whose hand and name,
we know,
May do much northward; ay, but this we
know,
How much his hand was lesser than his name
When proof was put on either; and the lord
Paget, whose power is in some shires of
weight
To incline them usward; both may now be
had,
And some, she saith, of the exiles principal,

If the enterprise be resolute once, with these
May come back darkling; Paget lies in Spain,
Whom we may treat with by his brother's
mean,

Charles, who keeps wotch in Paris: then in
the end

She bids beware no messenger sent forth
That bears our counsel bear our letters; these
Must through blind hands precede them or
ensue

By ignorant posts and severally despatched:
And of her sweet wise heart, as we were fools,
—But that I think she fears not—bids take
heed

Of spies among us and false brethren, chief
Of priests already practised on, she saith,
By the enemy's craft against us; what, for-
sooth,

We have not eyes to set such knaves apart
And look their wiles through, but should need
misdoubt

—Whom shall I say the least on all our
side?—

Good Gilbert Gifford with his kind boy's face
That fear's lean self could fear not? but God
knows

Woman is wise, but woman; none so bold,
So cunning none, God help the soft sweet wit,
But the fair flesh with weakness taints it;
why,

She warns me here of perilous scrolls to keep
That I should never bear about me, seeing
By that fault sank all they that fell before
Who should have walked unwounded else of
proof,

Unstayed of justice: but this following word
Hath savour of more judgment; we should
let

As little as we may our names be known
Or purpose here to the envoy sent from
France,

Whom though she hears for honest, we must
fear

His master holds the course of his design
Far contrary to this of ours, which known
Might move him to discovery.

TICHBORNE

Well forewarned:
Forearmed enough were now that cause at
need
Which had but half so good an armour on
To fight false faith or France in.

BABINGTON

Peace awhile:
 Here she winds up her craft. She hath long
 time sued
 To shift her lodging, and for answer hath
 None but the Castle of Dudley named as
 meet
 To serve this turn; and thither may depart,
 She thinks, with parting summer; whence
 may we
 Devise what means about those lands to lay
 For her deliverance; who from present bonds
 May but by one of three ways be discharged:
 When she shall ride forth on the moors that
 part
 Her prison-place from Stafford, where few
 folk
 Use to pass over, on the same day set,
 With fifty or threescore men well horsed and
 armed,
 To take her from her keeper's charge, who
 rides
 With but some score that bear but pistols;
 next,
 To come by deep night round the darkling
 house
 And fire the barns and stables, which being
 nigh
 Shall draw the household huddling forth to
 help,
 And they that come to serve her, wearing
 each
 A secret sign for note and cognizance,
 May some of them surprise the house, whom
 she
 Shall with her servants meet and second; last,
 When carts come in at morning, these being
 met
 In the main gateway's midst may by device
 Fall or be sidelong overthrown, and we
 Make in thereon and suddenly possess
 The house whence lightly mig' we bear her
 forth
 Ere help came in of soldiers to relief
 Who lie a mile or half a mile away
 In several lodgings: but howe'er this end
 She holds her bounden to me all her days
 Who proffer me to hazard for her love,
 And doubtless shall as well esteem of you
 Or scarce less honourably, when she shall
 know
 Your names who serve beneath me; so com-
 mends

Her friend to God, and bids me burn the word
 That I would wear at heart for ever; yet,
 Lest this sweet scripture haply write us dead,
 Where she set hand I set my lips, and thus
 Rend mine own heart with her sweet name
 and end.
[Tears the letter]

SALISBURY

She hath chosen a trusty servant.

BABINGTON

Ay, of me?
 What ails you at her choice? was this not I
 That laid the ground of all this work, and
 wrought
 Your hearts to shape for service? or per-
 chance
 The man was you that took this first on him,
 To serve her dying and living, and put on
 The bloodred name of traitor and the deed
 Found for her sake not murderous?

SALISBURY

Why, they say
 First Gifford put this on you, Ballard next,
 Whom he brought over to redeem your heart
 Half lost for doubt already, and refresh
 The flagging flame that fired it first, and now
 Fell faltering half in ashes, whence his breath
 Hardly with hard pains quickened it and
 blew
 The grey to red rekindling.

BABINGTON

Sir, they lie
 Who say for fear I faltered, or lost heart
 For doubt to lose life after; let such know
 It shames me not though I were slow of will
 To take such work upon my soul and hand
 As killing of a queen; being once assured,
 Brought once past question, set beyond men's
 doubts
 By witness of God's will borne sensibly,
 Meseems I have swerved not.

SALISBURY

Ay, when once the word
 Was washed in holy water, you would wear
 Lightly the name so hallowed of priests' lips
 That men spell murderer; but till Ballard
 spake

The shadow of her slaying whom we shall
strike
Was ice to freeze your purpose.

TICHBORNE

Friend, what then?
Is this so small a thing, being English born,
To strike the living empire here at heart
That is called England? stab her present
state,
Give even her false-faced likeness up to death,
With hands that smite a woman? I that
speak,
Ye know me if now my faith be firm, as I will
To do faith's bidding; yet it wrings not me
To say I was not quick nor light of heart,
Though moved perforce of will unwillingly,
To take in trust this charge upon me.

BARNWELL

I
With all good will would take, and give God
thanks,
The charge of all that falter in it: by heaven,
To bear in the end of doubts and doublings
heaves
My heart up as with sickness. Why, by th'
The heretic harlot that confounds our hope
Should be made carrion, with those follow
g four
That were to wait upon her dead: all five
Live yet to scourge God's servants, and we
prate
And threaten here in painting: by my life,
I see no more in us of life or heart
Than in this heartless picture.

BABINGTON

Peace again:
Our purpose shall not long lack life, nor they
Whose life is deadly to the heart of ours
Much longer keep it; Burghley, Walsingham,
Hunsdon and Knowles, all these four names
writ out,
With hers at head they worship, are but now
As those five several letters that spell death
In eyes that read them right. Give me but
faith
A little longer: trust that heart awhile
Which laid the ground of all our glories;
think
I that was chosen of our queen's friends in
France,

By Morgan's hand there prisoner for her sake
On charge of such a deed's device as ours
Commended to her for truest, and a man
More sure than might be Ballard and more fit
To bear the burden of her counsels—I
Can be not undeserving, whom she trusts,
That ye should likewise trust me; seeing at
first
She writes me but a thankful word, and this,
God wot, for little service; I return
For aptest answer and thankworthiest meed
Word of the usurper's plotted end, and she
With such large heart of trust and liberal
faith
As here ye have heard requites me: whoin, I
think,
For you to trust is no too great thing now
For me to ask and have of all.

TICHBORNE

Dear friend,
Mistrust has no part in our mind of you
More than in hers; yet she too bids take
heed,
As I would bid you take, and let not slip
The least of her good counsels, which to keep
No whit proclaims us colder than herself
Who gives us charge to keep them; and to
slight
No whit proclaims us less unserviceable
Who are found too hot to serve her than the
slave
Who for cold heart and fear might fail.

BABINGTON

Too hot!
Why, what man's heart hath heat enough or
blood
To give for such good service? Look you,
sirs,
This is no new thing for my faith to keep,
My soul to feed its fires with, and my hope
Fix eyes upon for star to steer by; she
That six years hence the boy that I was then,
And page, ye know, to Shrewsbury, gave his
faith
To serve and worship with his body and soul
For only lady and queen, with power alone
To lift my heart up and bow down mine eyes
At sight and sense of her sweet sovereignty,
Made thence her man for ever; she whose
look

Turned all my blood of life to tears and fire,
That going or coming, sad or glad—for yet
She would be somehow merry, as though to
give

Comfort, and ease at heart her servants, then
Weep smilingly to be so light of mind,
Saying she was like the bird grown blithe in
bonds

That if too late set free would die for fear,
Or wild birds hunt it out of life—if sad,
Put madness in me for her suffering's sake,
If joyous, for her very love's sake—still
Made my heart mad alike to serve her, being
I know not when the sweeter, sad or blithe,
Nor what mood heavenliest of her, all whose
change

Was as of stars and sun and moon in heaven;
She is well content,—ye have heard her—she,
to die,

If we without her may redeem ourselves
And loose our lives from bondage; but her
friends

Must take forsooth good heed they be not, no,
Too hot of heart to serve her! And for me,
Am I so vain a thing of wind and smoke
That your deep counsel must have care to
keep

My lightness safe in wardship? I sought
none—

Craved no man's counsel to draw plain my
plot,

Need no man's warning to dispose my deed.
Have I not laid of mine own hand a snare
To bring no less a lusty bird to lure
Than Walsingham with proffer of myself
For scout and spy on mine own friends in
France

To fill his wise wide ears with large report
Of all things wrought there on our side, and
plots

Laid for our queen's sake? and for all his wit
This politic knave misdoubts me not, whom
ye

Held yet too light and lean of wit to pass
Unspied of wise men on our enemies' part,
Who have sealed the subtlest eyes up of them
all.

TICHBORNE

That would I know; for if they be not blind,
But only wink upon your proffer, seeing
More than they let your own eyes find or fear,
Why, there may lurk a fire to burn us all
Masked in them with false blindness.

BABINGTON

Hear you, sir?

Now by the faith I had in this my friend
And by mine own yet flawless towards him,
yea

By all true love and trust that holds men fast,
It shames me that I held him in this cause.
Half mine own heart, my better hand and eye,
Mine other soul and worthier. Pray you, go.
Let us not hold you; sir, be quit of us;
Go home, lie safe, and give God thanks; lie
close,

Keep your head warm and covered; nay, be
wise;

We are fit for no such wise folk's fellowship,
No married man's who being bid forth to
fight

Holds his wife's kirtle fitter wear for man
Than theirs who put on iron: I did know it,
Albeit I would not know, this man that was,
This soul and sinew of a noble seed,
Love and the lips that burn a bridegroom's
through

Have charmed to deathward, and in all
good stead

Left him a silken spirit.

TICHBORNE

By that faith

Which yet I think you have found as fast in
me

As ever yours I found, you wrong me more
Than were I that your words can make me
not

I had wronged myself and all our cause; I
hold

No whit less dear for love's sake even than
love

Faith, honour, friendship, all that all my
days

Was only dear to my desire, till now
This new thing dear as all these only were
Made all these dearer. If my love be less
Toward you, toward honour or this cause,
then think

I love my wife not either, whom you know
How close at heart I cherish, but in all
Play false alike. Lead now which way you
will,

And wear what likeness; though to all men
else

It look not smooth, smooth shall it seem to
me,

And danger be not dangerous; where you go,
For me shall wildest ways be safe, and straight
For me the steepest; with your eyes and heart
Will I take count of life and death, and think
No thought against your counsel: yea, by
heaven,

I had rather follow and trust my friend and
the
Than halt and hark mistrustfully behind
To live of him mistrusted.

BABINGTON

Why, well said:
Strike hands upon it; I think you shall not
find
A trustless pilot of me. Keep we fast,
And hold you fast my counsel, we shall see
The state high-built here of heretic hope
Shaken to dust and death. Here comes more
proof
To warrant me no liar. You are welcome,
sirs;

Enter BALLARD, disguised, and SAVAGE.

Good father captain, come you plumed or
cowed,
Or stoled or sworded, here at any hand
The true heart bids you welcome.

BALLARD

Sir, at none
Is folly welcome to mine ears or eyes.
Nay, stare not on me stormily; I say,
I bid at no hand welcome, by no name,
Be it ne'er so wise or valiant on men's lips,
Pledge health to folly, nor forecast good hope
For them that serve her, I, but take of men
Things ill done ill at any hand alike.
Ye shall not say I cheered you to your death,
Nor would, though nought more dangerous
than your death
Or deadlier for our cause and God's in ours
Were here to starve the chance of, and your
blood
Shed vainly with no seed for faith to sow
Should be not poison for men's hopes to
drink.
What is this picture? Have ye sense or souls,
Eyes, ears, or wits to take assurance in
Of how ye stand in strange men's eyes and
ears,
How fare upon their talking tongues, how
dwell

In shot of their suspicion, and sustain
How great a work how lightly? Think ye
not

These men have ears and eyes about your
ways,
Walk with your feet, work with your hands,
and watch

When ye sleep sound and babble in your
sleep?

What knave was he, or whose man sworn and
spy,

That drank with you last night? whose hire-
ling lip

Was this that pledged you, Master Babing-
ton,

To a foul quean's downfall and a fair queen's
rise?

Can ye not seal your tongues from tavern
speech,

Nor sup abroad but air may catch it back,
Nor think who set that watch upon your lips
Yourselves can keep not on them?

BABINGTON

What, my friends!

Here is one come to counsel, God be thanked,
That bears commission to rebuke us all.

Why, hark you, sir, you that speak judgment,
you

That take our doom upon your double tongue
To sentence and accuse us with one breath,
Our doomsman and our justicer for sin,
Good Captain Ballard, Father Fortescue,
Who made you guardian of us poor men, gave
Your wisdom wardship of our follies, chose
Your faith for keeper of our faiths, that yet
Were never taxed of change or doubted?

You,

'Tis you that have an eye to us, and take note
What time we keep, what place, what com-
pany,

How far may wisdom trust us to be wise
Or faith esteem us faithful, and yourself
Were once the hireling hand and tongue and
eye

That waited on this very Walsingham
To spy men's counsels and betray their blood
Whose trust had sealed you trusty? By God's
light,

A goodly guard I have of you, to crave
What man was he I drank with yesternight,
What name, what shape, what habit, as, for-
sooth,

Were I some statesman's knave and spotted
 spy,
 The man I served, and cared not how, being
 dead,
 His molten gold should glut my throat in
 hell,
 Might question of me whom I snared last
 night,
 Make inquisition of his face, his gait,
 His speech, his likeness. Well, be answered
 then
 By God, I know not; but God knows I think
 The spy most dangerous on my secret walks
 And witness of my ways most worth my fear
 And deadliest listener to devour my speech
 Now questions me of danger, and the tongue
 Most like to sting my trust and life to death
 Now taxes mine of rashness.

BALLARD

Is he mad?
 Or are ye brainsick all with heat of wine
 That stand and hear him rage like men in
 storms
 Made drunk with danger? have ye sworn
 with him
 To die the fool's death too of furious fear
 And passion scared to slaughter of itself?
 Is there none here that knows his cause or
 me,
 Nor what should save or spoil us?

TICHBORNE

Friend, give ear;
 For God's sake, yet be counselled.

BABINGTON

Ay, for God's!
 What part hath God in this man's counsels?
 nay,
 Take you part with him; nay, in God's name
 go;
 What should you do to bide with me? turn
 back;
 There stands your captain.

SAVAGE

Hath not one man here
 One spark in spirit or sprinkling left of
 shame?
 I that looked once for no such fellowship,
 But soldier's hearts in shapes of gentlemen,

I am sick with shame to hear men's jangling
 tongues
 Outnoise their swords unbloodied. Hear me,
 sirs;
 My hand keeps time before my tongue, and
 hath
 But wit to speak in iron; yet as now
 Such wit were sharp enough to serve our turn
 That keenest tongues may serve not. One
 thing sworn
 Calls on our hearts; the queen must singly
 die,
 Or we, half dead men now with dallying,
 must
 Die several deaths for her brief one, and
 stretched
 Beyond the scope of sufferance; wherefore
 here
 Choose out the man to put this peril on
 And gird him with this glory; let him pass
 Straight hence to court, and through all stays
 of state
 Strike death into her heart.

BABINGTON

Why, this rings right;
 Well said, and soldierlike; do thus, and take
 The vanguard of us all for honour.

SAVAGE

Ay,
 Well would I go, but seeing no courtly suit
 Like yours, her servants and her pensioners,
 The doorkeepers will bid my baseness back
 From passage to her presence.

BABINGTON

O, for that,
 Take this and buy; nay, start not from your
 word;
 You shall not.

SAVAGE

Sir, I shall not.

BABINGTON

Here's more gold;
 Make haste, and God go with you; if the plot
 Be blown on once of men's suspicious breath,
 We are dead, and all die bootless deaths—be
 swi:—
 And her we have served we shall but surely
 slay.

I will make trial again of Walsingham
If he misdoubt us. O, my cloak and sword—

[Knocking within.]

I will go forth myself. What noise is that?
Get you to Gage's lodging; stay not here;
Make speed without for Westminster; perchance

There may we safely shift our shapes and fly,
If the end be come upon us.

BALLARD

It is here.

Death knocks at door already. Fly; farewell.

BABINGTON

I would not leave you—but they know you not—

You need not fear, being found here singly.

BALLARD

No.

BABINGTON

Nay, halt not, sirs; no word but haste; this way,
Ere they break down the doors. God speed us well!

[Exeunt all but BALLARD. As they go out enter an Officer with Soldiers.]

OFFICER

Here's one fox yet by the foot; lay hold on him.

BALLARD

What would you, sirs?

OFFICER

Why, make one foul bird fast,
Though the full flight be scattered: for their kind

Must prey not here again, nor here put on
The jay's loose feathers for the raven priest's
To mock the blear-eyed marksman: these plucked off

Shall show the nest that sent this fledgeling forth,
Hatched in the hottest holy nook of hell.

BALLARD

I am a soldier.

OFFICER

Ay, the badge we know

Whose broidery signs the shoulders of the file
That Satan marks for Jesus. Bind him fast:
Blue satin and slashed velvet and gold lace,
Methinks we have you, and the hat's band here

So seemly set with silver buttons, all
As here was down in order; by my faith,
A goodly ghostly friend to shrive a maid
As ever kissed for penance: pity 'tis
The hangman's hands must hallow him again
When this lay slough slips off, and twist one rope
For priest to swing with soldier. Bring him hence.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE II. Chartley

MARY STUART and MARY BEATON

MARY STUART

We shall not need keep house for fear to-day;
The skies are fair and hot; the wind sits well
For hound and horn to chime with. I will go.

MARY BEATON

How far from this to Tixall?

MARY STUART

Nine or ten
Or what miles more I care not; we shall find
Fair field and goodly quarry, or he lies,
The gospeller that bade us to the sport,
Protesting yesternight the shire had none
To shame Sir Walter Aston's. God be praised,
I take such pleasure yet to back my steed
And bear my crossbow for a deer's death well,
I am almost half content—and yet I lie—
To ride no harder nor more dangerous heat
And hunt no beast of game less gallant.

MARY BEATON

Nay,
You grew long since more patient.

MARY STUART

Ah, God help!
 What should I do but learn the word of him
 These years and years, the last word learnt
 but one,
 That ever I loved least of all sad words?
 The last is death for any soul to learn,
 The last save death is patience.

MARY BEATON

Time enough
 We have had ere death of life to learn it in
 Since you rode last on wilder ways than theirs
 That drive the dun deer to his death.

MARY STUART

Eighteen—
 How many more years yet shall God mete out
 For thee and me to wait upon their will
 And hope or hope not, watch or sleep, and
 dream
 Awake or sleeping? surely fewer, I think,
 Than half these years that all have less of life
 Than one of those more fleet that flew before.
 I am yet some ten years younger than this
 queen,

Some nine or ten; but if I die this year
 And she some score years longer than I think
 Be royal-titled, in one year of mine
 I shall have lived the longer life, and die
 The fuller-fortuned woman. Dost thou
 mind

The letter that I writ nigh two years gone
 To let her wit what privacies of hers
 Our trusty dame of Shrewsbury's tongue
 made mine

Ere it took fire to sting her and me?
 How thick soe'er o'erscur'd with poisonous
 lies,

Of her I am sure it lies, and perchance
 I did the wiselier, having y fill,
 Yet to withhold the letter she sought
 Of me to know what villainies had it poured
 In ears of mine against her innocent name:
 And yet thou knowest what mirthful heart
 was mine

To write her word of these, that had she read
 Had surely, being but woman, made her mad,
 Or haply, being not woman, had not. 'Faith,
 How say'st thou? did I well?

MARY BEATON

Ay, surely well
 To keep that back you did not ill to write.

MARY STUART

I think so, and again I think not; yet
 The best I did was bid thee burn it. She,
 That other Bess I mean of Hardwick, hath
 Mixed with her gall the fire at heart of hell,
 And all the mortal medicines of the world
 To drug her speech with poison; and God wot
 Her daughter's child here that I bred and
 loved.

Bess Pierpoint, my sweet bedfellow that was,
 Keeps too much savour of her grandam's
 stock

For me to match with Nau; my secretary
 Shall with no slip of hers engraft his own,
 Begetting shame or peril to us all
 From her false blood and fiery tongue; ex-
 cept

I find a mate as meet to match with him
 For truth to me as Gilbert Curle hath found,
 I will play Tudor once and break the banns,
 Put on the feature of Elizabeth
 To frown their hands in sunder.

MARY BEATON

Were it not
 Some tyranny to take her likeness on
 And bitter-hearted grudge of matrimony
 For one and not his brother secretary,
 Forbid your Frenchman's banns for jealousy
 And grace your English with such liberal love
 As Barbara fails not yet to find of you
 Since she writ Curle for Mowbray? and
 herein

There shows no touch of Tudor in your mood
 More than its wont is; which indeed is nought;
 The world, they say, for her should waste, ere
 man

Should get her virginal goodwill to wed.

MARY STUART

I would not be so tempered of my blood,
 So much mismade as she in spirit and flesh,
 To be more fair of fortune. She should hate
 Not me, albeit she hate me deadly, more
 Than thee or any woman. By my faith,
 Fain would I know, what knowing not of her
 now

I muse upon and marvel, if she have

Desire or pulse or passion of true heart
Fed full from natural veins, or be indeed
All bare and barren all as dead men's bones
Of all sweet nature and sharp seed of love,
And those salt springs of life, through fire and tears

That bring forth pain and pleasure in their kind

To make good days and evil, all in her
Lie sere and sapless as the dust of death.
I have found no great good hap in all my days
Nor much good cause to make me glad of God,

Yet have I had and lacked not of my life
My good things and mine evil: being not yet
Barred from life's natural ends of evil and good

Foredoomed for man and woman through the world

Till all their works be nothing: and of mine
I know but this—though I should die to-day,
I would not take for mine her fortune.

MARY BEATON

No?

Myself perchance I would not.

MARY STUART

Dost thou think

That fire-tongued witch of Shrewsbury spake
once truth

Who told me all those quaint foul merry tales
Of our dear sister that at her desire

I writ to give her word of, and at thine
Withheld and put the letter in thine hand

To burn as was thy counsel? for my part,
How loud she lied soever in the charge

That for adultery taxed me with her lord
And being disproved before the council here

Brought on their knees to give themselves the lie

Her and her sons by that first lord of four
That took in turn this hell-mouthed hag to wife

And got her kind upon her, yet in this
I do believe she lied not more than I

Reporting her by record, how she said
What infinite times had Leicester and his queen

Plucked all the fruitless fruit of baffled love
That being contracted privily they might,

With what large gust of fierce and foiled desire

This votaress crowned, whose vow could no man break,

Since God whose hand shuts up the unkindly womb

Had sealed it on her body, man by man
Would course her kindless lovers, and in quest

Pursue them hungering as a hound in heat,
Full on the fiery scent and slot of lust,

That men took shame and laughed and marvelled: one,

Her chamberlain, so hotly would she trace
And turn perforce from cover, that himself
Being tracked at sight thus in the general eye

Was even constrained to play the piteous hare

And wind and double till her amorous chase
Were blind with speed and breathless; but the worst

Was this, that for this country's sake and shame's

Our huntress Dian could not be content
With Hatton and another born her man

And subject of this kingdom, but to heap
The heavier scandal on her countrymen

Had cast the wild growth of her lust away
On one base-born, a stranger, whom of nights

Within her woman's chamber would she seek
To kiss and play for shame with secretly;

And with the duke her bridegroom that should be,

That should and could not, seeing forsooth no man

Might make her wife or woman, had she dealt

As with this knave his follower; for by night
She met him coming at her chamber door

In her bare sinock and night-rail, and thereon
Bade him come in; who there abode three

hours:

But fools were they that thought to bind her will

And stay with one man or allay the mood
That ranging still gave tongue on several heats

To hunt fresh trails of lusty love; all this,
Thou knowest, on record truly was set down,

With much more villainous else: she prayed me write

That she might know the natural spirit and mind

Toward her of this fell witch whose rancorous mouth

Then bayed my name, as now being great
 with child
 By her fourth husband, in whose charge I lay
 As here in Paulet's; so being moved I wrote,
 And yet I would she had read it, though not
 now
 Would I re-write each word again, albeit
 I might, or thou, were I so minded, or
 Thyself so moved to bear such witness; but
 'Tis well we know not how she had borne to
 read
 All this and more, what counsel gave the
 dame,
 With loud excess of laughter urging me
 To enter on those lists of love-making
 My son for suitor to her, who thereby
 Might greatly serve and stead me in her sight;
 And I replying that such a thing could be
 But held a very mockery, she returns,
 The queen was so infatuate and distraught
 With high conceit of her fair fretted face
 As of a heavenly goddess, that herself
 Would take it on her head with no great pains
 To bring her to believe it easily;
 Being so past reason fain of flattering tongues
 She thought they mocked her not nor lied who
 said
 They might not sometimes look her full in
 face
 For the light glittering from it as the sun;
 And so perforce must all her women say
 And she herself that spake, who durst not
 look
 For fear to laugh out each in other's face
 Even while they fooled and fed her vein with
 words,
 Nor let their eyes cross when they spake to
 her
 And set their feature fast as in a frame
 To keep grave countenance with gross mock-
 ery lined;
 And how she prayed me chide her daughter,
 whom
 She might by no means move to take this way,
 And for her daughter Talbot was assured
 She could not ever choose but laugh outright
 Even in the good queen's flattered face. God
 wot,
 Had she read all, and in my hand set down,
 I could not blame her though she had sought
 to take
 My head for payment; no less poise on earth
 Had served, and hardiy, for the writer's
 fee;

I could not much have blamed her; all the
 less,
 That I did take this, though from slanderous
 lips,
 For gospel and not slander, and that now
 I yet do well believe it.

MARY BEATON

And herself
 Had we'll believed so much, and surely seen,
 For all your protest of discredit made
 With God to witness that you could not take
 Such tales for truth of her nor would not, yet
 You meant not she should take your word for
 this,
 As well I think she would not.

MARY STUART

Haply, no.
 We do protest not thus to be believed.
 And yet the witch in one thing seven years
 since
 Belied her, saying she then must needs die
 soon
 For timeless fault of nature. Now belike
 The soothsaying that speaks short her span
 to be
 May prove more true of presage.

MARY BEATON

Have you hope
 The chase to-day may serve our further ends
 Than to renew your spirit and bid time speed?

MARY STUART

I see not but I may; the hour is full
 Which I was bidden expect of them to bear
 More fruit than grows of promise; Babington
 Should tarry now not long; from France our
 friends
 Lift up their heads to usward, and await
 What comfort may confirm them from our
 part
 Who sent us comfort; Ballard's secret tongue
 Has kindled England, stiking from men's
 hearts
 As from a flint the fire that slept, and made
 Their dark dumb thoughts and dim disfigured
 hopes
 Take form from his and feather, aim and
 strength,

Speech and desire toward action; all the
 shires
 Wherein the force lies hidden of our faith
 Are stirred and set on edge of present deed
 And hope more imminent now of help to
 come
 And work to do than ever; not this time
 We hang on trust in succour that comes short
 By Philip's fault from Austrian John, whose
 death
 Put widow's weeds on mine unwedded hope,
 Late trothplight to his enterprise in vain
 That was to set me free, but might not seal
 The faith it pledged nor on the hand of hope
 Make fast the ring that weds desire with deed
 And promise with performance; Parma
 stands
 More fast now for us in his uncle's stead,
 Albeit the lesser warrior, yet in place
 More like to avail us, and in happier time
 To do like service; for my cousin of Guise,
 His hand and league hold fast our kinsman
 king,
 If not to bend and shape him for our use,
 Yet so to govern as he may not thwart
 Our forward undertaking till its force
 Discharge itself on England: from no side
 I see the shade of any fear to fail
 As those before so baffled; heart and hand
 Our hope is armed with trust more strong than
 steel
 And spirit to strike more helpful than a sword
 In hands that lack the spirit; and here to-day
 It may be I shall look this hope in the eyes
 And see her face transfigured. God is good;
 He will not fail his faith for ever. O,
 That I were now in saddle! Yet an hour,
 And I shall be as young again as May
 Whose life was come to August; like this
 year,
 I had grown past midway of my life, and sat
 Heartsick of summer; but new-mounted now
 I shall ride right through shine and shade of
 spring
 With heart and habit of a bride, and bear
 A brow more bright than fortune. Truth it
 is,
 Those words of bride and May should on my
 tongue
 Sound now not merry, ring no joy-bells out
 In ears of hope or memory; not for me
 Have they been joyous words; but this fair
 day
 All sounds that ring delight in fortunate ears

And words that make men thankful, even to
 me
 Seem thankworthy for joy they have given me
 not
 And hope which now they should not.

MARY BEATON

Nay, who knows?
 The less they have given of joy, the more they
 may;
 And they who have had their happiness before
 Have hope not in the future; time o'erpast
 And time to be have several ends, nor wear
 One forward face and backward.

MARY STUART

God, I pray,
 Turn thy good words to gospel, and make
 truth
 Of their kind presage! but our Scotswomen
 Would say, to be so joyous as I am,
 Though I had cause, as surely cause I have,
 Were no good warrant of good hope for me.
 I never took such comfort of my trust
 In Norfolk or Northumberland, nor looked
 For such good end as now of all my fears
 From all devices past of policy
 To join my name with my misnated son's
 In handfast pledge with England's, ere my
 foes
 His counsellors had flawed his craven faith
 And moved my natural blood to cast me off
 Who bore him in my body, to come forth
 Less childlike than a changeling. But not
 long
 Shall they find means by him to work their
 will,
 Nor he bear head against me; hope was his
 To reign forsooth without my fellowship,
 And he that with me would not shall not now
 Without or with me wield not or divide
 Or part or all of empire.

MARY BEATON

Dear my queen,
 Vex not your mood with sudden change of
 thoughts;
 Your mind but now was merrier than the sun
 Half rid by this through morning: we by noon
 Should blithely mount and meet him.

MARY STUART

So I said.
My spirit is fallen again from that glad
strength
Which even but now arrayed it; yet what
cause
Should dull the dancing measure in my blood
For doubt or wrath, I know not. Being once
forth,
My heart again will quicken. [Sings.

And ye maun braid your yellow hair
And busk ye like a bride;
Wi' sevenscore men to bring ye hame,
And ae true love beside;
Between the birk and the green rowan
Fu' blithely shall ye ride.

O ye maun braid my yellow hair,
But braid it like nae bride;
And I maun gang my ways, mither,
Wi' nae true love beside;
Between the kirk and the kirkyard
Fu' sadly shall I ride.

How long since,
How long since was it last I heard or sang
Such light lost ends of old faint rhyme worn
thin
With use of country songsters? When we
twain
Were maidens but some twice a span's length
high,
Thou hadst the happier memory to hold
rhyme,
But not for songs the merrier.

MARY BEATON

This was one
That I would sing after my nurse, I think,
And weep upon in France at six years old
To think of Scotland.

MARY STUART

Would I weep for that,
Woman or child, I have had now years
enough
To weep in; thou wast never French in heart,
Serving the queen of France. Poor queen
that was,
Poor boy that played her bridegroom! now
they seem
In these mine eyes that were her eyes as far
Beyond the reach and range of oldworld time
As their first fathers' graves.

Enter SIR AMYAS PAULET

PAULET

Madam, if now
It please you to set forth, the hour's full,
And there your horses ready.

MARY STUART

Sir, my thanks.
We are bounden to you and this goodly day
For no small comfort. Is it your will we ride
Accompanied with any for the nonce
Of our own household?

PAULET

If you will, to-day
Your secretaries have leave to ride with you.

MARY STUART

We keep some state then yet. I pray you,
sir,
Doth he wait on you that came here last
month,
A low-built lank-cheeked Judas-bearded
man,
Lean, supple, grave, pock-pitten, yellow-
polled,
A smiling fellow with a downcast eye?

PAULET

Madam, I know the man for none of mine.

MARY STUART

I give you joy as you should give God thanks,
Sir, if I err not; but meseemed this man
Found gracious entertainment here, and took
Such counsel with you as I surely thought
Spake him your friend, and honourable; but
now
If I misread not an ambiguous word
It seems you know no more of him or less
Than Peter did, being questioned, of his
Lord.

PAULET

I know not where the cause were to be sought
That might for likeness or unlikeness found
Make seemly way for such comparison
As turns such names to jest and bitterness;
Howbeit, as I denied not nor disclaimed

To know the man you speak of, yet I may
With very purity of truth profess
The man to be not of my following.

MARY STUART

See
How lightly may the tongue that thinks no ill
Or trip or slip, discoursing that or this
With grave good men in purity and truth,
And come to shame even with a word! God
wot,
We had need put bit and bridle in our lips
Ere they take on them of their foolishness
To change wise words with wisdom. Come,
sweet friend,

Let us go seek our kind with horse and hound
To keep us witless company; belike,
There shall we find our fellows.

[*Exeunt MARY STUART and MARY BEATON.*]

PAULET

Would to God
This day had done his office! mine till then
Holds me the verier prisoner.

Enter PHILLIPPS

PHILLIPPS

She will go?

PAULET

Gladly, poor sinful fool; more gladly, sir,
Than I go with her.

PHILLIPPS

Yet you go not far;
She is come too near her end of wayfaring
To tire much more men's feet that follow.

PAULET

Ay.
She walks but half blind yet to the end; even
now
She spake of you, and questioned doubtfully
What here you came to do, or held what place
Or commerce with me: when you caught her
eye,
It seems your courtesy by some graceless
chance
Found but scant grace with her.

PHILLIPPS

'Tis mine own blame,
Or fault of mine own feature; yet forsooth
I greatly covet not their gracious hap
Who have found or find most grace with her.
I pray,
Doth Wade go with you?

PAULET

Nay,—what, know you not?—
But with Sir Thomas Gorges, from the court,
To drive this deer at Tixall.

PHILLIPPS

Two years since,
He went, I think, commissioned from the
queen
To treat with her at Sheffield?

PAULET

Ay, and since
She hath not seen him; who being known of
here
Had haply given her swift suspicion edge
Or cause at least of wonder.

PHILLIPPS

And I doubt
His last year's entertainment oversea
As our queen's envoy to demand of France
Her traitor Morgan's body, whence he
brought
Nought save dry blows back from the duke
d'Aumale
And for that prisoner's quarters here to hang
His own not whole but beaten, should not
much
Incline him to more good regard of her
For whose love's sake her friends have dealt
with him
So honourably, nor she that knows of this
Be the less like to take his presence here
For no good presage to her: you have both
done well
To keep his hand as close herein as mine.

PAULET

Sir, by my faith I know not, for myself,
What part is for mine honour, or wherein
Of all this action laid upon mine hand
The name and witness of a gentleman

May gain desert or credit, and increase
 In seed and harvest of good men's esteem
 For heritage to his heirs, that men unborn
 Whose fame is as their name derived from his
 May reap in reputation; and indeed
 I look for none advancement in the world
 Further than this that yet for no man's sake
 Would I forego, to keep the name I have
 And honour, which no son of mine shall say
 I have left him not for any deed of mine
 As perfect as my sire bequeathed it me:
 I say, for any word or work yet past
 No tongue can thus far tax me of decline
 From that fair forthright way of gentleman,
 Nor shall for any that I think to do
 Or might I think to say alive: howbeit,
 I were much bounden to the man would say
 But so much for me in our mistress' ear,
 The treasurer's, or your master Walsing-
 ham's,
 Whose office here I have undergone thus long
 And had I leave more gladly would put off
 Than ever I put on me; being not one
 That out of love toward England even or God
 At mightiest men's desire would lightly be
 For loyalty disloyal, or approved
 In trustless works a trusty traitor; this
 He that should tell them of me, to procure
 The speedier end here of this work imposed,
 Should bind me to him more heartily than
 thanks
 Might answer.

PHILLIPPS

Good Sir Amyas, you and I
 Hold no such office in this dangerous time
 As men make love to for their own name's
 sake
 Or personal lust of honour; but herein
 I say you yet take note, and pardon me
 If I for the instance mix your name with mine,
 That no man's private honour lies at gage,
 Nor is the stake set here to play for less
 Than what is more than all men's names
 alive,
 The great life's gage of England; in whose
 name
 Lie all our own implicated, as all our lives
 For her redemption forfeit, if the cause
 Call once upon us; not this gift or this,
 Or what best likes us or were gladliest given
 Or might most honourably be parted with
 For our more credit on her best behalf,

Doth she we serve, this land that made us
 men,
 Require of all her children; but demands
 Of our great duty toward her full deserts
 Even all we have of honour or of life,
 Of breath or fame to give her. What were I
 Or what were you, being mean or nobly born,
 Yet moulded both of one land's natural womb
 And fashioned out of England, to deny
 What gift she crave soever, choose and
 grudge
 What grace we list to give or what withhold,
 Refuse and reckon with her when she bids
 Yield up forsooth not life but fame to come,
 A good man's praise or gentleman's repute,
 Or lineal pride of children, and the light
 Of loyalty remembered? which of these
 Were worth our mother's death, or shame that
 might
 Fall for one hour on England? She must live
 And keep in all men's sight her honour fast
 Though all we die dishonoured; and myself
 Know not nor seek of men's report to know
 If what I do to serve her till I die
 Be honourable or shameful, and its end
 Good in men's eyes or evil; but for God,
 I find not why the name or fear of him
 Herein should make me swerve or start aside
 Through faint heart's falsehood as a broken
 bow
 Snapped in his hand that bent it, ere the shaft
 Find out his enemies' heart, and I that end
 Whereto I am sped for service even of him
 Who put this office on us.

PAULET

Truly, sir,
 I lack the wordy wit to match with yours,
 Who speak no more than soldier; this I know,
 I am sick in spirit and heart to have in hand
 Such work or such device of yours as yet
 For fear and conscience of what worst may
 come
 I dare not well bear through.

PHILLIPPS

Why, so last month
 You writ my master word and me to boot
 I had set you down a course for many things
 You durst not put in execution, nor
 Consign the packet to this lady's hand
 That was returned from mine, seeing all was
 well,

And you should hold yourself most wretched
man

If by your mean or order there should spring
Suspicion 'twixt the several messengers
Whose hands unwitting each of other ply
The same close trade for the same golden end,
While either holds his mate a faithful fool
And all their souls, baseborn or gently bred,
Are coined and stamped and minted for our
use

And current in our service; I thereon
To assuage your doubt and fortify your fear
Was posted hither, where by craft and pains
The web is wound up of our enterprise
And in our hands we hold her very heart
As fast as all this while we held impawned
The faith of Barnes that stood for Gifford
here

To take what letters for his mistress came
From southward through the ambassador of
France

And bear them to the brewer, your honest
man,

Who wist no further of his fellowship
Than he of Gifford's, being as simple knaves
As knavish each in his simplicity,
And either serviceable alike, to shift
Between my master's hands and yours and
mine

Her letters writ and answered to and fro;
And all these faiths as weathertight and safe
As was the box that held those letters close
At bottom of the barrel, to give up
The charge there sealed and ciphered, and
receive

A charge as great in peril and in price
To yield again, when they drew off the beer
That weekly served this lady's household
whom

We have drained as dry of secrets drugged
with death

As ever they this vessel, and return
To her own lips the dregs she brewed or we
For her to drink have tempered. What of
this

Should seem so strange now to you, or dis-
taste

So much the daintier palate of your thoughts,
That I should need reiterate you by word
The work of us o'erpast, or fill your ear
With long foregone recital, that at last
Your soul may start not or your sense recoil
To know what end we are come to, or what
hope

We took in hand to cut this peril off
By what close mean soe'er and what foul
hands

Unwashed of treason, which it yet mislikes
Your knightly palm to touch or close with,
seeing

The grime of gold is baser than of blood
That barks their filthy fingers? yet with these
Must you cross hands and grapple, or let fall
The trust you took to treasure.

PAULET

Sir, I will,

Even till the queen take back that gave it;
yet

Will not join hands with these, nor take on
mine

The taint of their contagion; knowing no
cause

That should confound or couple my good
name

With theirs more hateful than the reek of hell.
You had these knaveries and these knaves
in charge,

Nor I that knew not how to handle them
Nor whom to choose for chief of treasons,
him

That in mine ignorant eye, unused to read
The shameful scripture of such faces, bare
Graved on his smooth and simple cheek and
brow

No token of a traitor; yet this boy,
This milk-mouthed weanling with his maiden
chin,

This soft-lipped knave, late suckled as on
blood

And nursed of poisonous nipples, have you
not

Found false or feared by this, whom first you
found

A trustier thief and worthier of his wage
Than I, poor man, had wit to find him? I,
That trust no changelings of the church of
hell,

No babes reared priestlike at the paps of
Rome,

Who have left the old harlot's deadly dugs
drawn dry,

I lacked the craft to rate this knave of price,
Your smock-faced Gifford, at his worth
aright,

Which now comes short of promise.

PHILLIPPS

O, not he;
Let not your knighthood for a slippery word
So much misdoubt his knaveship; here from
France,

On hint of our suspicion in his ear
Half jestingly recorded, that his hand
Were set against us in one politic track
With his old yoke-fellows in craft and creed,
Betraying not them to us but ourselves to
them,

My Gilbert writes me with such heat of hand
Such piteous protestation of his faith
So stuffed and swoln with burly-bellied oaths
And God and Chirst confound him if he lie
And Jesus save him as he speaks mere truth,
My gracious godly priestling, that yourself
Must sure be moved to take his truth on trust
Or stand for him approved an atheist.

PAULET

Well,
That you find stuff of laughter in such gear
And mirth to make out of the godless mouth
Of such a twice-cursed villain, for my part
I take in token of your certain trust,
And make therewith mine own assurance sure,
To see betimes an end of all such craft
As takes the faith forsworn of loud-tongued
liars

And blasphemies of brothel-breathing knaves
To build its hone or break its jest upon;
And so commend you to your charge, and take
Mine own on me less gladly; for by this
She should be girt to ride, as the old saw saith,
Out of God's blessing into the warm sun
And out of the warm sun into the pit
That men have dug before her, as herself
Had dug for England else a deeper grave
To hide our hope for ever: yet I would
This day and all that hang on it were done.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE III.—*Before Tixall Park*

MARY STUART, MARY BEATON, PAULET,
CURLE, NAU, and Attendants

MARY STUART

If I should never more back steed alive
But now had ridden hither this fair day
The last road ever I must ride on earth,
Yet would I praise it, saying of all days gone

And all roads ridden in sight of stars and sun
Since first I sprang to saddle, here at last
I had found no joyless end. These ways are
smooth,

And all this land's face merry; yet I find
The ways even therefore not so good to ride,
And all the land's face therefore less worth
love,

Being smoother for a palfrey's maiden pace
And merrier than our moors for outlook; nay,
I lie to say so; there the wind and sun
Make madder mirth by midsummer, and fill
With broader breath and lustier length of light
The heartier hours that clothe for even and
dawn

Our bosom-belted billowy-blossoming hills
Whose hearts break out in laughter like the
sea

For miles of heaving heather. Ye should
mock

My banished praise of Scotland; and in faith
I praised it but to prick you on to praise
Of your own goodly land; though field and
wood

Be parked and parcelled to the sky's edge out,
And this green Stafford moorland smooth and
strait

That we but now rode over, and by ours
Look pale for lack of large live mountain
bloom

Wind-buffed with morning, it should be
Worth praise of men whose lineal honour lives
In keeping here of history: but meseems
I have heard, Sir Amyas, of your liberal west
As of a land more affluent-souled than this
And fruitful-hearted as the south-wind; here
I find a fair-faced change of temperate clime
From that bald hill-brow in a broad bare plain
Where winter laid us both his prisoners late
Fast by the feet at Tutbury; but men say
Your birthright in this land is fallen more fair
In goodlier ground of heritage: perchance,
Grief to be now barred thence by mean of me,
Who less than you can help it or myself,
Makes you ride sad and sullen.

PAULET

Madam, no;

I pray you lay not to my wilful charge
The blame or burden of discourtesy
That but the time should bear which lays on
me
This weight of thoughts untimely.

MARY STUART

Nay, fair sir,
If I, that have no cause in life to seem
Glad of my sad life more than prisoners may,
Take comfort yet of sunshine, he methinks
That holds in ward my days and nights might
well
Take no less pleasure in this broad blithe air
Than his poor charge that too much troubles
him.
What, are we nigh the chase?

PAULET

Even hard at hand.

MARY STUART

Can I not see between the glittering leaves
Gleam the dun hides and flash the startled
horns
That we must charge and scatter? Were I
queen
And had a crown to wager on my hand,
Sir, I would set it on the chance to-day
To shoot a flight beyond you.

PAULET

Verily,
The hazard were too heavy for my skill:
I would not hold your wager.

MARY STUART

No! and why?

PAULET

For fear to come a bowshot short of you
On the left hand, unluckily.

MARY STUART

My friend,
Our keeper's wit-shaft is too keen for ours
To match its edge with pointless iron.—Sir,
Your tongue shoots further than my hand or
eye
With sense or aim can follow.—Gilbert Curle,
Your heart yet halts behind this cry of hounds,
Hunting your own deer's trail at home, who
lies
Now close in covert till her bearing-time
Be full to bring forth kindly fruit of kind
To love that yet lacks issue; and in sooth
I blame you not to bid all sport go by

For one white doe's self, who my-
self
Think long till I see you in mine arm
The soft fawn sun not yet
But is to make! must hold
A goodly christe. with prisoner's
cheer

And mirth enow for such a tender thing
As will not weep more to be born in bonds
Than babes born out of gaoler's ward, nor
grudge

To find no friend more fortunate than I
Nor happier hand to welcome it, nor name
More prosperous than poor mine to wear, if
God

Shall send the new-made mother's breast, for
love

Of us that love his mother's maidenhood,
A maid to be my namechild, and in all
Save love to them that love her, by God's
grace,

Most unlike me; for whose unborn sweet sake
Pray you meantime be merry.—'Faith, me-
thinks

Here be more huntsmen out afield to-day
And merrier than my guardian. Sir, look
up;

What think you of these riders?—All my
friends

Make on to meet them.

PAULET

There shall need no haste;
They ride not slack or lamely.

MARY STUART

Now, fair sir,
What say you to my chance on wager? here
I think to outshoot your archery.—By my life,
That too must fail if hope now fail me; these
That ride so far off yet, being come, shall
bring
Death or deliverance. Prithee, speak but
once; [Aside to MARY BEATON.
Say, these are they we looked for; say, thou
too
Hadst hope to meet them; say, they should
be here,
And I did well to look for them; O God!
Say but I was not mad to hope; see there;
Speak, or I die.

MARY BEATO

Nay, not before the come.

MARY STUART

Dost thou not hear my heart speaks
loudI can hear nothing of them. Yet I will not
fail in mine enemy's sight. This is mine
hourThat was to be for triumph, God, pray,
Stretch not its length out longer!

MARY BEATO

*Enter SIR THOMAS GORGES, SIR ARTHUR
WADE, and Soldiers*

MARY STUART

What man is this that stands across my way?

GORGES

One that hath warrant, madam, from the
queenTo arrest your French and English servants
And for more surety see you self removed
To present ward at Tilghfield here hard by,
As in this paper standeth her subscribed.
Lay hands on them.

MARY STUART

Was this your right hand's word?

[To PAULET]

You have shot beyond me indeed, and sent me
to deathYour honour with my life.—Draw, Sirs,
stand!Ye shall see I will to strike with once,
I dieBy the sword of the Lord with. The good
end—I should have told you of my heart
And say the word for I have drawn;

They have

So large a vantage that I need not
Bear back one foot.

I say;

Ye shall but die more shamefully than
Who here die fighting. What

must I do?

Must I live and never in my need alive

A man with heart to help me? O, my God,
Let me die now and foil them! Paulet, you,
Most knightly liar and traitor, was not this
Part of your charge, to play my hangman too,
Who have played so well my doomsman, and
be a traitor!To look on my trust, so bravely set
A sword so loyal to make sure for death
To poor a foolish woman? Sir, for you
That have this gallant office, present as his,
To do the dearest errand and most vile
I have ever your mistress ever laid on man
And sent me to this knight to hear and slay,
Are his eyes and his heart, and should
notLook to his title being a knight,
For he is that you, lose not
heartTo strike for a stroke, that may
Rid me of death if I should have
the gapes of death, I findA face beside that I bear
Nor inscribed two yearsI read in a shield what good
She has done that sent to treat withalSo mean a man and shameless, by his tongue
To take mine honour on the face, and turn
Me from queen to servant; by his hand
To turn my life's name now to death,
Which I would take more thankfully than
shame

To lead and thus prevail not.

PAULET

Madam, no,

As you may not in such suit prevail
Nor we be lords or wrath of yours be moved
turn the edge back on you, nor remit
the least part of our office, which deserves
for scorn of you nor wonder, whose own act
Has laid it on us; wherefore with less rage
Please you take thought now to submit your-
self,Even for your own more honour, to the effect
Whose cause was of your own device, that
hereBears fruit unlooked for; which being ripe
in timeYou cannot choose but taste of, nor may we
do the season's bidding, and the queen's
Who weeps at heart to know it.—Disarm these
men:Take you the prisoners to your present ward
And hence again to London; here meanwhile

Some week or twain their lady must lie close
 And with a patient or impatient heart
 Expect an end and word of judgment: I
 Must with Sir William back to Chartley
 Straight
 And there make inquisition ere day close
 What secret serpents of what treasons hatched
 May in this lady's papers lurk, whence we
 Must pluck the fangs forth of them yet un-
 dished,
 And lay these plots like dead and strangled
 snakes
 Naked before the council.

MARY STUART

I must go?

GORGES

M. m., no help; I pray your pardon.

MARY STUART

Ay?

Had I your pardon in this hand to give,
 I here in this my vengeance—Words, and
 words!
 O, for thy pity! what vile thing is this
 That thou didst make of woman? even in
 the
 the extremest evil of all our lives,
 an but curse or pray, but prate and weep,
 our wrath is wind that works no
 k,
 or fire as water. Noble sirs,
 servants of your servants, and obey
 of your least groom; obsequiously,
 you but report of us so much,
 Submit us to you. Yet would I take farewell,
 May it not displease you, for old service' sake,
 Of one my servant here that was, and now
 Hath no word for me; yet I blame him not,
 Who am past all help of man; God witness
 me,
 I would not chide now, Gilbert, though my
 tongue
 Had strength yet left for chiding, and its edge
 Were yet a sword to smite with, or my wrath
 A thing that babes might shrink at; only this
 Take with you for your poor queen's true last
 word,
 That if they let me live so long to see
 The fair wife's face again from whose soft
 side,

Now labouring with your child, by violent
 hands
 You are reft perforce for my sake, while I live
 I will have charge of her more carefully
 Than of mine own life's keeping, which in-
 deed
 I think not long to keep, nor care, God knows,
 How soon or how men take it. Nay, good
 friend,
 Weep not; my weeping time is wellnigh past,
 And theirs whose eyes have too much wept
 for me
 Should last no longer. Sirs, I give you thanks
 For thus much grace and patience shown of
 you,
 My gentle gaolers, towards a queen un-
 queened
 Who shall nor get nor crave again of man
 What grace may rest in him to give her.
 Come,
 Bring me to bonds again, and her with me;
 That hath not stood so nigh me all these
 years
 To fall ere life doth from my side, or take
 Her way to death without me till I die.

ACT II

WALSINGHAM

SCENE I.—Windsor Castle

QUEEN ELIZABETH and SIR FRANCIS WAL-
 SINGHAM

ELIZABETH

WHAT will ye make me? Let the council
 know
 I am yet their loving mistress, but they lay
 Too strange a burden on my love who send
 As to their servant word what ways to take,
 What sentence of my subjects given sub-
 scribe
 And in mine own name utter. Bid them
 wait;
 Have I not patience? and was never quick
 To teach my tongue the deadly word of death,
 Lest one
 with
 The red
 Shall

WALSINGHAM

God grant your mercy shown
Mark not your memory like a martyr's red
With pure imperial heart's-blood of your own
Shed through your own sweet-spirited height
of heart
That held your hand from justice.

ELIZABETH

I would rather
Stand in God's sight so signed with mine own
blood
Than with a sister's—innocent; or indeed
Though guilty—being a sister's—might I
choose,
As being a queen I may not surely—no—
I may not choose, you tell me.

WALSINGHAM

Nay, no man
Hath license of so large election given
As once to choose, being servant called of
God,
If he will serve or no, or save the name
And slack the service.

ELIZABETH

Yea, but in his Word
I find no word that whets for king-killing
The sword kings bear for justice; yet I
doubt,
Being drawn, it may not choose but strike at
root—
Being drawn to cut off treason. Walsing-
ham,
You are more a statesman than a gospeller;
Take for your tongue's text now no text of
God's,
But what the devil has put into their lips
Who should have slain me; nay, what by
God's grace,
Who bared their purpose to us, through pain
or fear
Hath been wrung thence of secrets writ in
fire
At bottom of their hearts. Have they con-
fessed?

WALSINGHAM

The twain trapped first in London.

ELIZABETH

What, the priest?
Their twice-turned Ballard, ha?

WALSINGHAM

Madam, not he.

ELIZABETH

God's blood! ye have spared not him the
torment, knaves?
Of all I would not spare him.

WALSINGHAM

Verily, no;
The rack hath spun his life's thread out so
fine
There is but left for death to slit in twain
The thickness of a spider's.

ELIZABETH

Ay, still dumb?

WALSINGHAM

Dumb for all good the pains can get of him;
Had he drunk dry the chalice of his craft
Brewed in design abhorred of even his friends
With poisonous purpose toward your ma-
jesty,
He had kept scarce harder silence.

ELIZABETH

Poison? ay—
That should be still the churchman's house-
hold sword
Or saintly staff to bruise crowned heads from
far
And break them with his precious balms that
smell
Rank as the jaws of death, or festal fume
When Rome yet reeked with Borgia; but the
rest
Had grace enow to grant me for goodwill
Some death more gracious than a rat's?
God wot,
I am bounden to them, and will charge for
this
The hangman thank them heartily; they
shall not
Lack daylight means to die by. God, me-
seems,
Will have me not die darkling like a dog.

Who hath kept my lips from poison and my heart

From shot of English knave or Spanish, both
Dubbed of the devil or damned his doctors,
whom

My riddance from all ills that plague man's life
Should have made great in record; and for
wage

Your Ballard hath not better hap to fee
Than Lopez had or Parry. Well, he lies
As dumb in bonds as those dead dogs in
earth,

You say, but of his fellows newly ta'en
There are that keep not silence: what say
these?

Pour in mine ears the poison of their plot
Whose fangs have stung the silly snakes to
death.

WALSINGHAM

The first a soldier, Savage, in these wars
That sometime serving sought a traitor's luck
Under the prince Farnese, then of late
At Rheims was tempted of our traitors there,
Of one in chief, Gifford the seminarist,
My snook-faced spy's good uncle, to take off
Or the earl of Leicester or your gracious self;
And since his passage hither, to confirm
His hollow-hearted hardihood, hath had
Word from this doctor more solicitous yet
Sent by my knave his nephew, who of late
Was in the seminary of so deadly seed
Their reader in philosophy, that their head,
Even Cardinal Allen, holds for just and good
The purpose laid upon his hand; this man
Makes yet more large confession than of this,
Saying from our Gilbert's trusty mouth he had
Assurance that in Italy the Pope
Hath levies raised against us, to set forth
For seeming succour toward the Parmesan,
But in their actual aim bent hither, where
With French and Spaniards in one front of
war

They might make in upon us; but from
France

No foot shall pass for inroad on our peace
Till—so they phrase it—by these Catholics
here

Your majesty be taken, or—

ELIZABETH

No more—

But only taken? springed but bird-like?
Ha!

They are something tender of our poor per-
sonal chance—

Temperately tender: yet I doubt the springe
Had haply maimed me no less deep than life
Sits next the heart most mortal. Or—so be
it

I slip the springe—what yet may shackle
France,

Hang weights upon their purpose who should
else

Be great of heart against us? They take time
Till I be taken—or till what signal else
As favourable?

WALSINGHAM

Till she they serve be brought
Safe out of Paulet's keeping.

ELIZABETH

Ay? they know him

So much my servant, and his guard so good,
That sound of strange feet marching on our
soil

Against us in his prisoner's name perchance
Might from the walls wherein she sits his
guest

Raise a funereal echo? Yet I think
He would not dare—what think'st thou might
he dare

Without my word for warrant? If I knew
This—

WALSINGHAM

It should profit not your grace to know
What may not be conceivable for truth
Without some stain on honour.

ELIZABETH

Nay, I say not

That I would have him take upon his hand
More than his trust may warrant: yet have
men,

Good men, for very truth of their good hearts
Put loyal hand to work as perilous—well,
God wot I would not have him so transgress—
If such be called transgressors.

WALSINGHAM

Let the queen

Rest well assured he shall not. So far forth
Our swordsman Savage witnesses of these
That moved him toward your murder but
in trust

Thereby to bring invasion over sea:
Which one more gently natured of his birth,
Tichborne, protests with very show of truth
That he would give no ear to, knowing, he
saith,
The miseries of such conquest: nor, it seems,
Heard this man aught of murderous purpose
bent
Against your highness.

ELIZA: ETH

Naught? why then, again,
To him I am yet more bounden, who may
think,
Being found but half my traitor, at my hands
To find but half a hangman.

WALSINGHAM

Nay, the man
Herein seems all but half his own man, being
Made merely out of stranger hearts and
brains
Their engine of conspiracy; for thus
Forsooth he pleads, that Babington his friend
First showed him how himself was wrought
upon
By one man's counsel and persuasion, one
Held of great judgment, Ballard, on whose
head
All these lay all their forfeit.

ELIZABETH

Yet shall each
Pay for himself red coin of ransom down
In costlier drops than gold is. But of these
Why take we thought? their natural-subject
blood
Can wash not out their sanguine-sealed at-
tempt,
Nor leave us marked as tyrant: only she
That is the head and heart of all your fears
Whose hope or fear is England's, quick or
dead,
Leaves or imperilled or impeached of blood
Me that with all but hazard of mine own,
God knows, would yet redeem her. I will
write
With mine own hand to her privily,—what
else?—
Saying, if by word as privy from . . . and
She will confess her treasonous . . .
They shall be wrapped in silence . . . she
By judgment live unscathed.

WALSINGHAM

Being that she is,
So surely will she deem of your great grace,
And see it but as a snare set wide, or net
Spread in the bird's sight vainly.

ELIZABETH

Why, then, well:
She, casting off my grace, from all men's
grace
Cuts off herself, and even aloud avows
By silence and suspect of jealous heart
Her manifest foul conscience: on which proof
I will proclaim her to the parliament
So self-convicted. Yet I would not have
Her name and life by mortal evidence
Touched at the trial of them that now shall
die
Or by their charge attainted: lest myself
Fall in more peril of her friends than she
Stands yet in shot of judgment.

WALSINGHAM

Be assured,
Madam, the process of their treasons judged
Shall tax not her before her trial-time
With public note of clear complicity
Even for that danger's sake which moves you.

ELIZABETH

Me
So much it moves not for my mere life's sake
Which I would never buy with fear of death
As for the general danger's and the shame's
Thence cast on queenship and on woman-
hood
By mean of such a murderess. But, for
them,
I would the merited manner of their death
Might for more note of terror be referred
To me and to my council: these at least
Shall hang for warning in the world's wide
eye
More high than common traitors, with more
pains
Being ravished forth of their more villainous
lives
Than feed the general throat of justice. Her
Shall this too touch, whom none that serves
henceforth
But shall be sure of hire more terrible
Than all past wage of treason.

WALSINGHAM

Why, so far

As law gives leave—

ELIZABETH

What prat'st thou me of law?

God's blood! is law for man's sake made, or
man

For law's sake only, to be held in bonds,
Led lovingly like hound in huntsman's leash
Or child by finger, not for help or stay,
But hurt and hindrance? Is not all this land
And all its hope and surety given to time
Of sovereignty and freedom, all the fame
And all the fruit of manhood hence to be,
More than one rag or relic of its law
Wherewith all these lie shackled? as too sure
Have states no less than ours been done to
death

With gentle counsel and soft-handed rule
For fear to snap one thread of ordinance
Though thence the state were strangled.

WALSINGHAM

Madam, yet

There need no need be here of law's least
breach,

That of all else is worst necessity—
Being such a mortal medicine to the state
As poison drunk to expel a feverish taint
Which air or sleep might purge as easily.

ELIZABETH

Ay, but if air be poison-struck with plague
Or sleep to death lie palsied, fools were they,
Faint hearts and faithless, who for health's
fair sake
Should fear to cleanse air, pierce and probe
the trance,

With purging fire or iron. Have your way.
God send good end of all this, and procure
Some mean whereby mine enemies' craft and
his

May take no feet but theirs in their own toils,
And no blood shed be innocent as mine.

SCENE II.—*Chartley*

MARY BEATON and SIR AMYAS PAULET

PAULET

You should do well to bid her less be moved
Who needs fear less of evil. Since we came
Again from Tixall this wild mood of hers
Hath vexed her more than all men's enmities
Should move a heart more constant. Verily,
I thought she had held more rule upon herself
Than to call out on beggars at the gate
When she rode forth, crying she had nought
to give,
Being all as much a beggar too as they,
With all things taken from her.

MARY BEATON

Being so served,

In sooth she should not show nor shame nor
spleen:

It was but seventeen days ye held her there
Away from all attendance, as in bonds
Kept without change of raiment, and to find,
Being thence held hither again, no nobler
use

But all her papers plundered—then her keys
By force of violent threat wrung from the
hand

She scarce could stir to help herself abed:
These were no matters that should move her.

PAULET

None,

If she be clean of conscience, whole of heart,
Nor else than pure in purpose, but maligned
Of men's suspicions: how should one thus
wronged

But hold all hard chance good to approve her
case

Blameless, give praise for all, turn all to
thanks

That might unload her of so sore a charge,
Despoiled not, but disburdened? Her great
wrath

Pleads hard against her, and itself spake loud
Alone, ere other witness might unseal
Wrath's fierce interpretation: which ere long
Was of her secretaries expounded.

MARY BEATON

Sir,

As you are honourable, and of equal heart
Have shown such grace as man being manful
may

To such a piteous prisoner as desires
Nought now but what may hurt not loyalty

Though you comply therewith to comfort her,
 Let her not think your spirit so far incensed
 By wild words of her mistress cast on you
 In heat of heart and bitter fire of spleen
 That you should now close ears against a
 prayer
 Which else might fairly find them open.

PAULET

More short and plainly: what I well may
 grant
 Shall so seem easiest granted.

MARY BEATON

There should be
 No cause I think to seal your lips up, though
 I crave of them but so much breath as may
 Give mine ear knowledge of the witness borne
 (If aught of witness were against her borne)
 By those her secretaries you spake of.

PAULET

This
 With hard expostulation was drawn forth
 At last of one and other, that they twain
 Had writ by record from their lady's mouth
 To Babington some letter which implies
 Close conscience of his treason, and goodwill
 To meet his service with complicity:
 But one thing found therein of deadliest note
 The Frenchman swore they set not down, nor
 she
 Bade write one word of favour nor assent
 Answering this murderous motion toward our
 queen:
 Only, saith he, she held herself not bound
 For love's sake to reveal it, and thereby
 For love of enemies do to death such friends
 As only for her own love's sake were found
 Fit men for murderous treason: and so much
 Her own hand's transcript of the word she
 sent
 Should once produced bear witness of her.

MARY BEATON

How then came this withholden?

PAULET

If she speak
 But truth, why, truth should sure be manifest,
 And shall, with God's good will, to good men's
 joy

That wish not evil: as at Fotheringay
 When she shall come to trial must be tried
 If it be truth or no: for which assay
 You shall do toward her well and faithfully
 To bid her presently prepare her soul
 That it may there make answer.

MARY BEATON

Presently?

PAULET

Upon the arraignment of her friends who
 stand
 As 'twere at point of execution now
 Ere sentence pass upon them of their sin.
 Would you no more with me?

MARY BEATON

I am bounden to you
 For thus much tidings granted.

PAULET

So farewell. [Exit.]

MARY BEATON

So fare I well or ill as one who knows
 He shall not fare much further toward his end.
 Here looms on me the landmark of my life
 That I have looked for now some score of
 years
 Even with long-suffering eagerness of heart
 And a most hungry patience. I did know,
 Yea, God, thou knowest I knew this all that
 while,
 From that day forth when even these eyes
 beheld
 Fall the most faithful head in all the world,
 Toward her most loving and of me most loved,
 By doom of hers that was so loved of him
 He could not love me nor his life at all
 Nor his own soul nor aught that all men love,
 Nor could fear death nor very God, or care
 If there were aught more merciful in heaven
 Than love on earth had been to him. Chaste-
 lard!

I have not had the name upon my lips
 That stands for sign of love the truest in man
 Since first love made him sacrifice of men,
 This long sad score of years retributive
 Since it was cast out of her heart and mind
 Who made it mean a dead thing; nor, I
 think,

Will she remember it before she die
 More than in France the memories of old
 friends
 Are like to have yet forgotten; but for me,
 Haply thou knowest, so death not all be death,
 If all these years I have had not in my mind
 Through all these chances this one thought in
 all,
 That I shall never leave her till she die.
 Nor surely now shall I much longer serve
 Who fain would lie down at her foot and
 sleep,
 Fain, fain have done with waking. Yet my
 soul
 Knows, and yet God knows, I would set not
 hand
 To such a work as might put on the time
 And make death's foot more forward for her
 sake:
 Yea, were it to deliver mine own soul
 From bondage and long-suffering of my life,
 I would not set mine hand to work her wrong.
 Tempted I was—but hath God need of me
 To work his judgment, bring his time about,
 Approve his justice if the word be just
 That whoso doeth shall suffer his own deed,
 Bear his own blow, to weep tears back for
 tears,
 And bleed for bloodshed? God should spare
 me this
 That once I held the one good hope on earth,
 To be mean and engine of her end
 Or some least part at least therein: I prayed,
 God, give me so much grace—who now
 should pray,
 Tempt me not, God. My heart swelled once
 to know
 I bore her death about me; as I think
 Indeed I bear it: but what need hath God
 That I should clench his doom with craft of
 mine?
 What needs the wrath of hot Elizabeth
 Be blown aflame with mere past writing read,
 Which hath to enkindle it higher already
 proof
 Of present practice on her state and life?
 Shall fear of death or love of England fail
 Or memory faint or foresight fall stark blind,
 That there should need the whet and spur of
 shame
 To turn her spirit into some chafing snake's
 And make its fang more feared for mortal?
 Yet
 I am glad, and I repent me not, to know

I have the writing in my bosom sealed
 That bears such matter with her own hand
 signed
 As she that yet repents her not to have writ
 Repents her not that she refrained to send
 And fears not but long since it felt the fire—
 Being fire itself to burn her, yet unquenched,
 But in my hand here covered harmless up
 Which had in charge to burn it. What per-
 chance
 Might then the reading of it have wrought
 for us,
 If all this fiery poison of her scoffs
 Making the foul froth of a serpent's tongue
 More venomous, and more deadly toward her
 queen
 Even Bess of Hardwick's bitterest babbling
 tales,
 Had touched at heart the Tudor vein indeed?
 Enough it yet were surely, though that vein
 Were now the gentlest that such hearts may
 hold
 And all doubt's trembling balance that way
 bent,
 To turn as with one mortal grain cast in
 The scale of grace against her life that writ
 And weigh down pity deathward.

Enter MARY STUART

MARY STUART

Have we found
 Such kindness of our keeper as may give
 Some ease from expectation? or must hope
 Still fret for ignorance how long here we stay
 As men abiding judgment?

MARY BEATON

Now not long,
 He tells me, need we think to tarry; since
 The time and place of trial are set, next month
 To hold it in the castle of Fotheringay.

MARY STUART

Why, he knows well I were full easily moved
 To set forth hence; there must I find more
 scope
 To commune with the ambassador of France
 By letter thence to London: but, God help.
 Think these folk truly, doth she verily think,
 What never man durst yet nor woman
 dreamed,

May one that is nor man nor woman think,
To bring a queen born subject of no laws
Here in subjection of an alien law
By foreign force of judgment? Were she wise,
Might she not have me privily made away?
And being nor wise nor valiant but of tongue,
Could she find yet foolhardiness of heart
Enough to attain the rule of royal rights
With murderous madness? I will think not
Till it be proven indeed.

MARY BEATON

A month come round,
This man protests, will prove it.

MARY STUART

Ay! protests?
What protestation of what Protestant
Can unmake law that was of God's mouth
made,
Unwrite the writing of the world, unsay
The general saying of ages? If I go,
Compelled of God's hand or constrained of
man's,

Yet God shall bid me not nor man enforce
My tongue to plead before them for my life.
I had rather end as kings before me, die
Rather by shot or stroke of murderous hands,
Than so make answer once in face of man
As one brought forth to judgment. Are they
mad,

And she most mad for envious heart of all,
To make so mean account of me? Methought,

When late we came back hither soiled and
spent

And sick with travel, I had seen their worst
of wrong

Full-faced, with its most outrage: when I
found

My servant Curle's young new-delivered wife
Without priest's comfort and her babe un-
blessed

A nameless piteous thing born ere its time,
And took it from the mother's arms abed
And bade her have good comfort, since my-
self

Would take all charge against her husband
laid

On mine own head to answer; deeming not
Man ever durst bid answer for myself
On charge as mortal; and mine almoner gone,

Did I not crave of Paulet for a grace
His chaplain might baptize me this poor babe,
And was denied it, and with mine own hands
For shame and charity moved to christen her
There with scant ritual in his heretic sight
By mine own woful name, whence God, I
pray,

For her take off its presage? I misdeemed,
Who deemed all these and yet far more than
these

For on a queen indignities enough,
On one crowned head enough of buffets:
more

Hath time's hand laid upon me: yet I keep
Faith in one word I spake to Paulet, saying
Two things were mine though I stood spoiled
of all

As of my letters and my privy coin
By pickpurse hands of office: these things
yet

Might none take thievish hold upon to strip
His prisoner naked of her natural dower,
The blood yet royal running here unspilled
And that religion which I think to keep
Fast as this royal blood until I die.

So where at last and howsoe'er I fare
I need not much take thought, nor thou for
love

Take of thy mistress pity; yet meseems
They dare not work their open will on me:
But God's it is that shall be done, and I
Find end of all in quiet. I would sleep
On this strange news of thine, that being
awake

I may the freshlier front my sense thereof
And thought of life or death. Come in with
me.

SCENE III.—Tyburn

A Crowd of Citizens

FIRST CITIZEN

Is not their hour yet on? Men say the queen
Bade spare no jot of torment in their end
That law might lay upon them.

SECOND CITIZEN

Truth it is,
To spare what scourge soe'er man's justice
may
Twist for such caitiff traitors were to grieve

God's with mere inobservance. Hear you
not
How yet the loud lewd braggarts of their side
Keep heart to threaten that for all this foal
They are not foiled indeed, but yet the work
shall prosper with deliverance of their queen
And death for her of ours, though they should
give
of their *lives* for one an hundredfold?

THIRD CITIZEN

These are bold mouths; one that shall die to-
day,
Being this last week arraigned at Westmin-
ster,
Had no such heart, they say, to his defence,
Who was the main head of their treasons.

FIRST CITIZEN

Ay,
And yesterday, if truth belie not him,
Durst with his doomed hand write some word
of prayer
To the queen's self, her very grace, to crave
Grace of her for his gracelessness, that she
Might work on one too tainted to deserve
A miracle of compassion, whence her fame
For pity of sins too great for pity of man
Might shine more glorious than his crime
showed foul
In the eye of such a mercy.

SECOND CITIZEN

Yet men said
He spake at his arraignment soberly
With clear mild looks and gracious gesture,
showing
The purport of his treasons in such wise
That it seemed pity of him to hear them, how
All their beginnings and proceedings had
First head and fountain only for their spring
From ill persuasions of that poisonous priest
Who stood the guiltiest near, by this man's
side
Approved a valiant villain. Barnwell next,
Who came but late from Ireland here to court,
Made simply protestation of design
To work no personal ill against the queen
Nor paint rebellion's face as murder's red
With blood imperial: Tichborne then avowed
He knew the secret of their aim, and kept,
And held forsooth himself no traitor; yet

In the end would even plead guilty, Donne
with him,
And Salisbury, who not less professed he still
Stood out against the killing of the queen,
And would not hurt her for a kingdom: so,
When thus all these had pleaded, one by one
Was each man bid say fairly, for his part,
Why sentence should not pass: and Ballard
first,
Who had been so sorely racked he might not
stand,
Spake, but as seems to none effect: of whom
Said Babington again, he set them on,
He first, and most of all him, who believed
This priest had power to assail his soul alive
Of all else mortal treason: Ballard then,
As in sad scorn—*Yea, Master Babington,*
Quoth he, lay all upon me, but I wish
For you the shedding of my blood might be
The saving of your life: howbeit, for that,
Say what you will; and I will say no more.
Nor spake the swordsman Savage aught again,
Who, first arraigned, had first avowed his
cause
Guilty: nor yet spake Tichborne aught: but
Donne
Spake, and the same said Barnwell, each had
sinned
For very conscience only: Salisbury last
Besought the queen remission of his guilt.
Then spake Sir Christopher Hatton for the
rest
That sat with him commissioners, and
showed
How by dark doctrine of the seminaries
And instance most of Ballard had been
brought
To extreme destruction here of body and soul
A sort of brave youths otherwise endowed
With goodly gifts of birthright: and in fine
There was the sentence given that here even
now
Shows seven for dead men in our present
sight
And shall bring six to-morrow forth to die.

*Enter BABINGTON, BALLARD (carried in a
chair), TICHBORNE, SAVAGE, BARNWELL,
TILNEY, and ABINGTON, guarded: Sheriff,
Executioner, Chaplain, &c.*

FIRST CITIZEN

What, will they speak?

SECOND CITIZEN

Ay; each hath leave in turn
To show what mood he dies in toward his
cause.

BALLARD

Sirs, ye that stand to see us take our doom,
I being here given this grace to speak to you
Have but my word to witness for my soul,
That all I have done and all designed to do
Was only for advancement of true faith
To furtherance of religion: for myself
Aught would I never, but for Christ's dear
church
Was mine intent all wholly, to redeem
Her sore affliction in this age and land,
As now may not be yet: which knowing for
truth,
I am readier even at heart to die than live.
And dying I crave of all men pardon whom
My doings at all have touched, or who thereat:
Take scandal; and forgiveness of the queen
If on this cause I have offended her.

SAVAGE

The like say I, that have no skill in speech,
But heart enough with faith at heart to die,
Seeing but for conscience and the common
good,
And no preferment but this general weal,
I did attempt this business.

BARNWELL

I confess
That I, whose seed was of that hallowed earth
Whereof each pore hath sweated blood for
Christ,
Had note of these men's drifts, which I deny
That ever I consented with or could
In conscience hold for lawful. That I came
To spy for them occasions in the court
And there being noted of her majesty
She seeing mine eyes peer sharply like a man's
That had such purpose as she wist before
Prayed God that all were well—if this were
urged.
I might make answer, it was not unknown
To divers of the council that I there
Had matters to solicit of mine own
Which thither drew me then: yet I confess

That Babington, espying me thence returned,
Asked me what news: to whom again I told,
Her majesty had been abroad that day.
With all the circumstance I saw there. Now
If I have done her majesty offence
I crave her pardon: and assuredly
If this my body's sacrifice might yet
Establish her in true religion, here
Most willingly should this be offered up.

TILNEY

I came not here to reason of my faith,
But to die simply like a Catholic, praying
Christ give our queen Elizabeth long life,
And warning all youth born take heed by me.

ABINGTON

I likewise, and if aught I have erred in aught
I crave but pardon as for ignorant sin,
Holding at all points firm the Catholic faith;
And all things charged against me I confess,
Save that I ever sought her highness' death:
In whose poor kingdom yet ere long I fear
Will be great bloodshed.

SHERIFF

Seest thou, Abington,
Here all these people present of thy kind
Whose blood shall be demanded at thy hands
If dying thou hide what might endanger
them?
Speak therefore, why or by what mortal
mean
Should there be shed such blood?

ABINGTON

All that I know
You have on record: take but this for sure,
This country lives for its iniquity
Loathed of all countries, and God loves it not.
Whereon I pray you trouble me no more
With questions of this world, but let me pray
And in mine own wise make my peace with
God.

BABINGTON

For me, first head of all this enterprise,
I needs must make this record of myself,

I have not conspired for profit, but in trust
Of men's persuasions whence I stood assured
This work was lawful which I should have
done
And meritorious as toward God; for which
No less I crave forgiveness of my queen
And that my brother may possess my lands
In heritage else forfeit with my head.

TICHBORNE

Good countrymen and my dear friends, you
look

For something to be said of me, that am
But an ill orator; and my text is worse.
Vain were it to make full discourse of all
This cause that brings me hither, which before
Was all made bare, and is well known to most
That have their eyes upon me: let me stand
For all young men, and most for those born
high,

Their present warning here: a friend I had,
Ay, and a dear friend, one of whom I made
No small account, whose friendship for pure
love

To this hath brought me: I may not deny
He told me all the matter, how set down,
And ready to be wrought; which always I
Held impious, and denied to deal therein:
But only for my friend's regard was I
Silent, and verified a saying in me,
Who so consented to him. Ere this thing
chanced,

How brotherly we twain lived heart in heart
Together, in what flourishing estate,
This town well knows: of whom went all
report

Through her loud length of Fleetstreet and
the Strand

And all parts else that sound men's fortunate
names,

But Babington and Tichborne? that therein
There was no haughtiest threshold found of
force

To brave our entry; thus we lived our life,
And wanted nothing we might wish for: then,
For me, what less was in my head, God
knows,

Than high state matters? Give me now but
leave

Scarce to declare the miseries I sustained
Since I took knowledge of this action, whence

To his estate I well may liken mine,
Who could forbear not one forbidden thing
To enjoy all else afforded of the world:
The terror of my conscience hung on me;
Who, taking heed what perils girt me, went
To Sir John Peters hence in Essex, there
Appointing that my horses by his mean
Should meet me here in London, whence I
thought

To flee into the country: but being here
I heard how all was now bewrayed abroad:
Whence Adam-like we fled into the woods
And there were taken. My dear country-
men,

Albeit my sorrows well may be your joy,
Yet mix your smiles with tears: pity my case,
Who, born out of an house whose name de-
scends

Even from two hundred years ere English
earth

Felt Norman heel upon her, were it yet
Till this mishap of mine unspotted. Sirs,
I have a wife, and one sweet child: my
wife,

My dear wife Agnes: and my grief is there;
And for six sisters too left on my hand:
All my poor servants were dispersed, I know,
Upon their master's capture: all which things
Most heartily I sorrow for: and though
Nought might I less have merited at her hands,
Yet had I looked for pardon of my fault
From the queen's absolute grace and clem-
ency;

That the unexpired remainder of my years
Might in some sort have haply recompensed
This former guilt of mine whereof I die:
But seeing such fault may find not such re-
lease

Even of her utter mercies, heartily
I crave at least of her and all the world
Forgiveness, and to God commend my soul,
And to men's memory this my penitence
Till our death's record die from out the land.

FIRST CITIZEN

God pardon him! Stand back: what ail these
knaves

To drive and thrust upon us? Help me, sir;
I thank you: hence we take them full in view:
Hath yet the hangman there his knife in
hand?

ACT III

BURGHLEY

SCENE I.—*The presence-chamber in Fotheringay Castle. At the upper end, a chair of state as for QUEEN ELIZABETH; opposite, in the centre of the hall, a chair for MARY STUART. The Commissioners seated on either side along the wall: to the right, the Earls, with LORD CHANCELLOR BROMLEY and LORD TREASURER BURGHLEY; to the left, the Barons, with the Knights of the Privy Council, among them WALSINGHAM and PAULET; POPHAM, EGERTON, and GAWDY, as Counsel for the Crown. Enter MARY STUART, supported by SIR ANDREW MELVILLE, and takes her place.*

MARY STUART

HERE are full many men of counsel met;
Not one for me. *[The Chancellor rises.]*

BROMLEY

Madam, this court is held
To make strait inquisition as by law
Of what with grief of heart our queen has
heard,
A plot upon her life, against the faith
Here in her kingdom established: on which
cause
Our charge it is to exact your answer here
And put to proof your guilt or innocence.

MARY STUART *(rising)*

Sirs, whom by strange constraint I stand
before,
My lords, and not my judges, since no law
Can hold to mortal judgment answerable
A princess free-born of all courts on earth,
I rise not here to make response as one
Responsible toward any for my life
Or of mine acts accountable to man,
Who see none higher save only God in
heaven:
I am no natural subject of your land
That I should here plead as a criminal
charged,
Nor in such wise appear I now: I came
On your queen's faith to seek in England
help

By trothplight pledged me: where by
promise-breach
I am even since then her prisoner held in
ward:

Yet, understanding by report of you
Some certain things I know not of to be
Against me brought on record, by my will
I stand content to hear and answer these.

BROMLEY

Madam, there lives none born on earth so
high
Who for this land's laws' breach within this
land
Shall not stand answerable before those laws.

BURGHLEY

Let there be record of the prisoner's plea
And answer given such protest here set down,
And so proceed we to this present charge.

GAWDY

My lords, to unfold by length of circumstance
The model of this whole conspiracy
Should lay the pattern of all treasons bare
That ever brought high state in danger: this
No man there lives among us but hath heard,
How certain men of our queen's household
folk

Being wrought on by persuasion of their
priests
Drew late a bond between them, binding
these

With others of their faith accomplices
Directed first of Anthony Babington
By mean of six for execution chosen
To slay the queen their mistress, and thereon
Make all her trustiest men of trust away;
As my lord treasurer Burghley present here,
Lord Hunsdon, and Sir Francis Walsingham,
And one that held in charge awhile ago
This lady now on trial, Sir Francis Knowles.
That she was hereto privy, to her power
Approving and abetting their device,
It shall not stand us in much need to show
Whose proofs are manifoldly manifest
On record written of their hands and hers.

MARY STUART

Of all this I know nothing: Babington
I have used for mine intelligencer, sent
With letters charged at need, but never yet

Spake with him, never writ him word of mine

As privy to these close conspiracies
Nor word of his had from him. Never came
One harmful thought upon me toward your
queen,

Nor knowledge ever that of other hearts
Was harm designed against her. Proofs, ye
say,

Forsooth ye hold to impeach me: I desire
But only to behold and handle them
If they in sooth of sense be tangible
More than mere air and shadow.

BURGHLEY

Let the clerk
Produce those letters writ from Babington.

MARY STUART

What then? it may be such were writ of him:
Be it proved that they came ever in my hands.
If Babington affirm so much, I say
He, or who else will say it, lies openly.

GAWDY

Here is the man's confession writ, and here
Ballard's the Jesuit, and the soldier's here,
Savage, that served with Parma.

MARY STUART

What of these?
Traitors they were, and traitor-like they lied.

GAWDY

And here the last her letter of response
Confirming and approving in each point
Their purpose, writ direct to Babington.

MARY STUART

My letter? none of mine it is: perchance
It may be in my cipher characterized,
But never came from or my tongue or hand:
I have sought mine own deliverance, and
thereto

Solicited of my friends their natural help:
Yet certain whom I list not name there were,
Whose offers made of help to set me free
Receiving, yet I answered not a word.
Howbeit, desiring to divert the storm
Of persecution from the church, for this
To your queen's grace I have made most
earnest suit:

But for mine own part I would purchase not
This kingdom with the meanest one man's
death

In all its commonalty, much less the queen's.
Many there be have dangerously designed
Things that I knew not: yea, but very late
There came a letter to my hand which craved
My pardon if by enterprise of some
Were undertaken aught unknown of me:
A cipher lightly may one counterfeit,
As he that vaunted him of late in France
To be my son's base brother: and I fear
Lest this, for aught mine ignorance of it
knows,

May be that secretary's fair handiwork
Who sits to judge me, and hath practised late,
I hear, against my son's life and mine own.
But I protest I have not so much as thought
Nor dreamed upon destruction of the queen:
I had rather spend most gladly mine own life
Than for my sake the Catholics should be
thus

Afflicted only in very hate of me
And drawn to death so cruel as these tears
Gush newly forth to think of.

BURGHLEY

Here no man
Who hath showed himself true subject to the
state
Was ever for religion done to death:
But some for treason, that against the queen
Upheld the pope's bull and authority.

MARY STUART

Yet have I heard it otherwise affirmed
And read in books set forth in print as much.

BURGHLEY

They that so write say too the queen hath here
Made forfeit of her royal dignity.

WALSINGHAM

Here I call God to record on my part
That personally or as a private man
I have done nought misbecoming honesty,
Nor as I bear a public person's place
Done aught thereof unworthy. I confess
That, being right careful of the queen's estate
And safety of this realm, I have curiously
Searched out the practices against it: nay,

Herein had Ballard offered me his help,
 I durst not have denied him; yea, I would
 Have recompensed the pains he had taken.
 Say
 I have practised aught with him, why did he
 not,
 To save his life, reveal it?

MARY STUART

Pray you, sir,
 Take no displeasure at me: truth it is
 Report has found me of your dealings, blown
 From lip to ear abroad, wherein myself
 I put no credit: and could but desire
 Yourself would all as little make account
 Of slanders flung on me. Spies, sure, are
 men
 Of doubtful credit, which dissemble things
 Far other than they speak. Do not believe
 That I gave ever or could give consent
 Once to the queen's destruction: I would
 never,
 These tears are bitter witness, never would
 Make shipwreck of my soul by compassing
 Destruction of my dearest sister.

GAWDY

This
 Shall soon by witness be disproved: as here
 Even by this letter from Charles Paget's hand
 Transcribed, which Curle your secretary hath
 borne
 Plain witness you received, touching a league
 Betwixt Mendoza and Ballard, who conferred
 Of this land's foreordained invasion, thence
 To give you freedom.

MARY STUART

What of this? ye shoot
 Wide of the purpose: this approves not me
 Consenting to the queen's destruction.

GAWDY

That
 Stands proven enough by word of Babington
 Who dying avowed it, and by letters passed
 From him to you, whom he therein acclaims
 As his most dread and sovereign lady and
 queen,
 And by the way makes mention passingly
 Of a plot laid by transference to convey
 This kingdom to the Spaniard.

MARY STUART

I confess
 There came a priest unto me, saying if I
 Would not herein bear part I with my son
 Alike should be debarred the inheritance:
 His name ye shall not have of me: but this
 Ye know, that openly the Spaniard lays
 Claim to your kingdom, and to none will give
 Place ever save to me.

BURGHLEY

Still stands the charge
 On written witness of your secretaries
 Great on all points against you.

MARY STUART

Wherefore then
 Are not these writers with these writings
 brought
 To outface me front to front? For Gilbert
 Curle,
 He is in the Frenchman's hands a waxen toy,
 Whom the other, once mine uncle's secretary,
 The cardinal's of Lorraine, at his mere will
 Moulds, turns, and tempers: being himself a
 knave
 That may be hired or scared with peril or
 coin
 To swear what thing men bid him. Truth
 again
 Is this that I deny not, seen
 Against all right held fast in my conscience,
 I have sought all help where I thought good to
 find:
 Which thing that I dispute not, let it be
 The sign that I disclaim no jot of truth
 In all objected to me. For the rest,
 All majesty that moves in all the world
 And all safe station of all princes born
 Fall, as things unrespected, to the ground
 If on the testimony of secretaries
 And on their writings merely these depend.
 Being to their likeness thence debased: for
 me,
 Nought I delivered to them but what first
 Nature to me delivered, that I might
 Recover yet at length my liberty.
 I am not to be convicted save alone
 By mine own word or writing. If these men
 Have written toward the queen my sister's
 hurt
 Aught, I wist nought of all such writ at all:

Let them be put to punishment: I am sure,
Were these here sent, they by testimony
Would bring me clear of blame.

GAWDY

Yet by their mean
They could not in excuse of you deny
That letters of communion to and fro
Have passed between you and the Spaniard,
whence

What should have come on England and the
queen
These both well know, and with what mes-
sages

Were English exiles entertained of you
By mean of these men, of your secretaries,
Confirmed and cherished in conspiracy
For this her kingdom's overthrow: in France
Paget and Morgan, traitors in design
Of one close mind with you, and in your name
Cheered hence for constant service.

MARY STUART

That I sought
Comfort and furtherance of all Catholic
states

By what mean found soever just and good,
Your mistress from myself had note long
since

And open warning: uncompelled I made
Avowal of such my righteous purpose, nor
In aught may disavow it. Of these late plots
No proof is here to attain mine innocence,
Who dare all proof against me: Babington
I know not of nor Ballard, nor their works,
But king, my kinmen, powers that serve the
churc

These I confess my comforters, in hope
Held fast of their alliance. Yet again
I challenge in the witness of my words
That notes wait of these letters here alleged
In mine own hand: if these ye bring not forth,
Judge all good men if I be not condemned
In all your hearts already, who perchance
For all this pageant held of lawless law
Have bound yourselves by pledge to speak me
dead:

But I would have you look into your souls,
Remembering how the theatre of the world
Is wider, in whose eye ye are judged that
judge,
Than this one realm of England.

BURGHLEY

Toward that realm
Suffice it here that, madam, you stand
charged
With deadly purpose: being of proven intent
To have your son conveyed to Spain, and
give
The title you pretend upon our crown
Up with his wardship to King Philip.

MARY STUART

Nay,
I have no kingdom left to assign, nor crown
Whereof to make conveyance: yet is this
But lawful, that of all things which are mine
I may dispose at pleasure, and to none
Stand on such count accountable.

BURGHLEY

So be it
So far as may be: but your ciphers sent
By Curle's plain testimony to Babington,
To the lord Lodovic, and to Fernihurst,
Once provost on your part in Edinburgh
By mean of Grange your friend his father-
in-law,
Speak not but as with tongue imperial, nor
Of import less than kingdoms

MARY STUART

Surely, sir,
Such have I writ, and many: nor therein
Beyond my birth have trespassed, to com-
mend
That lord you speak of, and another, both
My friends in faith, to a cardinal's dignity,
And that, I trust, without offence: except
It be not held as lawful on my part
To commune with the chiefest of my creed
By written word on matters of mine own
As for your queen with churchfolk of her
kind.

BURGHLEY

Well were it, madam, that with some of yours
You had held less close communion: since
by proof
Reiterated from those your secretaries
It seems you know right well that Morgan,
who
Sent Parry privily to despatch the queen,
And have assigned him annual pension.

MARY STUART

This

I know not, whether or no your charge be truth,

But I do know this Morgan hath lost all
For my sake, and in honour sure I am
That rather to relieve him I stand bound
Than to revenge an injury done your queen
By one that lives my friend, and hath de-
served

Well at mine hands: yet, being not bound to this,

I did affright the man from such attempts
Of crimes against her, who contrariwise
Hath out of England openly assigned
Pensions to Gray my traitor, and the Scots
Mine adversaries, as also to my son,
To hire him to forsake me.

BURGHLEY

Nay, but seeing

By negligence of them that steered the state
The revenues of Scotland sore impaired
Some bounty did her grace bestow
Upon your son the king, her kinsman: whom
She would not, being to her so near of blood,
Forget from charity. No such help it was
Nor no such honest service that your friends
Designed you, who by letters hither writ
To Paget and Mendoza sent as here
Large proffers of strange aid from oversea
To right you by her ruin.

MARY STUART

Here was nought

Aimed for your queen's destruction: nor is this

Against me to be charged, that foreign friends
Should labour for my liberty. Thus much
At sundry times I have signified aloud
By open message to her, that I would still
Seek mine own freedom. Who shall bar me
this?

Who tax me with unreason, that I sent
Unjust conditions on my part to be
To her propounded, which now many times
Have always found rejection? yea, when even
For hostages I proffered in my stead
To be delivered up with mine own son
The duke of Guise's, both to stand in pledge
That nor your queen nor kingdom should
through me

Take aught of damage; so that hence by proof

I see myself utterly from all hope
Already barred of freedom. But I now
Am dealt with most unworthily, whose fame
And honourable repute are called in doubt
Before such foreign men of law as may
By miserable conclusions of their craft
Draw every thin and shallow circumstance
Out into compass of a consequence:
Whereas the anointed heads and consecrate
Of princes are not subject to such laws
As private men are. Next, whereas ye are
given

Authority but to look such matters through
As tend to the hurt of your queen's person,
yet

Here is the cause so handled, and so far
Here are my letters wrested, that the faith
Which I profess, the immunity and state
Of foreign princes, and their private right
Of mutual speech by word reciprocate
From royal hand to royal, all in one
Are called in question, and myself by force
Brought down beneath my kingly dignity
And made to appear before a judgment-seat
As one held guilty; to none end but this,
All to none other purpose but that I
Might from all natural favour of the queen
Be quite excluded, and my right cut off
From claim hereditary: whereas I stand
Here of mine own goodwill to clear myself
Of all objected to me, lest I seem
To have aught neglected in the full defence
Of mine own innocence and honour. This
Would I bring likewise in your minds, how
once

This queen herself of yours, Elizabeth,
Was drawn in question of conspiracy
That Wyatt raised against her sister, yet
Ye know she was most innocent. For me,
With very heart's religion I affirm,
Though I desire the Catholics here might
stand

Assured of safety, this I would not yet
Buy with the blood and death of any one.
And on mine own part rather would I play
Esther than Judith; for the people's sake
To God make intercession, than deprive
The meanest of the people born of life.
Mine enemies have made broad report aloud
That I was irreligious: yet the time
Has been I would have learnt the faith ye
hold,

But none would suffer me, for all I sought,
To find such teaching at your teachers' hands;
As though they cared not what my soul be-
came.

And now at last, when all ye can ye have done
Against me, and have barred me from my
right,

Ye may chance fail yet of your cause and
hope.

To God and to the princes of my kin
I make again appeal, from you again
Record my protestation, and reject
All judgment of your court: I had rather die
Thus undishonoured, even a thousand deaths,
Than so bring down the height of majesty;
Yea, and thereby confess myself as bound
By all the laws of England, even in faith
Of things religious, who could never learn
What manner of laws these were: I am desti-
tute

Of counsellors, and who shall be my peers
To judge my cause through and give doom
thereon

I am ignorant wholly, being an absolute
queen,

And will do nought which may impair that
state

In me nor other princes, nor my son;
Since yet my mind is not dejected, nor
Will I sink under my calamity.

My notes are taken from me, and no man
Dares but step forth to be my advocate.

I am clear from all crime done against the
queen,

I have stirred not up one man against her:
yet,

Albeit of many dangers overpast
I have thoroughly forewarned her, still I
found

No credit, but have always been contemned,
Though nearest to her in blood allied. When
late

Ye made association, and thereon
An act against their lives on whose behalf,
Though innocent even as ignorance of it,
ought

Might be contrived to endangering of the
queen

From foreign force abroad, or privy plots
At home of close rebellion. I foresaw
That, whatsoever of peril so might rise
Or more than all this for religion's sake,
M. many mortal enemies in her court
Should lay upon me all the charge, and I

Bear the whole blame of all men. Certainly,
I well might take it hardly, nor without
High cause, that such confederacy was made
With mine own son, and I not knowing: but
this

I speak not of, being not so grieved thereat
As that mine own dear sister, that the queen,
Is misinformed of me, and I, now kept
These many years in so strait prison, and
grown

Lame of my limbs, have lien neglected, nor
For all most reasonable conditions made
Or proffered to redeem my liberty
Found audience or acceptance: and at last
Here am I set with none to plead for me.
But this I pray, that on this matter of mine
Another meeting there be kept, and I
Be granted on my part an advocate
To hold my cause up; or that seeing ye know
I am a princess, I may be believed
By mine own word, being princely: for should
I

Stand to your judgment, who most plainly I
see

Are armed against me strong in prejudice,
It were mine extreme folly: more than this,
That ever I came to England in such trust
As of the plighted friendship of your queen
And comfort of her promise. Look, my
lords,

Here on this ring: her pledge of love was this
And surety sent me when I lay in bonds
Of mine own rebels once: regard it well:
In trust of this I came amongst you: none
But sees what faith I have found to keep this
trust.

BURGHLEY

Whereas I bear a double person, being
Commissioner first, then counsellor in this
cause,

From me as from the queen's commissioner
here

Receive a few words first. Your protest
made

Is now on record, and a transcript of it
Shall be delivered you. To us is given
Under the queen's hand our authority, whence
Is no appeal, this grant being ratified
With the great seal of England; nor are we
With prejudice come hither, but to judge
By the straight rule of justice. On their part,
These the queen's learned counsel here in
place

Do level at nothing else but that the truth
May come to light, how far you have made
offence

Against the person of the queen. To us
Full power is given to hear and diligently
Examine all the matter, though yourself
Were absent: yet for this did we desire
To have your presence here, lest we might
seem

To have derogated from your honour: nor
Designed to object against you anything
But what you knew of, or took part therein,
Against the queen's life bent. For this were
these

Your letters brought in question, but to unfold

Your aim against her person, and therewith
All matters to it belonging: with a perforce
Are so with other matters interlarded

As none may sever them. Hence was there
need

Set all these forth, not parcels here and there,
Whose circumstances do the assurance give
Upon what points you dealt with Babington.

MARY STUART

The circumstances haply may find proof,
But the fact never. Mine integrity
Nor on the memory nor the credit hangs
Of these my secretaries, albeit I know
They are men of honest hearts: yet if they
have

Confessed in fear of torture anything
Or hope of guerdon and impunity,
It may not be admitted, for just cause,
Which I will otherwise allege. Men's minds
Are with affections diversly distraught
And borne about of passion: nor would
these

Have ever avowed such things against me,
save

For their own hope and profit. Letters
may

Toward other hands be outwardly addressed
Than they were writ for: yea, and many
times

Have many things been privily slipped in
mine

Which from my tongue came never. Were I
not

Reft of my papers, and my secretary
Kept from me, better might I then confute
These things cast up against me.

BURGHLEY

But there shall
Be nothing brought against you save what
last

Stands charged, even since the nineteenth day
of June:

Nor would your papers here avail you, seeing
Your secretaries, and Babington himself,
Being of the rack unquestioned, have affirmed
You sent those letters to him; which though
yourself

Deny, yet whether more belief should here
On affirmation or negation hang

Let the commissioners judge. But, to come
back,

This next I tell you as a counsellor,
Time after time you have put forth many
things

Propounded for your freedom: that all these
Have fallen all profitless, 'tis long of you,

And of the Scots; in no wise of the queen.
For first the lords of Scotland, being required,

Flatly refused, to render up the king
In hostage: and when treaty last was held

Upon your freedom, then was Parry sent
By your dependant Morgan privily

To make the queen away by murder.

MARY STUART

Ah!

You are my adversary.

BURGHLEY

Yea, surely I am
To the queen's adversaries an adversary.
But now hereof enough: let us proceed
Henceforth to proofs.

MARY STUART

I will not hear them.

BURGHLEY

Hear them will we.

Yet

MARY STUART

And in another place
I too will hear them, and defend myself

GAWDY

First let your letters to Charles Paget speak,
Wherein you show him there is none other way

For Spain to bring the Netherlands again
To the old obedience, but by setting up
A prince in England that might help his
cause:

Then to Lord Paget, to bring hastiler
His forces up for help to invade this land:
And Cardinal Allen's letter, hailing you
His most dread sovereign lady, and signifying
The matter to the prince of Parma's care
To be commended.

MARY STUART

I am so sore beset

I know not how by point and circumstance
To meet your manifold impeachments: this
I see through all this charge for evil truth,
That Babington and my two secretaries
Have even to excuse themselves accused me:

yet,
As touching their conspiracy, this I say,
Of those six men for execution chosen
I never heard: and all the rest is nought
To this pretended purpose of your charge.
For Cardinal Allen, whatsoe'er he have writ,
I hold him for a reverend prelate, so
To be esteemed, no more: none save the Pope
Will I acknowledge for the church's head
And sovereign thence on thought or spirit of
mine:

But in what rank and place I stand esteemed
Of him and foreign princes through the world
I know not: neither can I hinder them
By letters writ of their own hearts and hands
To hail me queen of England. As for those
Whose duty and plain allegiance sworn to me
Stands flawed in all men's sight, my secre-
taries,

These merit no belief. They which have once
For-sworn themselves, albeit they swear again
With oaths and protestations ne'er so great,
Are not to be believed. Nor may these men
By what sworn oath soever hold them bound
In court of conscience, seeing they have sworn
to me

Their secrecy and fidelity before,
And are no subjects of this country. Nau
Hath many times writ other than I bade.
And Curle sets down whate'er Nau bids him
write;

But for my part I am ready in all to bear
The burden of their fault, save what may
lay

A blot upon mine honour. Haply too

These things did they confess to save them-
selves;

Supposing their avowal could hurt not me,
Who, being a queen, they thought, good
ignorant men,

More favourably must needs be dealt withal.
For Ballard, I ne'er heard of any such,
But of one Hallard once that proffered me
Such help as I would none of, knowing this
man

Had vowed his service too to Walsingham.

GAWDY

Next, from your letters to Mendoza, writ
By Curle, as freely his confession shows,
In privy cipher, take these few brief notes
For perfect witness of your full design.
You find yourself, the Spaniard hears thereby,
Sore troubled what best course to take anew
For your affairs this side the sea, whereon
Charles Paget hath a charge to impart from
you

Some certain overtures to Spain and him
In your behalf, whom you desire with prayer
Show freely what he thinks may be obtained
Thus from the king his master. One point
more

Have you reserved thereon depending, which
On your behalf you charge him send the king
Some secret word concerning, no man else,
If this be possible, being privy to it:
Even this, that seeing your son's great ob-
stinacy

In heresy, and foreseeing too sure thereon
Most imminent danger and harm thence like
to ensue

To the Catholic church, he coming to bear
rule

Within this kingdom, you are resolved at
heart

In case your son be not reduced again
To the Catholic faith before your death,
whereof

Plainly you say small hope is yours so long
As he shall bide in Scotland, to give up
To that said king, and grant in absolute right,
Your claim upon succession to this crown,
By your last will made; praying him on this
cause

From that time forth wholly to take yourself
Into his keeping, and therewith the state
And charge of all this country: which, you
say,

You cannot for discharge of conscience think
That you could put into a prince's hands
More zealous for your faith, and abler found
To build it strong upon this side again,
Even as through all parts else of Christendom.
But this let silence keep in secret, lest
Being known it be your dowry's loss in
France,

And open breach in Scotland with your son,
And in this realm of England utterly
Your ruin and destruction. On your part
Next is he bidden thank his lord the king
For liberal grace and sovereign favour shown
Lord Paget and his brother, which you pray
him

Most earnestly to increase, and gratify
Poor Morgan with some pension for your sake
Who hath not for your sake only endured so
much

But for the common cause. Likewise, and
last,

Is one he knows commended to his charge
With some more full supply to be sustained
Than the entertainment that yourself allot
According to the little means you have.

BURGHLEY

Hereon stands proof apparent of that charge
Which you but now put by, that you design
To give your right supposed upon this realm
Into the Spaniard's hold; and on that cause
Lie now at Rome Allen and Parsons, men
Your servants and our traitors.

MARY STUART

No such proof
Lives but by witness of revolted men,
My traitors and your helpers; who to me
Have broken their allegiance bound by oath.
When being a prisoner clothed about with
cares

I languished out of hope of liberty,
Nor yet saw hope to effect of those things
aught

Which many and many looked for at my
hands,

Declining now through age and sickness, this
To some seemed good, even for religion's sake,
That the succession here of the English crown
Should or be established in the Spanish king
Or in some English Catholic. And a book
Was sent to me to avow the Spaniard's claim;

Which being of me allowed not, some there
were

In whose displeasure thence I fell; but now
Seeing all my hope in England desperate
grown,

I am fully minded to reject no aid
Abroad, but resolute to receive it.

WALSINGHAM

Sirs,
Bethink you, were the kingdom so conveyed,
What should become of you and all of yours,
Estates and honours and posterities,
Being to such hands delivered.

BURGHLEY

Nay, but these
In no such wise can be conveyed away
By personal will, but by successive right
Still must descend in heritage of law.

Whereto your own words witness, saying if
this

Were blown abroad your cause were utterly
Lost in all hearts of English friends. Therein
Your thoughts hit right: for here in all men's
minds

That are not mad with envying at the truth
Death were no loathlier than a stranger king.
If you would any more, speak: if not aught,
This cause is ended.

MARY STUART

I require again
Before a full and open parliament
Hearing, or speech in person with the queen,
Who shall, I hope, have of a queen regard,
And with the council. So, in trust hereof,
I crave a word with some of you apart,
And of this main assembly take farewell.

ACT IV

ELIZABETH

SCENE I.—*Richmond*

WALSINGHAM and DAVIDSON

WALSINGHAM

It is God's wrath, too sure, that holds her
hand;
His plague upon this people, to preserve

By her sole mean her deadliest enemy, known
By proof more potent than approof of law
In all points guilty, but on more than all
Toward all this country dangerous. To take
off

From the court held last month at Fotherin-
gay

Authority with so full commission given
To pass upon her judgment—suddenly
Cut short by message of some three lines writ
With hurrying hand at midnight, and de-
spatched

To maim its work upon the second day,
What else may this be in so wise a queen
But madness, as a brand to sear the brain
Of one by God infatuate? yea, and now
That she receives the French ambassador
With one more special envoy from his king,
Except their message touch her spleen with
fire

And so undo itself, we cannot tell
What doubt may work upon her. Had we
but

Some sign more evident of some private seal
Confirming toward her by more personal
proof

The Scottish queen's inveteracy, for this
As for our country plucked from imminent
death

We might thank God: but with such gracious
words

Of piteous challenge and imperial plea
She hath wrought by letter on our mistress'
mind,

We may not think her judgment so could slip,
Borne down with passion or forgetfulness,
As to leave bare her bitter root of heart
And core of evil will there labouring.

DAVISON

Yet

I see no shade of other surety cast
From any sign of likelihood. It were
Not shameful more than dangerous, though
she bade,

To have her prisoner privily made away;
Yet stands the queen's heart wellnigh fixed
hereon

When aught may seem to fix it; then as fast
Wavers, but veers to that bad point again
Whence blowing the wind blows down her
honour, nor

Brings surety of life with fame's destruction.

WALSINGHAM

Ay,

We are no Catholic keepers, and his charge
Need fear no poison in our watch-dog's fang,
Though he show honest teeth at her, to threat
Thieves' hands with loyal danger.

Enter QUEEN ELIZABETH, *attended by* BURGH-
LEY, LEICESTER, HUNSDON, HATTON, *and*
others of the Council

ELIZABETH

No, my lords,

We are not so weak of wit as men that need
Be counselled of their enemies. Blame us
not

That we accuse your friendship on this cause
Of too much fearfulness: France we will
hear,

Nor doubt but France shall hear us all as loud
As friend or foe may threaten or protest,
Of our own heart advised, and resolute more
Than hearts that need men's counsel. Bid
them in.

Enter CHATEAUNEUF *and* BELLIEVRE,
attended

From our fair cousin of France what message,
sirs?

BELLIEVRE

I, madam, have in special charge to lay
The king's mind open to your majesty,
Which gives my tongue first leave of speech
more free

Than from a common envoy. Sure it is,
No man more grieves at what his heart abhors,
The counsels of your highness' enemies,
Than doth the king of France: wherein how
far

The queen your prisoner have borne part, or
may

Seem of their works partaker, he can judge
Nought: but much less the king may under-
stand

What men may stand accusers, who rise up
Judge in so great a matter. Men of law
May lay their charges on a subject: but
The queen of Scotland, dowager queen of
France,

And sister made by wedlock to the king,
To none being subject, can be judged of none
Without such violence done on rule as breaks

Prerogative of princes. Nor may man
That looks upon your present majesty
In such clear wise apparent, and retains
Remembrance of your name through all the
world

For virtuous wisdom, bring his mind to think
That England's royal-souled Elizabeth,
Being set so high in fame, can so forget
Wise Plato's word, that common souls are
wrought

Out of dull iron and slow lead, but kings
Of gold untempered with so vile alloy
As makes all metal up of meaner men.
But say this were not thus, and all men's awe
Were from all time toward kingship merely
vain,

And state no more worth reverence, yet the
plea

Were nought which here your ministers pretend.

That while the queen of Scots lives you may
live

No day that knows not danger. Were she
dead,

Rather might then your peril wax indeed
To shape and sense of heavier portent, whom
The Catholic states now threat not, nor your
land,

For this queen's love, but rather for their
faith's,

Whose cause, were she by violent hand removed,

Could be but furthered, and its enterprise
Put on more strong and prosperous pretext;
yea,

You shall but draw the invasion on this land
Whose threat you so may think to stay, and
bring

Imminence down of inroad. Thus far forth
The queen of Scots hath for your person been
Even as a targe or buckler which has caught
All intercepted shafts against your state
Shot, or a stone held fast within your hand,
Which, if you cast it thence in fear or wrath
To smite your adversary, is cast away,
And no mean left therein for menace. If
You lay but hand upon her life, albeit
There were that counselled this, her death
will make

Your enemies weapons of their own despair
And give their whetted wrath excuse and edge
More plausibly to strike more perilously.

Your grace is known for strong in foresight:
we

These nineteen years of your wise reign have
kept

Fast watch in France upon you: of those
claims

Which lineally this queen here prisoner may
Put forth on your succession have you made
The stoutest rampire of your rule: and this
Is grown a byword with us, that their cause
Who shift the base whereon their policies
lean

Bow down toward ruin: and of loyal heart
This will I tell you, madam, which hath been
Given me for truth assured of one whose
place

Affirms him honourable, how openly
A certain prince's minister that well
May stand in your suspicion says abroad
That for his master's greatness it were good
The queen of Scots were lost already, seeing
He is well assured the Catholics here should
then

All wholly range them on his master's part.
Thus long hath reigned your highness happily
Who have loved fair temperance more than
violence: now,

While honour bids have mercy, wisdom holds
Equal at least the scales of interest. Think
What name shall yours be found in time far
hence,

Even as you deal with her that in your hand
Lies not more subject than your fame to come
In men's repute that shall be. Bid her live,
And ever shall my lord stand bound to you
And you for ever firm in praise of men.

ELIZABETH

I am sorry, sir, you are hither come from
France

Upon no better errand. I appeal
To God for judge between my cause and hers
Whom here you stand for. In this realm of
mine

The queen of Scots sought shelter, and
therein

Hath never found but kindness; for which
grace

In recompense she hath three times sought
my life.

No grief that on this head yet ever fell
Shook ever from mine eyes so many a tear
As this last plot upon it. I have read
As deep I doubt me in as many books
As any queen or prince in Christendom,

Yet never chanced on aught so strange and
sarl

As this my state's calamity. Mine own life
Is by mere nature precious to myself,
And in mine own realm I can live not safe.
I am a poor lone woman, girt about
With secret enemies that perpetually
Lay wait for me to kill me. From your king
Why have not I my traitor to my hands
Delivered up, who now this second time
Hath sought to slay me, Morgan? On my
part,

Had mine own cousin Hunsdon here con-
spired

Against the French king's life, he had found
not so

Refuge of me, nor even for kindred's sake
From the edge of law protection: and this
cause

Needs present evidence of this man's mouth.

BELLIEVE

Madam, there stand against the queen of
Scots

Already here in England on this charge
So many and they so dangerous witnesses
No need can be to bring one over more:
Nor can the king show such unnatural heart
As to send hither a knife for enemies' hands
To cut his sister's throat. Most earnestly
My lord expects your resolution: which
If we receive as given against his plea,
I must crave leave to part for Paris hence.
Yet give me pardon first if yet once more
I pray your highness be assured, and so
Take heed in season, you shall find this queen
More dangerous dead than living. Spare her
life,

And not my lord alone but all that reign
Shall be your sureties in all Christian lands
Against all scathe of all conspiracies
Made on her party: while such remedies' ends
As physic states with bloodshedding, to cure
Danger by death, bring fresh calamities
Far oftener forth than the old are healed of
them

Which so men thought to medicine. To re-
frain

From that red-handed way of rule, and set
Justice no higher than mercy sits beside,
Is the first mean of kings' prosperity
That would reign long: nor will my lord be-
lieve

Your highness could put off yourself so much
As to reverse and tread upon the law
That you thus long have kept and honour-
ably:

But should this perilous purpose hold right on,
I am bounden by my charge to say, the king
Will not regard as liable to your laws
A queen's imperial person, nor will hold
Her death as but the general wrong of kings
And no more his than as his brethren's all,
But as his own and special injury done,
More than to these injurious.

ELIZABETH

Doth your lord

Bid you speak thus?

BELLIEVE

Ay, madam: from his mouth
Had I command what speech to use.

ELIZABETH

You have done
Better to speak than he to send it. Sir,
You shall not presently depart this land
As one denied of mere discourtesy.
I will return an envoy of mine own
To speak for me at Paris with the king.
You shall bear back a letter from my hand,
And give your lord assurance, having seen,
I cannot be so frightened with men's threats
That they shall not much rather move my
mind
To quicken than to slack the righteous doom
Which none must think by menace to put
back,

Or daunt it with defiance. Sirs, good day.

[*Exeunt Ambassadors.*]

I were as one belated with false lights
If I should think to steer my darkling way
By twilight furtherance of their wiles and
words.

Think you, my lords, France yet would have
her live?

BURGHLEY

If there be other than the apparent end
Hid in this mission to your majesty,
Mine envoys can by no means fathom it,
Who deal for me at Paris: fear of Spain
Laws double hand as 'twere upon the king,

Lest by removal of the queen of Scots
A way be made for peril in the claim
More potent then of Philip; and if there come
From his Farnese note of enterprise
Or danger this way tending, France will yet
Cleave to your friendship though his sister
die.

ELIZABETH

So, in your mind, this half-souled brother
would
Steer any way that might keep safe his sail
Against a southern wind, which here, he
thinks,
Her death might strengthen from the north
again
To blow against him off our subject straits,
Made servile then and Spanish? Yet per-
chance
There swells behind our seas a heart too high
To bow more easily down, and bring this land
More humbly to such handling, than their
waves
Bow down to ships of strangers, or their
storms
To breath of any lord on earth but God.
What thinks our cousin?

HUNSDON

That if Spain or France
Or both be stronger than the heart in us
Which beats to battle ere they menace, why,
In God's name, let them rise and make their
prey
Of what was England: but if neither be,
The smooth-cheeked French man-harlot, nor
that hand
Which help to light Rome's fires with English
limbs,
Let us not keep to make their weakness strong
A pestilence here alive in England, which
Gives force to their faint enmities, and burns
Half the heart out of loyal trust and hope
With heat that kindles treason.

ELIZABETH

By this light,
I have heard worse counsel from a wise man's
tongue
Than this clear note of forthright soldiership.
How say you, Dudley, to it?

LEICESTER

Madam, ere this
You have had my mind upon the matter, writ
But late from Holland, that no public stroke
Should fall upon this princess, who may be
By privy death more happily removed
Without impeach of majesty, nor leave
A sign against your judgment, to call down
Blame of strange kings for wrong to kinship
wrought
Though right were done to justice.

ELIZABETH

Of your love
We know it is that comes this counsel; nor,
Had we such friends of all our servants, need
Our mind be now distraught with dangerous
doubts
That find no screen from dangers. Yet me-
seems
One doubt stands now removed, if doubt there
were
Of aught from Scotland ever: Walsingham,
You should have there intelligence whereof
To make these lords with us partakers.

WALSINGHAM

Nay,
Madam, no more than from a trustless hand
Protest and promise: of those twain that
come
Hot on these Frenchmen's heels in embassy,
He that in counsel on this cause was late
One with my lord of Leicester now, to rid
By draught of secret death this queen away,
Bears charge to say as these gone hence have
said
In open audience, but by personal note
Hath given me this to know, that howsoever
His king indeed desire her life be spared
Much may be wrought upon him, would your
grace
More richly line his ragged wants with gold
And by full utterance of your parliament
Approve him heir in England.

ELIZABETH

Ayl no more?
God's blood! what grace is proffered us at
need,
And on what mild conditions! Say I will not

Redeem such perils at so dear a price,
Shall not our pensioner too join hands with
France

And pay my gold with iron barter back
At edge of sword he dares not look upon,
They tell us, for the scathe and scare he took
Even in this woman's womb when shot and
steel

Undid the manhood in his veins unborn
And left his tongue's threats handless?

WALSINGHAM

Men there be,
Your majesty must think, who bear but ill,
For pride of country and high-heartedness,
To see the king they serve your servant so
That not his mother's life and once their
queen's

Being at such point of peril can enforce
One warlike word of his for chance of war
Conditional against you. Word came late
From Edinburgh that there the citizens
With hoot and hiss had bayed him through
the streets

As he went heartless by; of whom they had
heard

This published saying, that in his personal
mind

The blood of kindred or affinity
So much not binds us as the friendship
pledged

To them that are not of our blood: and this
Stands clear for certain, that no breath of war
Shall breathe from him against us though she
die,

Except his titular claim be reft from him
On our succession: and that all his mind
Is but to reign unpartnered with a power
Which should weigh down that half his king-
dom's weight

Left to his hand's share nominally in hold:
And for his mother, this would he desire,
That she were kept from this day to her
death

Close prisoner in one chamber, never more
To speak with man or woman: and hereon
That proclamation should be made of her
As of one subject formally declared
To the English law whereby, if she offend
Again with iterance of conspiracy,
She shall not as a queen again be tried,
But as your vassal and a private head
Live liable to the doom and stroke of death.

ELIZABETH

She is bounden to him as he long since to her,
Who would have given his kingdom up at
least

To his dead father's slayer, in whose red hand
How safe had lain his life too doubt may
guess,

Which yet kept dark her purpose then on
him,

Dark now no more to usward. Think you
then

That they belie him, whose suspicion saith
His ear and heart are yet inclined to Spain,
If from that brother-in-law that was of yours
And would have been our bridegroom he may
win

Help of strange gold and foreign soldiership,
With Scottish furtherance of those Catholic
lords

Who are stronger-spirited in their faith than
ours,

Being harried more of heretics, as they say
Than there with our borders, to root out
The creed there established now, and do to
death

Its ministers with all the lords their friends,
Lay hands on all strong places there, and rule
As prince upon their party? since he fain
From ours would be divided, and cast in
His lot with Rome against us too, from these
Might he but earn assurance of their faith,
Revolting from his own. May these things
be

More than mere muttering breath of trustless
lies,

And half his heart yet hover toward our side
For all such hope or purpose?

WALSINGHAM

Of his heart

We know not, madam, surely; nor doth he
Who follows fast on their first envoy sent,
And writes to excuse him of his message here
On her behalf apparent, but in sooth
Aimed otherwise; the Master I mean of Gray,
Who swears me here by letter, if he be not
True to the queen of England, he is content
To have his head fall on a scaffold: saying,
To put from him this charge of embassy
Had been his ruin, but the meaning of it
Is modes' and not menacing: whereto
If you will yield not yet to spare the life
So near its forfeit now, he thinks it well

You should be pleased by some commission
given
To stay by the way his comrade and himself,
Or bid them back.

ELIZABETH

What man is this then, sent
With such a knave to fellow?

WALSINGHAM

No such knave,
But still your prisoner's friend of old time
found:
Sir Robert Melville.

ELIZABETH

And an honest man
As faith might wish her servants: hut what
pledge
Will these produce me for security
That I may spare this dangerous life and live
Unscathed of after practice?

WALSINGHAM

As I think,
The king's self and his whole nobility
Will be her personal pledges; and her son,
If England yield her to his hand in charge,
On no less strait a bond will undertake
For her safe keeping.

ELIZABETH

That were even to arm
With double power mine adversary, and make
him
The stronger by my hand to do me hurt—
Were he mine adversary indeed: which yet
I will not hold him. Let them find a mean
For me to live unhurt and save her life,
It shall well please me. Say this king of
Scots

Himself would give his own inheritance up
Pretended in succession, if but once
Her hand were found or any friend's of hers
Again put forth upon me for her sake,
Why, haply so might hearts be satisfied
Of lords and commons then to let her live.
But this I doubt he had rather take her life
Himself than yield up to us for pledge: and
less,

These men shall know of me, I will not take

In price of her redemption: which were else
And haply may in no wise not be held,
To this my loyal land and mine own trust
A deadlier stroke and blast of sound more
dire
Than noise of fleets invasive.

WALSINGHAM

Surely so
Would all hearts hold it, madam, in that land
That are not enemies of the land and yours;
For ere the doom had been proclaimed an
hour
Which gave to death your main foe's head and
theirs
Yourself have heard what fire of joy brake
forth
From all your people: how their church-
towers all
Rang in with jubilant acclaim of bells
The day that bore such tidings, and the night
That laughed aloud with lightning of their
joy
And thundered round its triumph: twice
twelve hours
This tempest of thanksgiving roared and
shone
Sheer from the Solway's to the Channel's
foam
With light as from one festal-flaming hearth
And sound as of one trumpet: not a tongue
But praised God for it, or heart that leapt not
up,
Save of your traitors and their country's:
these
Withered at heart and shrank their heads in
close,
As though the bright sun's were a basilisk's
eye,
And light, that gave all others comfort, flame
And smoke to theirs of hell's own darkness,
whence
Such eyes were blinded or put out with fire.

ELIZABETH

Yea, I myself, I mind me, might not sleep
Those twice twelve hours thou speak'st of.
By God's light,
Be it most in love of me or fear of her
I know not, but my people seems in sooth
Hot and anhungered on this trail of hers:
Nor is it a people bloody-minded, used
To lap the life up of an enemy's vein

Who bleeds to death unweaponed: our good
 bounds
 Will course a quarry soldierlike in war,
 But rage not hangmanlike upon the prey,
 To flesh their fangs on limbs that strive not:
 yet
 Their hearts are hotter on this course than
 mine,
 Which most was deadliest aimed at.

WALSINGHAM

Even for that
 How should not theirs be hot as fire from hell
 To burn your danger up and slay that soul
 Alive that seeks it? Thinks your majesty
 There beats a heart where treason hath not
 turned
 All English blood to poison, which would feel
 No deadlier pang of dread more deathful to it
 To hear of yours endangered than to feel
 A sword against its own life bent, or know
 Death imminent as darkness overhead
 That takes the noon from one man's darken-
 ing eye
 As must your death from all this people's?
 You
 Are very England: in your light of life
 This living land of yours walks only safe,
 And all this breathing people with your breath
 Breathes unenslaved, and draws at each pulse
 in
 Freedom: your eye is light of theirs, your
 word
 As God's to comfort England, whose whole
 soul
 Is made with yours one, and her witness you
 That Rome or hell shall take not hold on her
 Again till God be wroth with us so much
 As to reclaim for heaven the star that yet
 Lights all your land that looks on it, and
 gives
 Assurance higher than danger dares assail
 Save in this lady's name and service, who
 Must now from you take judgment.

ELIZABETH

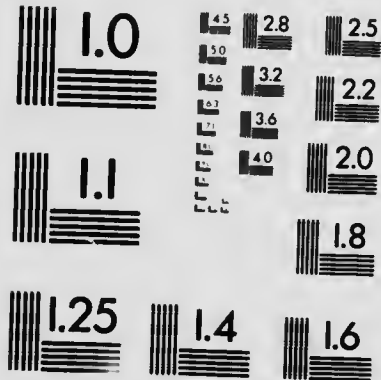
Must! by God,
 I know not *must* but as a word of mine,
 My tongue's and not mine ear's familiar.
 Sirs,
 Content yourselves to know this much of us,
 Or having known remember, that we sent
 The Lord of Buckhurst and our servant Beale

To acquaint this queen our prisoner with the
 doom
 Confirmed on second trial against her, saying
 Her word can weigh not down the weightier
 guilt
 Approved upon her, and by parliament
 Since fortified with sentence. Yea, my lords,
 Ye should forget not how by message then
 I bade her know of me with what strong force
 Of strenuous and invincible argument
 I am urged to hold no more in such delay
 The process of her execution, being
 The seed-plot of these late conspiracies,
 Their author and chief motive: and am told
 That if I yield not mine the guilt must be
 In God's and in the whole world's suffering
 sight
 Of all the miseries and calamities
 To ensue on my refusal: whence, albeit
 I know not yet how God shall please to in-
 cline
 My heart on that behalf, I have thought it
 meet
 In conscience yet that she should be fore-
 warned,
 That so she might bethink her of her sins
 Done both toward God offensive and to me
 And pray for grace to be true penitent
 For all these faults which, had the main fault
 reached
 No further than mine own poor person, God
 Stands witness with what truth my heart pro-
 tests
 I freely would have pardoned. She to this
 Makes bitter answer as of desperate heart
 All we may wreak our worst upon her; whom
 Having to death condemned, we may fulfil
 Our wicked work, and God in Paradise
 With just atonement shall requite her. This
 Ye see is all the pardon she will ask,
 Being only, and even as 'twere with prayer,
 desired
 To crave of us forgiveness: and thereon
 Being by Lord Buckhurst charged on this
 point home
 That by her mean the Catholics here had
 learnt
 To hold her for their sovereign, on which
 cause
 Nor my religion nor myself might live
 Uncharged with danger while her life should
 last,
 She answering gives God thanks aloud to be
 Held of so great account upon his side,



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

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And in God's cause and in the church of
 God's
 Rejoicingly makes offering of her life;
 Which I, God knows how unrejoicingly,
 Can scarce, ye tell me, choose but take, or
 yield
 At least for you to take it. Yet, being told
 It is not for religion she must die,
 But for a plot by compass of her own
 aid to dethrone me and destroy, she casts
 Again this answer barbed with mockery back,
 She was not so presumptuous born, to aspire
 To two such ends yet ever: yea, so far
 She dwelt from such desire removed in heart,
 She would not have me suffer by her will
 The fillip of a finger: though herself
 Be persecuted even as David once
 And her mishap be that she cannot so
 Fly by the window forth as David: whence
 It seems she likens us to Saul, and looks
 Haply to see us as on Mount Gilboa fallen,
 Where yet, for all the shooters on her side,
 Our shield shall be not vilely cast away,
 As of one unanointed. Yet, my lords,
 If England might but by my death attain
 A state more flourishing with a better prince,
 Gladly would I lay down my life; who have
 No care save only for my people's sake
 To keep it: for myself, in all the world
 I see no great cause why for all this coil
 I should be fond to live or fear to die.
 If I should say unto you that I mean
 To grant not your petition, by my faith,
 More should I so say haply than I mean:
 Or should I say I mean to grant it, this
 Were, as I think, to tell you of my mind
 More than is fit for you to know: and thus
 I must for all petitionary prayer
 Deliver you an answer answerless.
 Yet will I pray God lighten my dark mind
 That being illumined it may thence foresee
 What for his church and all this common-
 wealth
 May most be profitable: and this once known,
 My hand shall halt not long behind his will.

SCENE II.—*Fotheringay*

SIR AMYAS PAULET and SIR DREW DRURY

PAULET

I never gave God heartier thanks than these
 I give to have you partner of my charge

Now most of all, these letters being to you
 No less designed than me, and you in hea
 One with mine own upon them. Certainly
 When I put hand to pen this morning past
 That Master Davison by mine evidence
 Might note what sore disquietudes I had
 To increase my griefs before of body and
 mind.

I looked for no such word to cut off mine
 As these to us both of Walsingham's and his
 Would rather yet I had cause to still com-
 plain

Of those unanswered letters two months pas
 Than thus be certified of such intents
 As God best knoweth I never sought to know
 Or search out secret causes: though to hear
 Nothing at all did breed, as I confessed,
 In me some hard conceits against myself,
 I had rather yet rest ignorant than ashamed
 Of such ungracious knowledge. This shall
 be

Fruit as I think of dread wrought on the
 queen

By those seditious rumours whose report
 Blows fear among the people lest our charge
 Escape our trust, or as they term it now
 Be taken away,—such apprehensive tongues
 So phrase it—and her freedom strike men's
 hearts

More deep than all these flying fears that say
 London is fired of Papists, or the Scots
 Have crossed in arms the Border, or the
 north

Is risen again rebellious, or the Guise
 Is disembarked in Sussex, or that now
 In Milford Haven rides a Spanish fleet—
 All which, albeit but footless floating lies,
 May all too easily smite and work too far
 Even on the heart most royal in the world
 That ever was a woman's.

DRURY

Good my friend,

These noises come without a thunderbolt
 In such dense air of dusk expectancy
 As all this land lies under; nor will some
 Doubt or think much to say of those reports
 They are broached and vented of men's cred-
 ulous mouths

Whose ears have caught them from such lips
 as meant

Merely to strike more terror in the queen
 And wring that warrant from her hovering
 hand

Which falters yet and flutters on her lip
While the hand hangs and trembles half
advanced
Upon that sentence which, the treasurer
said,
Should well ere this have spoken, seeing it
was
More than a full month old and four days
more
When he so looked to hear the word of it
Which yet lies sealed of silence.

PAULET

Will you say,
Or any as wise and loyal, say or think
It was but for a show, to scare men's wits,
They have raised this hue and cry upon her
flight
Supposed from hence, to waken Exeter
With noise from Honiton and Sampfield
spread
Of proclamation to detain all ships
And lay all highways for her day and night,
And send like precepts out four manner of
ways
From town to town, to make in readiness
Their armour and artillery, with all speed,
On pain of death, for London by report
Was set on fire? though, God be therefore
praised,
We know this is not, yet the noise hereof
Were surely not to be neglected, seeing
There is, meseems, indeed no readier way
To levy forces for the achieving that
Which so these lewd reporters feign to fear.

DRURY

Why, in such mighty matters and such mists
Wise men may think what hardly fools would
say,
And eyes get glimpse of more than sight hath
leave
To give commission for the babbling tongue
Aloof to cry they have seen. This noise that
was
Upon one Arden's flight, a traitor, whence
Fear flew last week all round us, gave but
note
How lightly may men's minds take fire, and
words
Take wing that have no feet to fare upon
More solid than a shadow.

PAULET

Nay, he was
Escaped indeed: and every day thus brings
Forth its new mischief: as this last month
did
Those treasons of the French ambassador
Designed against our mistress, which God's
grace
Laid by the knave's mean bare to whom they
sought
For one to slay her, and of the Pope's hand
earn
Ten thousand blood-encrusted crowns a year
To his most hellish hire. You will not say
This too was merely fraud or vision wrought
By fear or cloudy falsehood?

DRURY

I will say
No more or surelier than I know: and this
I know not thoroughly to the core of truth
Or heart of falsehood in it. A man may lie
Merely, or trim some bald lean truth with
lies,
Or patch bare falsehood with some tatter of
truth,
And each of these pass current: but of these
Which likeliest may this man's tale be who
gave
Word of his own temptation by these French
To hire them such a murderer, and avowed
He held it godly cunning to comply
And bring this envoy's secretary to sight
Of one clapped up for debts in Newgate, who
Being thence released might readily, as he
said,
Even by such means as once this lady's lord
Was made away with, make the queen away
With powder fired beneath her bed—why,
this,
Good sooth, I guess not; but I doubt the man
To be more liar than fool, and yet, God wot,
More fool than traitor; most of all intent
To conjure coin forth of the Frenchman's
purse
With tricks of mere effrontery: thus at least
We know did Walsingham esteem of him:
And if by Davison held of more account,
Or merely found more serviceable, and made
A mean to tether up those quick French
tongues
From threat or pleading for this prisoner's
life,

I cannot tell, and care not. Though the
 queen
 Hath stayed this envoy's secretary from flight
 Forth of the kingdom, and committed him
 To ward within the Tower while Château-
 neuf
 Himself should come before a council held
 At my lord treasurer's, where being thus ac-
 cused
 At first he cared not to confront the man,
 But stood upon his office, and the charge
 Of his king's honour and prerogative—
 Then bade bring forth the knave, who being
 brought forth
 Outfaced him with insistence front to front
 And took the record of this whole tale's truth
 Upon his soul's damnation, challenging
 The Frenchman's answer in denial hereof,
 That of his own mouth had this witness
 been
 Traitorously tempted, and by personal plea
 Directly drawn to treason: which awhile
 Struck dumb the ambassador as amazed with
 wrath,
 Till presently, the accuser being removed,
 He made avowal this fellow some while since
 Had given his secretary to wit there lay
 One bound in Newgate who being thence re-
 leased
 Would take the queen's death on his hand:
 whereto
 Answering, he bade the knave avoid his house
 On pain, if once their ways should cross, to
 be
 Sent bound before the council: who replied
 He had done foul wrong to take no further
 note,
 But being made privy to this damned device
 Keep close its perilous knowledge; whence
 the queen
 Might well complain against him; and here-
 on
 They fell to wrangling on this cause, that he
 Professed himself to no man answerable
 For declaration or for secret held
 Save his own master: so that now is gone
 Sir William Wade to Paris, not with charge
 To let the king there know this queen shall
 live,
 But to require the ambassador's recall
 And swift delivery of our traitors there
 To present justice: yet may no man say,
 For all these half-faced scares and policies,
 Here was more sooth than seeming.

PAULET

Why, these craves
 Were shameful then as fear's most shameful
 self,
 If thus your wit read them aright; and we
 Should for our souls and lives alike do ill
 To jeopard them on such men's surety given
 As make no more account of simple faith
 Than true men make of liars: and these are
 they,
 Our friends and masters, that rebuke us both
 By speech late uttered of her majesty
 For lack of zeal in service and of care
 She looked for at our hands, in that we have
 not
 In all this time, unprompted, of ourselves
 Found out some way to cut this queen's li-
 off,
 Seeing how great peril, while her enemy lives
 She is hourly subject unto: saying, she notes
 Besides a kind of lack of love to her,
 Herein we have not that particular care
 Forsooth of our own safeties, or indeed
 Of the faith rather and the general good,
 That politic reason bids; especially,
 Having so strong a warrant and such ground
 For satisfaction of our consciences
 To Godward, and discharge of credit kept
 And reputation toward the world, as is
 That oath whereby we stand associated
 To prosecute inexorably to death
 Both with our joint and our particular force
 All by whose hand and all on whose behalf
 Our sovereign's life is struck at: as by proof
 Stands charged upon our prisoner. So they
 write,
 As though the queen's own will had warranted
 The words that by her will's authority
 Were blotted from the bond, whereby that
 head
 Was doomed on whose behoof her life should
 be
 By treason threatened: for she would not
 have
 Aught pass which grieved her subjects' con-
 sciences,
 She said, or might abide not openly
 The whole world's view: nor would she any
 one
 Were punished for another's fault: and so
 Cut off the plea whereon she now desires
 That we should dip our secret hands in blood
 With no direction given of her own mouth
 So to pursue that dangerous head to death

By whose assent her life were sought: for
this

Stands fixed for only warrant of such deed,
And this we have not, but her word instead
She takes it most unkindly toward herself
That men professing toward her loyalty
That love that we do should in any sort,
For lack of our own duty's full discharge,
Cast upon her the burden, knowing as we
Her slowness to shed blood, much more of
one

So near herself in blood as is this queen,
And one with her in sex and quality.
And these respects, they find, or so profess,
Do greatly trouble her: who hath sundry
times

Protested, they assure us, earnestly,
That if regard of her good subjects' risk
Did not more move her than the personal fear
Of proper peril to her, she never would
Be drawn to assent unto this bloodshedding:
And so to our good judgment they refer
These speeches they thought meet to acquaint
us with

As passed but lately from her majesty,
And to God's guard commend us: which God
knows

We should much more need than deserve of
him

Should we give ear to this, and as they bid
Make heretics of these papers: which three
times

You see how Davison hath enforced on us:
But they shall taste no fire for me, nor pass
Back to his hands till copies writ of them
Lie safe in mine for sons of mine to keep
In witness how their father dealt herein.

DRURY

You have done the wiselier: and what word
soe'er

Shall bid them know your mind, I am well
assured

It well may speak for me too.

PAULET

Thus it shall:

That having here his letters in my hands,
I would not fail, according to his charge,
To send back answer with all possible speed
Which shall deliver unto him my great grief
And bitterness of mind, in that I am
So much unhappy as I hold myself

24

To have lived to look on this unhappy day,
When I by plain direction am required
From my most gracious sovereign's mouth to
do

An act which God forbiddeth, and the law.
Hers are my goods and livings, and my life,
Held at her disposition, and myself
Am ready so to lose them this next day
If it shall please her so, acknowledging
I hold them of her mere goodwill, and do not
Desire them to enjoy them but so long
As her great grace gives leave: but God
forbid

That I should make for any grace of hers
So foul a shipwreck of my conscience, or
Leave ever to my poor posterity
So great a blot, as privily to shed blood
With neither law nor warrant. So, in trust
That she, of her accustomed clemency,
Will take my dutiful answer in good part,
By his good mediation, as returned
From one who never will be less in love,
Honour, obedience, duty to his queen,
Than any Christian subject living, thus
To God's grace I comitt him.

DRURY

Though I doubt

She haply shall be much more wroth hereat
Than lately she was gracious, when she bade
God treblefold reward you for your charge
So well discharged, saluting you by name
Most faithful and most careful, you shall do
Most like a wise man loyalty to write
But such good words as these, whereto my-
self

Subscribe in heart: though being not named
herein

(Albeit to both seem these late letters meant)
Nor this directed to me, I forbear
To make particular answer. And indeed,
Were danger less apparent in her life
To the heart's life of all this living land,
I would this woman might not die at all
By secret stroke nor open sentence.

PAULET

I

Will praise God's mercy most for this of all,
When I shall see the murderous cause re-
moved

Of its most mortal peril: nor desire
A guerdon ampler from the queen we serve,

Besides her commendations of my faith
 For spotless actions and for safe regards,
 Than to see judgment on her enemy done;
 Which were for me that recompense indeed
 Whereof she writes as one not given to all,
 But for such merit reserved to crown its claim
 Above all common service: nor save this
 Could any treasure's promise in the world
 So ease those travails and rejoice this heart
 That hers too much takes thought of, as to
 read

Her charge to carry for her sake in it
 This most just thought, that she can balance
 not

The value that her grace doth prize me at
 In any weight of judgment: yet it were
 A value to me more comfortable at heart
 Than these, though these most gracious, that
 should speak

Death to her death's contriver.

DRURY

Nay, myself

Were fain to see this coil wound up, and her
 Removed that makes it: yet such thing will
 pluck

Hard at men's hearts that think on them, and
 move

Compassion that such long strange years
 should find

So strange an end: nor shall men ever say
 But she was born right royal; full of sins,
 It may be, and by circumstance or choice
 Dyed and defaced with bloody stains and
 black,

Unmerciful, unfaithful, but of heart
 So fiery high, so swift of spirit and clear,
 In extreme danger and pain so lifted up,
 So of all violent things inviolable,
 So large of courage, so superb of soul,
 So sheathed with iron mind invincible
 And arms unbreached of fireproof con-
 stancy—

By shame not shaken, fear or force or death,
 Change, or all confluence of calamities—
 And so at her worst need beloved, and still,
 Naked of help and honour when she seemed,
 As other women would be, and of hope
 Stripped, still so of herself adorable
 By minds not always all ignobly mad
 Nor all made poisonous with false grain of
 faith,

She shall be a world's wonder to all time,
 A deadly glory watched of marvelling men

Not without praise, not without noble
 And if without what she would never have
 Who had it never, pity—yet from none
 Quite without reverence and some kin-
 love

For that which was so royal. Yea, and
 That at her prayer we here attend on her
 If, as I think, she have in mind to send
 Aught written to the queen, what we may
 To further her desire shall on my part
 Gladly be done, so be it the grace she craves
 Be nought akin to danger.

PAULET

It shall be

The first of all then craved by her of man
 Or by man's service done her, that was for
 So harmless ever.

Enter MARY STUART and MARY BEATON

MARY STUART

Sirs, in time past by

I was desirous many times, ye know,
 To have written to your queen: but since
 have had

Advertisement of my conviction, seeing
 I may not look for life, my soul is set
 On preparation for another world:

Yet none the less, not for desire of life,
 But for my conscience's discharge and rest
 And for my last farewell, I have at heart
 By you to send her a memorial writ

Of somewhat that concerns myself, when I
 Shall presently be gone out of this world.

And to remove from her, if such be there,
 Suspicion of all danger in receipt
 Of this poor paper that should come from me
 Myself will take the assay of it, and so
 With mine own hands to yours deliver it.

PAULET

Will you not also, madam, be content
 To seal and close it in my presence up?

MARY STUART

Sir, willingly: but I beseech your word
 Pledged for its safe delivery to the queen.

PAULET

I plight my faith it shall be sent to her.

nt to her.

The occasion why I moved it was but this,
That having made my custom in time past
To send sometimes some tokens to your
queen,
At one such time that I sent certain clothes
One standing by advised her cause my gifts
To be tried thoroughly ere she touched them;
which
I have since observed, and taken order thus
With Nau, when last he tarried at the court.

All strangers of what quality so'er
In matter of crime are only to be tried
In other princes' territories by law
That in that realm bears rule.

MARY STUART

You have your laws:
But other princes all will think of it
As they see cause; and mine own son is now
No more a child, but come to man's estate,
And he will think of these things bitterly.

DRURY

Ingratitude, whate'er he think of them,
Is odious in all persons, but of all
In mightiest personages most specially
Most hateful: and it will not be denied
But that the queen's grace greatly hath de-
served
Both of yourself and of your son.

MARY STUART

What boon
Shall I acknowledge? Being in bonds, I am
set
Free from the world, and therefore am I not
Afraid to speak; I have had the favour here
To have been kept prisoner now these many
years
Against my will and justice.

PAULET

Madam, this
Was a great favour, and without this grace
You had not lived to see these days.

MARY STUART

How so?

PAULET

Seeing your own subjects did pursue you, and
had
The best in your own country.

MARY STUART

That is true,
Because your Mildmay's ill persuasions first
Made me discharge my forces, and then
caused
Mine enemies to burn my friends' main holds,
Castles and houses.

PAULET

Howsoe'er, it was
By great men of that country that the queen
Had earnest suit made to her to have your-
self

Delivered to them, which her grace denied
And to their great misliking.

DRURY

Seventeen years
She hath kept your life to save it: and where
She calls your highness sister, she hath done
In truth and deed most graciously with you
And sisterlike, in seeking to preserve
Your life at once and honour.

MARY STUART

Ay! wherein?

DRURY

In that commission of your causes held
At York, which was at instance of your
friends
Dissolved to save your honour.

MARY STUART

No: the cause
Why that commission was dissolved indeed
Was that my friends could not be heard
inform
Against my loud accusers.

PAULET

But your friend
The bishop's self of Ross, your very friend,
Hath written that this meeting was dismissed
All only in your favour: and his book
Is extant: and this favour is but one
Of many graces which her majesty
Hath for mere love extended to you.

MARY STUART

This
Is one great favour, even to have kept me here
So many years against my will.

PAULET

It was
For your own safety, seeing your countrymen
Sought your destruction, and to that swift end
Required to have you yielded up to them,
As was before said.

MARY STUART

Nay, then, I will speak.
I am not afraid. It was determined here
That I should not depart: and when I was

Demanded by my subjects, this I know,
That my lord treasurer with his own close
hand
Writ in a packet which by trustier hands
Was intercepted, and to me conveyed,
To the earl of Murray, that the devil was tied
Fast in a chain, and they could keep her not,
But here she should be safely kept.

DRURY

That earl
Was even as honourable a gentleman
As I knew ever in that country bred.

MARY STUART

One of the worst men of the world he was:
A foul adulterer, one of general lust,
A spoiler and a murderer.

DRURY

Six weeks long,
As I remember, here I saw him; where
He bore him very gravely, and maintained
The reputation even on all men's tongues
In all things of a noble gentleman:
Nor have I heard him evil spoken of
Till this time ever.

MARY STUART

Yea, my rebels here
Are honoured and by the queen have been
Maintained.

PAULET

You greatly do forget yourself
To charge her highness with so foul a fault,
Which you can never find ability
To prove on her.

MARY STUART

What did she with the French,
I pray you, at Newhaven?

PAULET

It appears
You have conceived so hardly of the queen
My mistress, that you still inveterately
Interpret all her actions to the worst.
Not knowing the truth of all the cause: but
yet
I dare assure you that her majesty
Had most just cause and righteous, in respect
As well of Calais as for other ends,

To do the thing she did, and more to have
done,
Had it so pleased her to put forth her power:
And this is in you great unthankfulness
After so many favours and so great,
Whereof you will acknowledge in no wise
The least of any: though her majesty
Hath of her own grace merely saved your
life,

To the utter discontentment of the best
Your subjects once in open parliament
Who craved against you justice on the charge
Of civil law-breach and rebellion.

MARY STUART

I
Know no such matter, but full well I know
Sir Francis Walsingham hath openly,
Since his abiding last in Scotland, said
That I should rue his entertainment there.

PAULET

Madam, you have not rued it, but have been
More honourably entertained than ever yet
Was any other crown's competitor
In any realm save only this: whereof
Some have been kept close prisoners, other
some
Maimed and unnaturally disfigured, some
Murdered.

MARY STUART

But I was no competitor:
All I required was in successive right
To be reputed but as next the crown.

PAULET

Nay, madam, you went further, when you
gave
The English arms and style, as though our
queen
Had been but an usurper on your right.

MARY STUART

My husband and my kinsmen did therein
What they thought good: I had nought to do
with it.

PAULET

Why would you not then loyally renounce
Your claim herein pretended, but with such
Condition, that you might be authorized
Next heir apparent to the crown?

MARY STUART

I have made
At sundry times thereon good proffers, which
Could never be accepted.

PAULET

Heretofore
It hath been proved unto you presently
That in the very instant even of all
Your treaties and most friendlike offers were
Some dangerous crafts discovered.

MARY STUART

You must think
I have some friends on earth, and if they have
done
Anything privily, what is that to me?

PAULET

Madam, it was somewhat to you, and I would
For your own sake you had forborne it, that
After advertisement and conscience given
Of Morgan's devilish practice, to have killed
A sacred queen, you yet would entertain
The murderer as your servant.

MARY STUART

I might do it
With as good right as ever did your queen
So entertain my rebels.

DRURY

Be advised:
This speech is very hard, and all the case
Here differs greatly.

MARY STUART

Yea, let this then be;
Ye cannot yet of my conviction say
But I by partial judgment was condemned,
And the commissioners knew my son could
have
No right, were I convicted, and your queen
Could have no children of her womb; where-
by
They might set up what man for king they
would.

PAULET

This is in you too great forgetfulness
Of honour and yourself, to charge these lords
With two so foul and horrible faults, as first

To take your life by partial doom from you
And then bestow the kingdom where the
liked.

MARY STUART

Well, all is one to me: and for my part
I thank God I shall die without regret
Of anything that I have done alive.

PAULET

I would entreat you yet be sorry at least
For the great wrong, and well deserving grief,
You have done the queen my mistress.

MARY STUART

Nay, thereon
Let others answer for themselves: I have
Nothing to do with it. Have you borne in
mind

Those matters of my monies that we last
Conferred upon together?

PAULET

Ma-lam, these
Are not forgotten.

MARY STUART

Well it is if aught
Be yet at all remembered for my good.
Have here my letter sealed and superscribed,
And so farewell—or even as here men may.
[*Exeunt PAULET and DRURY.*]

Had I that old strength in my weary limbs
That in my heart yet fails not, fain would I
Fare forth if not fare better. Tired I am,
But not so lame in spirit I might not take
Some comfort of the winter-wasted sun
This bitter Christmas to me, though my feet
Were now no firmer nor more helpful found
Than when I went but in my chair abroad
Last weary June at Chartley. I can stand
And go now without help of either side,
And bend my hand again, thou seest, to
write:

I did not well perchance in sight of these
To have made so much of this lame hand,
which yet

God knows was grievous to me, and to-day
To make my letter up and superscribe
And seal it with no outward show of pain
Before their face and inquisition; yet
I care not much in player's wise piteously

To blind such eyes with feigning: though
this Drew
Be gentler and more gracious than his mate
And liker to be wrought on; but at last
What need have I of men?

MARY BEATON

What then you may
I know not, seeing for all that was and is
We are yet not at the last; but when you had,
You have hardly failed to find more help of
them
And heartier service than more prosperous
queens

Exact of expectation: when your need
Was greater than your name or natural state,
And wage was none to look for but of death,
As though the expectancy thereof and hope
Were more than man's prosperities, men have
given
Heart's thanks to have this gift of God and
you
For dear life's guerdon, even the trust assured
To drink for you the bitterness of death.

MARY STUART

Ay, one said once it must be—some one said
I must be perilous ever, and my love
More deadly than my will was evil or good
Toward any of all these that through me
should die—
I know not who, nor when one said it: but
I know too sure he lied not.

MARY BEATON

No; I think
This was a seer indeed. I have heard of men
That under imminence of death grew strong
With mortal foresight, yet in life-days past
Could see no foot before them, nor provide
For their own fate or fortune anything
Against one angry chance of accident
Or passionate fault of their own loves or
hates
That might to death betray them: such an
one
Thus haply might have prophesied, and had
No strength to save himself.

MARY STUART

I know not: yet
Time was when I remembered.

MARY BEATON

It should be
No enemy's saying whom you remember not;
You are wont not to forget your enemies; yet
The word rang sadder than a friend's should
fall
Save in some strange pass of the spirit or flesh
For love's sake haply hurt to death.

MARY STUART

It seems
Thy mind is bent to know the name of me
That of myself I know not.

MARY BEATON

Nay, my mind
Has other thoughts to beat upon: for me
It may suffice to know the saying for true
And never care who said it.

MARY STUART

True? too sure,
God to mine heart's grief hath approved it.
See,
Nor Scot nor Englishman that takes on him
The service of my sorrow but partakes
The sorrow of my service: man by man,
As that one said, they perish of me: yea.
Were I a sword sent upon earth, or plague
Bred of aerial poison, I could be
No deadlier where unwillingly I strike,
Who where I would can hurt not: Percy died
By his own hand in prison, Howard by law,
These young men with strange torments done
to death,
Who should have rid me and the world of her
That is our scourge, and to the church of God
A pestilence that wastes it: all the north
Wears yet the scars engraven of civil steel
Since its last rising: nay, she saith but right,
Mine enemy, saying by these her servile
tongues
I have brought upon her land mine own land's
curse,
And a sword follows at my heel, and fire
Is kindled of mine eyeshot: and before,
Whom did I love that died not of it? whom
That I would save might I deliver, when
I had once but looked on him with love, or
pledged
Friendship? I should have died I think long
since,

That many might have died not, and this
word

Had not been written of me nor fulfilled,
But perished in the saying, a prophecy
That took the prophet by the throat and
slew—

As sure I think it slew him. Such a song
Might my poor servant slain before my face
Have sung before the stroke of violent death
Had fallen upon him there for my sake.

MARY BEATON

You think so? this remembrance was it not
That hung and hovered in your mind but
now,

Moved your heart backward all unwittingly
To some blind memory of the man long dead?

MARY STUART

In sooth, I think my prophet should have
been
David.

MARY BEATON

You thought of him?

MARY STUART

An old sad thought:
The moan of it was made long since, and he
Not unremembered.

MARY BEATON

Nay, of him indeed
Record was made—a royal record: whence
No marvel is it that you forgot not him.

MARY STUART

I would forget no friends nor enemies: these
More needs me now remember. Think'st
thou not

This woman hates me deadlier—or this queen
That is not woman—than myself could hate
Except I were as she in all things? then
I should love no such woman as am I
Much more than she may love me: yet I am
sure,

Or so near surety as all belief may be.
She dare not lay me for her soul's sake: nay,
Though that were made as light of as a leaf
Storm-shaken, in such stormy winds of state
As blow between us like a blast of death,

For her throne's sake she durst not, wh
must be

Broken to build my scaffold. Yet, God v
Perchance a straw's weight now cast in
chance

Might weigh my life down in the scale
hand

Holds hardly straight for trembling: if s
be

Woman at all, so tempered naturally
And with such spirit and sense as thou and

Should I for wrath so far forget myself
As these men sometimes charge me that I c

My tongue might strike my head off, I
this head

That yet I wear to swear by, if life be
Thankworthy, God might well be thank
for this

Of me or whoso loves me in the world,
That I spake never half my heart out yet,

For any sore temptation of them all,
To her or hers; nor ever put but once

My heart upon my paper, writing plain
The things I thought, heard, knew for truth
of her,

Believed or feigned—nay, feigned not to
believe

Of her fierce follies fed with wry-mouthed
praise,

And that vain ravin of her sexless lust
Which could not feed nor hide its hunger
curb

With patience nor allay with love the thirst
That mocked itself as all mouths mocked it.
Ha,

What might the reading of these truths have
wrought

Within her maiden mind, what seed have
sown,

Trow'st thou, in her sweet spirit, of revenge
Toward me that showed her queenship in the
glass

A subject's hand of hers had put in mine
The likeness of it loathed and laughable
As they that worshipped it with words and
signs

Beheld her and bemocked her?

MARY BEATON

Certainly,

I think that soul drew never breath alive
To whom this letter might seem pardonable
Which timely you forbore to send her.

MARY STUART

Nay,
I doubt not I did well to keep it back—
And did not ill to write it: for God knows
It was no small ease to my heart.

MARY BEATON

But say
I had not burnt it as you bade me burn,
But kept it privily safe against a need
That I might haply sometime use of it?

MARY STUART

What, to destroy me?

MARY BEATON

Hardly, sure, to save.

MARY STUART

Why shouldst thou think to bring me to my
death?

MARY BEATON

Indeed, no man am I that love you; nor
Need I go therefore in such fear of you
As of my mortal danger.

MARY STUART

On my life,
(Long life or short, with gentle or violent end,
I know not, and would choose not, though I
might
So take God's office on me) one that heard
Would swear thy speech had in it, and subtly
mixed,
A savour as of menace, or a sound
As of an imminent ill or perilous sense
Which was not in thy meaning.

MARY BEATON

No: in mine
There lurked no treason ever; nor have you
Cause to think worse of me than loyally,
If proof may be believed on witness.

MARY STUART

Sure,
I think I have not nor I should not have:
Thy life has been the shadow cast of mine,
A present faith to serve my present need.
A foot behind my footsteps; as long since

In those French dances that we trod, and
laughed
The blithe way through together. Thou
couldst sing

Then, and a great while gone it is by this
Since I heard song or music: I could now
Find in my heart to bid thee, as the Jews
Were once bid sing in their captivity
One of their songs of Sion, sing me now,
If one thou knowest, for love of that far time,
One of our songs of Paris.

MARY BEATON

Give me leave
A little to cast up some wandering words
And gather back such memories as may beat
About my mind of such a song, and yet
I think I might renew some note long dumb
That once your ear allowed of.—I did pray,
[Aside.]

Tempt me not, God: and by Her mouth again
He tempts me—nay, but prompts me, being
most just,

To know by trial if all remembrance be
Dead as remorse or pity that in birth
Died, and were childless in her: if she quite
Forget that very swan-song of thy love,
My love that wast, my love that wouldst not
be,

Let God forget her now at last as I
Remember: if she think but soft thought,
Cast one poor word upon t God thereby
Shall surely bid me let her if none,
I shoot that letter home and sing her dead.
God strengthen me to sing but these words
through

Thou I fall dun at end for ever. Now—
[She sings.]

Après tant de jours, après tant de pleurs,
Soyez secourable à mon âme en peine.
Voyez comme Avril fait l'amour aux fleurs;
Dame d'amour, dame aux belles couleurs,
Dieu vous a fait belle, Amour vous fait reine.

Rions, je t'en prie; aimons, je le veux.
Le temps fuit et rit et ne revient guère
Pour baiser le bout de tes blonds cheveux,
Pour baiser tes cils, ta bouche et tes yeux:
L'amour n'a qu'un jour auprès de sa mère.

MARY STUART

Nay, I should once have known that song,
thou say'st,
And him that sang it and should now be dead:

Was it—but his rang sweeter—was it not
Remy Belleau?

MARY BEATON

(My letter—here at heart!) [*Aside*.
I think it might be—were it better writ
And courtlier phrased, with Latin spice cast
in,
And a more tunable descant.

MARY STUART

Ay; how sweet
Sang all the world about those stars that sang
With Ronsard for the strong mid star of all,
His bay-bound head all glorious with grey
hairs,
Who sang my birth and bridal! When I
think
Of those French years, I only seem to see
A light of swords and singing, only hear
Laughter of love and lovely stress of lutes,
And in between the passion of them borne
Sounds of swords crossing ever, as of feet
Dancing, and life and death still equally
Blithe and bright-eyed from battle. Haply
now
My sometime sister, mad Queen Madge, is
grown
As grave as I should be, and wears at waist
No hearts of last year's lovers any more
Enchased for jewels round her girdlestead,
But rather beads for penitence; yet I doubt
Time should not more abash her heart than
mine,
Who live not heartless yet. These days like
those
Have power but for a season given to do
No more upon our spirits than they may,
And what they may we know not till it be
Done, and we need no more take thought of
it,
As I no more of death or life to-day.

MARY BEATON

That shall you surely need not.

MARY STUART

So I think,
Our keepers being departed: and by these,
Even by the uncourtlier as the gentler man,
I read as in a glass their queen's plain heart,
And that by her at last I shall not die.

SCENE III.—*Greenwich Palace*

QUEEN ELIZABETH and DAVISON

ELIZABETH

Thou hast seen Lord Howard? I bade him
send thee.

DAVISON

Madam
But now he came upon me hard at hand
And by your gracious message bade me in

ELIZABETH

The day is fair as April: hast thou been
Abroad this morning? 'Tis no winter's sun
That makes these trees forget their naked-
ness
And all the glittering ground, as 'twere in
hope,
Breathe laughingly.

DAVISON

Indeed, the gracious air
Had drawn me forth into the park, and
thence
Comes my best speed to attend upon your
grace.

ELIZABETH

My grace is not so gracious as the sun
That graces thus the late distempered air:
And you should oftener use to walk abroad.
Sir, than your custom is: I would not have
Good servants heedless of their natural health
To do me sickly service. It were strange
That one twice bound as woman and as queen
To care for good men's lives and loyalties
Should prove herself toward either dangerous.

DAVISON

That
Can be no part of any servant's fear
Who lives for service of your majesty.

ELIZABETH

I would not have it be—God else forbid—
Who have so loyal servants as I hold
All now that bide about me: for I will not
Think, though such villainy once were in
men's minds,
That twice among mine English gentlemen

Palace

DAVISON

I bade him

Madam,
I bade me in.

thou been
winter's sun
their naked-

'twere in

ous air
park, and

upon your

sun
red air:
k abroad,
not have
ral health
strange
as queen
loyalties
angerous.

That

y.

bid—

ill not
were in

ntlemen

shall hearts be found so foul as theirs who
thought,

When I was horsed for hunting, to waylay
And shoot me through the back at unawares
With poisoned bullets: nor, thou knowest,
would I,

When this was opened to me, take such care,
Ride so fenced round about with iron guard,
Or walk so warily as men counselled me
For loyal fear of what thereafter might
More prosperously be plotted: nay, God
knows,

I would not hold on such poor terms my life,
With such a charge upon it, as to breathe
In dread of death or treason till the day
That they should stop my trembling breath,
and ease

The piteous heart that panted like a slave's
Of all vile fear for ever. So to live
Were so much hatefuller than thus to die,
I do not think that man or woman draws
Base breath of life the loathsomest on earth
Who by such purchase of perpetual fear
And deathless doubt of all in trust of none
Would shudderingly prolong it.

DAVISON

Even too well

Your servants know that greatness of your
heart

Which gives you yet unguarded to men's eyes,
And were unworthier found to serve or live
Than is the unworthiest of them, did not this
Make all their own hearts hotter with desire
To be the bulwark or the price of yours
Paid to redeem it from the arrest of death.

ELIZABETH

So haply should they be whose hearts beat
true

With loyal blood: but whoso says they are
Is but a loving liar.

DAVISON

I trust your grace

Hath in your own heart no such doubt of
them

As speaks in mockery through your lips.

ELIZABETH

By God,

I say much less than righteous truth might
speak

Of their loud loves that ring with emptiness,
And hollow-throated loyalties whose heart
Is wind and clamorous promise. Ye desire,
With all your souls ye swear that ye desire
The queen of Scots were happily removed,
And not a knave that loves me will put hand
To the enterprise ye look for only of me
Who only would forbear it.

DAVISON

If your grace

Be minded yet it shall be done at all,
The way that were most honourable and just
Were safest, sure, and best.

ELIZABETH

I dreamt last night

Our murderess there in hold had tasted death
By execution of the sentence done
That was pronounced upon her; and the
news

So stung my heart with wrath to hear of it
That had I had a sword—look to 't, and
'ware!—

I had thrust it through thy body.

DAVISON

God defend!

'Twas well I came not in your highness' way
While the hot mood was on you. But indeed
I would know soothly if your mind be changed
From its late root of purpose.

ELIZABETH

No, by God:

But I were fain it could be somehow done
And leave the blame not on me. And so
much,

If there were love and honesty in one
Whom I held faithful and exact of care,
Should easily be performed; but here I find
This dainty fellow so precise a knave
As will take all things dangerous on his tongue
And nothing on his hand: hot-mouthed and
large

In zeal to stuff mine ears with promises,
But perjurous in performance: did he not
Set hand among you to the bond whereby
He is bound at utmost hazard of his life
To do me such a service? Yet I could
Have wrought as well without him, had I wist

Of this faint falsehood in his heart: there is
That Wingfield whom thou wor'st of, would
have done
With glad goodwill what I required of him,
And made no Puritan mouths on 't.

DAVISON

Madam, yet
Far better were it all should but be done
By line of law and judgment.

ELIZABETH

There be men
Wiser than thou that see this otherwise.

DAVISON

All is not wisdom that of wise men comes,
Nor are all eyes that search the ways of state
Clear as a just man's conscience.

ELIZABETH

Proverbs! ha?
Who made thee master of these sentences,
Prime tongue of ethics and philosophy?

DAVISON

An honest heart to serve your majesty
Nought else nor subtler in its reach of wit
Than very simpleness of meaning.

ELIZABETH

Nay,
I do believe thee; heartily I do.
Did my lord admiral not desire thee bring
The warrant for her execution?

DAVISON

Ay,
Madam; here is it.

ELIZABETH

I would it might not be,
Or being so just were yet not necessary.
Art thou not heartily sorry—wouldst thou
not,
I say, be sad—to see me sign it?

DAVISON

Madam,
I grieve at any soul's mishap that lives,
And specially for shipwreck of a life
To you so near allied: but seeing this doom

Wrung forth from justice by necessity,
I had rather guilt should bleed than innocence.

ELIZABETH

When I shall sign, take thou this instantly
To the lord chancellor; see it straight
sealed

As quietly as he may, not saying a word.
That no man come to know it untimely: then
Send it to the earls of Kent and Shrewsbury
Who are here set down to see this justice done:
I would no more be troubled with this coil
Till all be through. But, for the place of
doom,

The hall there of the castle, in my mind,
Were fitter than the court or open green.
And as thou goest betake thee on thy way
To Walsingham, where he lies sick at home,
And let him know what hath of us been done:
Whereof the grief, I fear me, shall go near
To kill his heart outright.

DAVISON

Your majesty
Hath yet not signed the warrant.

ELIZABETH

Hal God's blood!
Art thou from tutor of philosophy late
Grown counsellor too and more than counsel-
lor, thou
To appoint me where and what this hand of
mine

Shall at thy beck obsequiously subscribe
And follow on thy finger? By God's death,
What if it please me now not sign at all?
This letter of my kinswoman's last writ
Hath more compulsion in it, and more power
To enforce my pity, than a thousand tongues
Dictating death against her in mine ear
Of mine own vassal subjects. Here but now
She writes me she thanks God with all her
heart

That it hath pleased him by the mean of me
To make an end of her life's pilgrimage,
Which hath been weary to her: and doth not
ask

To see its length drawn longer, having had
Too much experience of its bitterness:
But only doth entreat me, since she may
Look for no favour at their zealous hands

Who are first in councils of my ministry,
That only I myself will grant her prayers;
Whereof the first is, since she cannot hope
For English burial with such Catholic rites
As here were used in time of the ancient
kings,

Mine ancestors and hers, and since the tombs
Lie violated in Scotland of her sires,
That so soon ever as her enemies
Shall with her innocent blood be satiated,
Her body by her servants may be borne
To some ground consecrated, there to be
Interred: and rather, she desires, in France,
Where sleep her honoured mother's ashes: so
At length may her poor body find the rest
Which living it has never known: thereto,
She prays me, from the fears she hath of
those

To whose harsh hand I have abandoned her,
She may not secretly be done to death.
But in her servants' sight and others', who
May witness her obedience kept and faith
To the true church, and guard her memory
safe

From slander haply to be blown abroad
Concerning her by mouths of enemies: last,
She asks that her attendants, who so well
And faithfully through all her miseries past
Have served her, may go freely where they
please.

And lose not those small legacies of hers
Which poverty can yet bequeath to them.
This she conjures me by the blood of Christ,
Our kinship, and my grandsire's memory,
Who was her father's grandsire and a king,
And by the name of queen she bears with her
Even to the death, that I will not refuse,
And that a word in mine own hand may thus
Assure her, who will then as she hath lived
Die mine affectionate sister and prisoner.

See,
Howe'er she have sinned, what heart were
mine, if this

Drew no tears from me: not the meanest soul
That lives most miserable but with such
words

Must needs draw down men's pity.

DAVISON

Sure it is,
This queen hath skill of writing: and her
hand
Hath manifold eloquence with various voice
To express discourse of sirens or of snakes,

A mermaid's or a monster's, uttering best
All music or all malice. Here is come
A letter writ long since of hers to you
From Sheffield Castle, which for shame or
fear

She durst not or she would not thence des-
patch,

Sent secretly to me from Fotheringay,
Not from her hand, but with her own hand
writ,

So foul of import and malignity
I durst not for your majesty's respect
With its fierce infamies afire from hell
Offend your gracious eyesight: but because
Your justice by your mercy's ignorant hand
Hath her fair eyes put out, and walks now
blind

Even by the pit's edge deathward, pardon
me

If what you never should have seen be shown
By hands that rather would take fire in
hand

Than lay in yours this writing.

[Gives her a letter.

ELIZABETH

By this light,

Whate'er be here, thou hadst done presumptu-
ously,
And Walsingham thy principal, to keep
Aught from mine eyes that being to me de-
signed

Might even with most offence enlighten them.
Here is her hand indeed; and she takes it

[Reading.

In gracious wise enough the charge imposed
By promise on her and desire of ours,
How loth soe'er she be, regretfully
To bring such thing - in question of discourse,
Yet with no passion but sincerity,
As God shall witness her, declares to us
What our good lady of Shrewsbury said to
her

Touching ourself in terms ensuing; whereto
Answering she chid this dame for such be-
lief,

And reprehended for licentious tongue,
To speak so lewdly of us: which herself
Believes not, knowing the woman's natural
heart

And evil will as then to usward. Here
She writes no more than I would well believe
Of her as of the countess. Hal

DAVISON

Your grace
Shall but defile and vex your eyes and heart
To read these villainies through.

ELIZABETH

God's death, man! peace:
Thou wert not best incense me toward thine
own,
Whose eyes have been before me in them.
What!

Was she not mad to write this? *One that had
Your promise—lay with you times number-
less—*

*All license and all privateness that may
Be used of wife and husband! yea, of her
And more dead men than shame remembers.*
God

*Shall stand her witness—with the devil of hell
For sponsor to her vows, whose spirit in her
Begot himself this issue. Ha, the duke!*

—Nay, God shall give me patience—and his
knave,
And Hatton—God have mercy! nay, but
hate,

Hate and constraint and rage have wrecked
her wits,

And continence of life cut off from lust,
—This common stale of Scotland, that has
tried

The sins of three rank nations, and consumed
Their veins whose life she took not—Italy,
France that put half this poison in her blood,
And her own kingdom that being sick there-
with

Vomited out on ours the venomous thing
Whose head we set not foot on—but may
God

Make my fame fouler through the world than
hers

And ranker in men's record, if I spare
The she-wolf that I saved, the woman-beast,
Wolf-woman—how the Latin rings we know,
And what lewd lair first reared her, and whose
hand

Writ broad across the Louvre and Holyrood
Lupanar—but no brothel ever bred
Or breathed so rank a soul's infection,
spawned

Or spat such foulness in God's face and man's
Or festered in such falsehood as her breath
Strikes honour sick with, and the spirit of
shame

Dead as her fang shall strike herself, and
send
The serpent that corruption calls her soul
To vie strange venoms with the worm of hell
And make the face of darkness and the grave
Blush hotter with the fires wherein that soul
Sinks deeper than damnation.

DAVISON

Let your grace
Think only that but now the thing is known
And self-discovered which too long your love
Too dangerously hath cherished; and forget
All but that end which yet remains for her,
That right by pity be not overcome.

ELIZABETH

God pity so my soul as I do right,
And show me no more grace alive or dead
Than I do justice here. Give me again
That warrant I put by, being foolish: yea,
Thy word spake sooth—my soul's eyes were
put out—

I could not see for pity. Thou didst well—
I am bounden to thee heartily—to cure
My sight of this distemper, and my soul.
Here in God's sight I set mine hand, who
thought

Never to take this thing upon it, nor
Do God so bitter service. Take this hence:
And let me see no word nor hear of her
Till the sun see not such a soul alive.

ACT V

MARY STUART

SCENE I.—*Mary's Chamber in Fotheringay
Castle*

MARY STUART and MARY BEATON

MARY STUART

[Sings.

O Lord my God,
I have trusted in thee;
O Jesu my dearest one,
Now set me free.
In prison's oppression,
In sorrow's obsession,
I weary for thee.

With sighing and crying
Bowed down as dying,
I adore thee, I implore thee, set me free!

FREE are the dead: yet fain I would have had
Once, before all captivity find end,
Some breath of freedom living. These that
come,

I think, with no such message, must not find,
For all this lameness of my limbs, a heart
As maimed in me with sickness. Three year:
gone,

When last I parted from the earl marshal's
charge,

I did not think to see his face again
Turned on me as his prisoner. Now his
wife

Will take no jealousy more to hear of it,
I trust, albeit we meet not as unfriends,
If it be mortal news he brings me. Go,
If I seem ready, as meseems I should,
And well arrayed to bear myself indeed
None otherwise than queenlike in their sight,
Bid them come in. [Exit MARY BEATON.

I cannot tell at last

If it be fear or hope that should expect
Death: I have had enough of hope, and fear
Was none of my familiars while I lived
Such life as had more pleasant things to lose
Than death or life may now divide me from.
'Tis not so much to look upon the sun
With eyes that may not lead us where we
will,

And halt behind the footless flight of hope
With feet that may not follow: nor were
ought

So much, of all things life may think to have,
That one not cowardly born should find it
worth

The purchase of so base a price as this,
To stand self-shamed as coward. I do not
think

This is mine end that comes upon me: but
I had liefer far it were than, were it not,
That ever I should fear it.

Enter KENT, SHREWSBURY, BEALE, and
Sheriff

Sirs, good day:

With such good heart as prisoners have, I bid
You and your message welcome.

KENT

Madam, this

The secretary of the council here hath charge
To read as their commission.

MARY STUART

Let me hear

In as brief wise as may beseem the time
The purport of it.

BEALE

Our commission here

Given by the council under the great seal
Pronounces on your head for present doom
Death, by this written sentence.

MARY STUART

Ay, my lords?

May I believe this, and not hold myself
Mocked as a child with shadows? In God's
name,

Speak you, my lord of Shrewsbury: let me
know

If this be dream or waking.

KENT

Verily,

No dream it is, nor dreamers we that pray,
Madam, you meetly would prepare yourself
To stand before God's judgment presently.

MARY STUART

I had rather so than ever stand again
Before the face of man's. Why speak not
you,

To whom I speak, my lord earl marshal?
Nay,

Look not so heavily: by my life, he stands
As one at point to weep. Why, good my
lord,

To know that none may swear by Mary's life
And hope again to find belief of man
Upon so slight a warrant, should not bring
This trouble on your eyes; look up, and say
The word you have for her that never was
Less than your friend, and prisoner.

SHREWSBURY

None save this,

Which willingly I would not speak, I may;
That presently your time is come to die.

MARY STUART

Why, then, I am well content to leave a world
Wherein I am no more serviceable at all
To God or man, and have therein so long
Endured so much affliction. All my life

I have ever earnestly desired the love
And friendship of your queen: have warned
her oft

Of coming dangers; and have cherished long
The wish that I but once might speak with
her

In plain-souled confidence: being well as-
sured,

Had we but once met, there an end had been
Of jealousies between us: but our foes,
With equal wrong toward either, treacher-
ously

Have kept us still in sunder: by whose craft
And crooked policy hath my sister's crown
Fallen in great peril, and myself have been
Imprisoned, and inveterately malign'd,
And here must now be murdered. But I
know

That only for my faith's sake I must die,
And this to know for truth is recompense
As large as all my sufferings. For the crime
Wherewith I am charged, upon this holy
book

I lay mine hand for witness of my plea,
I am wholly ignorant of it; and solemnly
Declare that never yet conspiracy
Devised against the queen my sister's life
Took instigation or assent from me.

KENT

You swear but on a popish Testament:
Such oaths are all as worthless as the book.

MARY STUART

I swear upon the book wherein I trust:
Would you give rather credit to mine oath
Sworn on your scriptures that I trust not in?

KENT

Madam, I fain would have you heartily
Renounce your superstition: toward which
end

With us the godly dean of Peterborough,
Good Richard Fletcher, well approved for
faith
Of God and of the queen, is hither come
To proffer you his prayerful ministry.

MARY STUART

If you, my lords, or he will pray for me,
I shall be thankful for your prayers; but may
not

With theirs that hold another faith mix mine
I pray you therefore that mine almoner may
Have leave to attend on me, that from
hands

I, having made confession, may receive
The sacrament.

KENT

We may not grant you this.

MARY STUART

I shall not see my chaplain ere I die?
But two months gone this grace was granted
me

By word expressly from your queen, to have
Again his ministrations: and at last
In the utter hour and bitter strait of death
Is this denied me?

KENT

Madam, for your soul
More meet it were to cast these mummeries
out,
And bear Christ only in your heart, than
serve
With ceremonies of ritual hand and tongue
His mere idolatrous likeness.

MARY STUART

This were strange,
That I should bear him visible in my hand
Or keep with lips and knees his titular rites
And cast in heart no thought upon him. Nay,
Put me, I pray, to no more argument:
But if this least thing be not granted, yet
Grant me to know the season of my death.

SHREWSBURY

At eight by dawn to-morrow you must die.

MARY STUART

So shall I hardly see the sun again.
By dawn to-morrow? meanest men con-
demned
Give not their lives' breath up so suddenly:
Howbeit, I had rather yield you thanks, who
make
Such brief end of the bitterness of death
For me who have borne such bitter length of
life,
Than plead with protestation of appeal

For half a piteous hour's remission: nor
Henceforward shall I be denied of man
Aught, who may never now crave aught again
But whence is no denial. Yet shall this
Not easily be believed of men, nor find
In foreign ears acceptance, that a queen
Should be thrust out of life thus. Good my
friend,

Bid my physician Gorion come to me:
I have to speak with him—sirs, with your
leave—

Of certain monies due to me in France.

What, shall I twice desire your leave, my
lords.

To live these poor last hours of mine alive
At peace among my friends? I have much to
do,

And little time wherein to do it is left.

SHREWSBURY [To KENT apart.

I pray she may not mean worse than I would
Against herself ere morning.

KENT

Let not then

This French knave's drugs come near her,
nor himself:
We will take order for it.

SHREWSBURY

Nay, this were but

To exasperate more her thwarted heart, and
make

Despair more desperate than itself. Pray
God

She be not minded to compel us put
Force at the last upon her of men's hands
To hale her violently to death, and make
Judgment look foul and fierce as murder's
face.

With stain of strife and passion.

[*Exeunt all but MARY STUART and MARY
BEATON.*

MARY STUART

So, my friend,

The last of all our Maries are you left
To-morrow. Strange has been my life, and
now

Strange looks my death upon me: yet, albeit
Nor the hour nor manner of it be mine to
choose,

Ours is it yet, and all men's in the world,
To make death welcome in what wise we will.
Bid you my chaplain, though he see me not,
Watch through the night and pray for me:
perchance,

When ere the sundawn they shall bring me
forth,

I may behold him, and upon my knees
Receive his blessing. Let our supper be
Served earlier in than wont was: whereunto
I bid my true poor servants here, to take
Farewell and drink at parting to them all
The cup of my last kindness, in good hope
They shall stand alway constant in their faith
And dwell in peace together: thereupon
What little store is left me will I share

Among them, and between my girls divide
My wardrobe and my jewels severally,
Reserving but the black robe and the red
That shall attire me for my death: and last
With mine own hand shall be my will writ out
And all memorials more set down therein
That I would leave for legacies of love
To my next kinsmen and my household folk.

And to the king my brother yet of France
Must I write briefly, but a word to say
I am innocent of the charge whereon I die
Now for my right's sake claimed upon this
crown,

And our true faith's sake, but am barred from
sight

Even of mine almoner here, though hard at
hand:

And I would bid him take upon his charge
The keeping of my servants, as I think
He shall not for compassionate shame refuse,
Albeit his life be softer than his heart;
And in religion for a queen's soul pray
That once was styled Most Christian, and is
now

In the true faith about to die, deprived
Of all her past possessions. But this most
And first behoves it, that the king of Spain
By Gorion's word of mouth receive my heart,
Who soon shall stand before him. Bid the
leech

Come hither, and alone, to speak with me.

[*Exit MARY BEATON.*

She is dumb as death: yet never in her life
Hath she been quick of tongue. For all the
rest,

Poor souls, how well they love me, all as well
I think I know: and one of them or twain
At least may surely see me to my death

Ere twice the hours have changed again.
 Perchance
 Love that can weep not would the gladlier
 die
 For those it cannot weep on. Time wears
 thin:
 They should not now play laggard: nay, he
 comes,
 The last that ever speaks alone with me
 Before my soul shall speak alone with God.

Enter GORION

I have sent once more for you to no such end
 As sick men for physicians: no strong drug
 May put the death next morning twelve hours
 back
 Whose twilight overshadows me, that am
 Nor sick nor medicinable. Let me know
 If I may lay the last of all my trust
 On you that ever shall be laid on man
 To prove him kind and loyal.

GORION

So may God
 Deal with me, madam, as I prove to you
 Faithful, though none but I were in the world
 That you might trust beside.

MARY STUART

With equal heart
 Do I believe and thank you. I would send
 To Paris for the ambassador from Spain
 This letter with two diamonds, which your
 craft
 For me must cover from men's thievish eyes
 Where they may be not looked for.

GORION

Easily
 Within some molten drug may these be hid,
 And faithfully by me conveyed to him.

MARY STUART

The lesser of them shall he keep in sign
 Of my good friendship toward himself: but
 this
 In token to King Philip shall he give
 That for the truth I die, and dying commend
 To him my friends and servants, Gilbert
 Curle,
 His sister, and Jane Kennedy, who shall
 To-night watch by me; and my ladies all

That have endured my prison:
 Forget from his good favour of
 That I remember to him: Ch
 And either banished Paget; on
 Was better toward my service t
 Morgan: and of mine exiles f
 The prelates first of Glasgow a
 And Liggons and Throgmorto
 lost

For me their leave to live on E
 And Westmoreland, that lives no
 lorn

Than died that earl who rose for
 These I beseech him favour for
 Still: and forget not, if he come
 To rule as king in England, one
 That were mine enemies here: th
 first,

And Leicester, Walsingham, and
 don,

At Tutbury once my foe, fifteen y
 And Wade that spied upon me
 since,

And Paulet here my gaoler: set t
 For him to wreak wrath's utmost
 In my revenge remembered. Thou
 Dead, let him not forsake his hope
 Upon this people: with my last bre
 I make this last prayer to him, tha
 less

He will maintain the invasion yet de
 Of us before on England: let him t
 It is God's quarrel, and on earth a
 Well worthy of his greatness: whic
 won,

Let him forget no man of these nor
 And now will I lie down, that foun
 sleep

May give me strength before I sleep
 And need take never thought for
 more.

SCENE II.—*The Presence Chamber*

SHREWSBURY, KENT, PAULET, DRURY,
 VILLE, and Attendants

KENT

The stroke is past of eight.

SHREWSBURY

Not far, my lord.

KENT

What stays the provost and the sheriff yet
That went ere this to bring the prisoner forth?
What, are her doors locked inwards? then
perchance

Our last night's auguries of some close design
By death contrived of her self-slaughterous
hand

To baffle death by justice hit but right
The heart of her bad purpose.

SHREWSBURY

Fear it not:

See where she comes, a queenlier thing to see
Than whom such thoughts take hold on.

*Enter MARY STUART, led by two gentlemen and
preceded by the Sheriff; MARY BEATON,
BARBARA MOWBRAY, and other ladies be-
hind, who remain in the doorway*

MELVILLE (*kneeling to MARY*)

Woe am I,

Madam, that I must bear to Scotland back
Such tidings watered with such tears as these.

MARY STUART

Weep not, good Melville: rather should your
heart

Rejoice that here an end is come at last
Of Mary Stuart's long sorrows; for be sure
That all this world is only vanity.

And this record I pray you make of me,
That a true woman to my faith I die,
And true to Scotland and to France: but
God

Forgive them that have long desired mine end
And with false tongues have thirsted for my
blood

As the hart thirsteth for the water-brooks.
O God, who art truth, and the author of all
truth,

Thou knowest the extreme recesses of my
heart,

And how that I was willing all my days
That England should with Scotland be fast
friends.

Commend me to my son: tell him that I
Have nothing done to prejudice his rights
As king: and now, good Melville, fare thee
well.

My lord of Kent, whence comes it that your
charge

Hath bidden back my women there at door
Who fain to the end would bear me company?

KENT

Madam, this were not seemly nor discreet,
That these should so have leave to vex men's
ears

With cries and loose lamentings: haply too
They might in superstition seek to dip
Their handkerchiefs for relics in your blood.

MARY STUART

That will I pledge my word they shall not.
Nay,

The queen would surely not deny me this,
The poor last thing that I shall ask on earth.
Even a far meaner person dying I think
She would not have so handled. Sir, you
know

I am her cousin, of her grandsire's blood,
A queen of France by marriage, and by birth
Anointed queen of Scotland. My poor girls
I sire no more than but to see me die.

SHREWSBURY

Madam, you have leave to elect of this your
train

Two ladies with four men to go with you.

MARY STUART

I choose from forth my Scottish following
here

Jane Kennedy, with Elspeth Curle: of men,
Bourgoin and Gorion shall attend on me,
Gervais and Didier. Come then, let us go.

[*Exeunt: manent MARY BEATON and BAR-
BARA MOWBRAY.*]

BARBARA

I wist I was not worthy, though my child
It is that her own hands made Christian: but
I deemed she should have bid you go with her.
Alas, and would not all we die with her?

MARY BEATON

Why, from the gallery here at hand your eyes
May go with her along the hall beneath
Even to the scaffold: and I fain would hear

What fain I would not look on. Pray you,
then,

If you may bear to see it as those below,
Do me that sad good service of your eyes
For mine to look upon it, and declare
All that till all be done I will not see;
I pray you of your pity.

BARBARA

Though mine heart
Break, it shall not for fear forsake the sight
That may be faithful yet in following her,
Nor yet for grief refuse your prayer, being
fain

To give your love such bitter comfort, who
So long have never left her.

MARY BEATON

Till she die—
I have ever known I shall not till she die.
See you yet aught? if I hear spoken words,
My heart can better bear these pulses, else
Unbearable, that rend it.

BARBARA

Yea, I see
Stand in mid hall the scaffold, black as death.
And black the block upon it: all around,
Against the throng a guard of halberdiers;
And the axe against the scaffold-rail reclined,
And two men masked on either hand beyond:
And hard behind the block a cushion set,
Black, as the chair behind it.

MARY BEATON

When I saw
Fallen on a scaffold once a young man's head,
Such things as these I saw not. Nay, but on:
I knew not that I spake: and toward your
ears
Indeed I spake not.

BARBARA

All those faces change;
She comes more royally than ever yet
Fell foot of man triumphant on this earth,
Imperial more than empire made her, born
Entroned as queen sat never. Not a line
Stirs of her sovereign feature: like a bride
Brought home she mounts the scaffold; and
her eyes

Sweep regal round the cirque beneath
rest,
Subsiding with a smile. She sits, and
The doomsmen earls, beside her; at hand
The sheriff, and the clerk at hand on hand
To read the warrant.

MARY BEATON

None stands there but I
What things therein are writ against her
Knows what therein is writ not. God f
All.

BARBARA

Not a face there breathes of all the t
But is more moved than hers to hear this
Whose look alone is changed not.

MARY BEATON

Once I
A face that changed not in as dire an h
More than the queen's face changes.
he not
Ended?

BARBARA

You cannot hear them speak be
Come near and hearken; lid not me r
All.

MARY BEATON

I beseech you—for I may not come

BARBARA

Now speaks Lord Shrewsbury but a wor
twain,
And brieflier yet she answers, and stand
As though to kneel, and pray.

MARY BEATON

I too have praye
God hear at last her prayers not less t
mine,
Which failed not, sure, of hearing.

BARBARA

Now draws r
That heretic priest, and bows himself, a
thrice
Strives, as a man that sleeps in pain, to spe
Stammering: she waves him by, as one wh
prayers

She knows may nought avail her: now she kneels,
And the earls rebuke her, and she answers not,
Kneeling. O Christ, whose likeness there engraved
She strikes against her bosom, hear her!
Now
That priest lifts up his voice against her prayer,
Praying: and a voice all round goes up with his:
But hers is lift up higher than climbs their cry,
In the great psalms of penitence: and now
She prays aloud in English; for the Pope
Our father, and his church; and for her son,
And for the queen her murderess; and that God
May turn from England yet his wrath away;
And so forgive her enemies; and implores
High intercession of the saints with Christ,
Whom crucified she kisses on his cross,
And crossing now her breast—Ah, heard you not?
*Even as thine arms were spread upon the cross,
So make thy grace, O Jesus, wide for me,
Receive me to thy mercy so, and so
Forgive my sins.*

MARY BEATON

So be it, if so God please.
Is she not risen up yet?

BARBARA

Yea, but mine eyes
Darken: because those deadly twain close masked
Draw nigh as men that crave forgiveness,
which
Gently she grants: *for now, she said, I hope
You shall end all my troubles.* Now me-
seems
They would put hand upon her as to help,
And disarray her raiment: but she smiles—
Heard you not that? can you nor hear nor
speak,
Poor heart, for pain? *Truly, she said, my
lords,
I never had such chamber-grooms before
As these to wait on me.*

MARY BEATON

An end, an end.

BARBARA

Now comes those twain upon the scaffold up
Whom she preferred before us: and she lays
Her crucifix down, which now the headsmen
takes
Into his cursed hand, but being rebuked
Puts back for shame that sacred spoil of hers.
And now they lift her veil up from her head
Softly, and softly draw the black robe off,
And all in red as of a funeral flame
She stands up statelier yet before them, tall
And clothed as if with sunset: and she takes
From Elspeth's hand the crimson sleeves, and
draws
Their covering on her arms: and now those
twain
Burst out aloud in weeping: and she speaks—
Weep not; I promised for you. Now she
kneels;
And Jane binds round a kerchief on her eyes:
And smiling last her heavenliest smile on
earth,
She waves a blind hand toward them, with
Farewell,
Farewell, to meet again: and they come down
And leave her praying aloud, *In thee, O Lord,
I put my trust:* and now, that psalm being
through,
She lays between the block and her soft neck
Her long white peerless hands up tenderly,
Which now the headsmen draws again away,
But softly too: now stir her lips again—
*Into thine hands, O Lord, into thine hands,
Lord, I commend my spirit:* and now—but
now,
Look you, not I, the last upon her.

MARY BEATON

Hal
He strikes awry: she stirs not. Nay, but now
He strikes aright, and ends it.

BARBARA

Hark, a cry.

VOICE BELOW

So perish all found enemies of the queen!

ANOTHER VOICE

Amen.

MARY BEATON

I heard that very cry go up
Far off long since to God, who answers here.

APPENDIX.

I

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

MARY Queen of Scots, daughter of King James V. and his wife Mary of Lorraine, was born in December 1542, a few days before the death of her father, heart-broken by the disgrace of his arms at Solway Moss, where the disaffected nobles had declined to encounter an enemy of inferior force in the cause of a king whose systematic policy had been directed against the privileges of their order, and whose representative on the occasion was an unpopular favourite appointed general in defiance of their ill-will. On September 9 following the ceremony of coronation was duly performed upon the infant. A scheme for her betrothal to Edward Prince of Wales was defeated by the grasping greed of his father, whose obvious ambition to annex the crown of Scotland at once to that of England aroused instantly the general suspicion and indignation of Scottish patriotism. In 1548 the queen of six years old was betrothed to the dauphin Francis, and set sail for France, where she arrived on August 15. The society in which the child was thenceforward reared is known to readers of Brantôme as well as that of imperial Rome at its worst is known to readers of Suetonius or Petronius,—as well as that of papal Rome at its worst is known to readers of the diary kept by the domestic chaplain of Pope Alexander VI. Only in their pages can a parallel be found to the gay and easy record which reveals without sign of shame or suspicion of offence the daily life of a court compared to which the court of King Charles II. is as the court of Queen Victoria to the society described by Grammont. Debauchery of all kinds and murder in all forms were the daily subjects of excitement or of jest to the brilliant circle which revolved around Queen Catherine de' Medici. After ten years' training under the tutelage of the woman whose main instrument of policy was the corruption of her own

children, the queen of Scots, aged fifteen years and five months, was married to the eldest and feeblest of the brood on 24, 1558. On November 17, Elizabeth became queen of England, and the princes of Lorraine—Francis the great duke of Guise and his brother the cardinal—induced their niece and her husband to assume, in addition to the arms of France and Scotland, the arms of a country over which they asserted the right of Mary Stuart to reign as legitimate heiress of Mary Tudor. Civil strife broke out in Scotland between John Knox and the queen dowager—between the self-styled 'congregation of the Lord' and the adherents of the regent, whose French troops repelled the combined forces of the Scotch and their English allies from the beleaguered walls of Leith, little more than a month before the death of their mistress in the castle of Edinburgh, on June 10, 1560. On August 25 Protestantism was proclaimed and Catholicism suppressed in Scotland by a convention of states assembled without the assent of the absent queen. On December 5, Francis the Second died; in August 1561 his widow left France for Scotland, having been refused a safe conduct by Elizabeth on the ground of her own previous refusal to ratify the treaty made with England by her commissioners in the same month of the preceding year. She arrived nevertheless in safety at Leith, escorted by three of her uncles of the house of Lorraine, and bringing in her train her future biographer, Brantôme, and Chastelard, the first of all her voluntary victims. On August 21 she first met the only man able to withstand her, and their first passage of arms left, as he has recorded, upon the mind of John Knox an ineffaceable impression of her 'proud mind, crafty wit, and indurate heart against God and his truth.' And yet her acts of concession and conciliation were such as no fanatic on

the opposite side could have approved. She assented, not only to the undisturbed maintenance of the new creed, but even to a scheme for the endowment of the Protestant ministry out of the confiscated lands of the Church. Her half-brother, Lord James Stuart, shared the duties of her chief counsellor with William Maitland of Lethington, the keenest and most liberal thinker in the country. By the influence of Lord James, in spite of the earnest opposition of Knox, permission was obtained for her to hear mass celebrated in her private chapel—a licence to which, said the Reformer, he would have preferred the invasion of ten thousand Frenchmen. Through all the first troubles of her reign the young queen steered her skilful and dauntless way with the tact of a woman and the courage of a man. An insurrection in the north, headed by the earl of Huntly under pretext of rescuing from justice the life which his son had forfeited by his share in a homicidal brawl, was crushed at a blow by the Lord James, against whose life, as well as against his sister's liberty, the conspiracy of the Gordons had been aimed, and on whom, after the father had fallen in fight and the son had expiated his double offence on the scaffold, the leading rebel's earldom of Murray was conferred by the gratitude of the queen. Exactly four months after the battle of Corrichie, and the subsequent execution of a criminal whom she is said to have 'loved entirely,' had put an end to the first insurrection raised against her, Pierre de Boscosel de Chastelard, who had returned to France with the other companions of her arrival and in November 1562 had revisited Scotland, expiated with his head the offence or the misfortune of a second detection at night in her bed-chamber. In the same month, twenty-five years afterwards, the execution of his mistress, according to the verdict of her contemporaries in France, avenged the blood of a lover who had died without uttering a word to realize the apprehension which (according to Knox) had before his trial impelled her to desire her brother 'that, as he loved her, he would slay Chastelard, and let him never speak word.' And in the same month, two years from the date of Chastelard's execution, her first step was unconsciously taken on the road to Fotheringay, when she gave her heart at first sight

to her kinsman Henry Lord Darnley, son of Matthew Stuart, earl of Lennox, who had suffered an exile of twenty years in expiation of his intrigues with England, and had married the niece of King Henry the Eighth, daughter of his sister Margaret, the widow of James the Fourth, by her second husband, the earl of Angus. Queen Elizabeth, with the almost incredible want of tact or instinctive delicacy which distinguished and disfigured her vigorous intelligence, had recently proposed as a suitor to the Queen of Scots her own high-born and low-souled favourite, Lord Robert Dudley, the widower if not the murderer of Amy Robsart; and she now protested against the project of marriage between Mary and Darnley. Mary, who had already married her kinsman in secret at Stirling Castle with Catholic rites celebrated in the apartment of David Rizzio, her secretary for correspondence with France, assured the English ambassador, in reply to the protest of his mistress, that the marriage would not take place for three months, when a dispensation from the Pope would allow the cousins to be publicly united without offence to the Church. On July 29, 1565, they were accordingly remarried at Holyrood. The hapless and worthless bridegroom had already incurred the hatred of two powerful enemies, the earls of Morton and Glencairn; but the former of these took part with the queen against the forces raised by Murray, Glencairn, and others, under the nominal leadership of Hamilton, duke of Chatellerault, on the double plea of danger to the new religion of the country, and of the illegal proceeding by which Darnley had been proclaimed king of Scots without the needful constitutional assent of the estates of the realm. Murray was cited to attend the 'raid' or array levied by the king and queen, and was duly denounced by public blast of trumpet for his non-appearance. He entered Edinburgh with his forces, but failed to hold the town against the guns of the castle, and fell back upon Dumfries before the advance of the royal army, which was now joined by James Hepburn, earl of Bothwell, on his return from a three years' outlawed exile in France. He had been accused in 1562 of a plot to seize the queen and put her into the keeping of the earl of Arran, whose pretensions to her hand ended only when his insanity could no

longer be concealed. Another new adherent was the son of the late earl of Huntly, to whom the forfeited honours of his house were restored a few months before the marriage of his sister to Bothwell. The queen now appealed to France for aid; but Castelnau, the French ambassador, replied to her passionate pleading by sober and earnest advice to make peace with the malcontents. This counsel was rejected, and in October 1565 the queen marched an army of 18,000 men against them from Edinburgh; their forces dispersed in face of superior numbers, and Murray, on seeking shelter in England, was received with contumely by Elizabeth, whose half-hearted help had failed to support his enterprise, and whose intercession for his return found at first no favour with the queen of Scots. But the conduct of the besotted boy on whom at their marriage she had bestowed the title of king began at once to justify the enterprise and to play into the hands of all his enemies alike. His father set him on to demand the crown matrimonial, which would at least have assured to him the rank and station of independent royalty for life. Rizzio, hitherto his friend and advocate, induced the queen to reply by a reasonable refusal to this hazardous and audacious request. Darnley at once threw himself into the arms of the party opposed to the policy of the queen and her secretary—a policy which at that moment was doubly and trebly calculated to exasperate the fears of the religious and the pride of the patriotic. Mary was invited if not induced by the king of Spain to join his league for the suppression of Protestantism; while the actual or prospective endowment of Rizzio with Morton's office of chancellor, and the projected attainder of Murray and his allies, combined to inflame at once the anger and the apprehension of the Protestant nobles. According to one account, Darnley privately assured his uncle George Douglas of his wife's infidelity; he had himself, if he might be believed, discovered the secretary in the queen's apartment at midnight, under circumstances yet more unequivocally compromising than those which had brought Chastelard to the scaffold. Another version of the pitiful history represents Douglas as infusing suspicion of Rizzio into the empty mind of his nephew, and thus winning his consent to a deed already de-

signed by others. A bond was drawn which Darnley pledged himself to support, the confederates who undertook to punish 'certain privy persons' offensive to the state—especially a stranger Italian called David Rizzio, who was banished by Darnley and the other banished lords, then bidding their time in Newcastle, which engaged him to procure their pardon and restoration, while pledging them to ensure to him the enjoyment of the throne he coveted, with the consequent security of an undisputed succession to the crown, despite the counter claims of the house of Hamilton, in case his wife should die without issue—a result which, intentionally or not, he and his fellow conspirators did all that brutality could have suggested to accelerate and secure. On March 9, the palace of Holyrood was invested by a troop under the command of Morton, while Rizzio was dragged by force out of the queen's presence and slain without trial in the heat of the moment. The parliament was discharged by proclamation issued in the name of Darnley as king; and in the evening of the next day the banished lords, whom it was to have condemned to outlawry, returned to Edinburgh. On the day following they were graciously received by the queen, who undertook to sign a bond for their security, but delayed the subscription till the next morning under the plea of sickness. During the night she escaped with Darnley, whom she had already seduced from the party of his accomplices, and arrived at Dunbar on the third morning after the slaughter of her favourite. From thence they returned to Edinburgh on March 28, guarded by 2,000 horsemen under the command of Bothwell, who had escaped from Holyrood on the night of the murder, to raise a force on the queen's behalf with his usual soldierly promptitude. The slayers of Rizzio fled to England, and were outlawed; Darnley was permitted to protest his innocence and denounce his accomplices, after which he became the scorn of all parties alike, and few men dared or cared to be seen in his company. On June 19, a son was born to his wife, and in the face of his previous protestations he was induced to acknowledge himself the father. But, as Murray and his partisans returned to favour and influence no longer incompatible with that of Bothwell and Huntly, he grew desperate enough with terror to dream of escape to

France. This design was at once frustrated by the queen's resolution. She summoned him to declare his reasons for it in the presence of the French ambassador and an assembly of the nobles; she besought him for God's sake to speak out, and not spare her; and at last he left her presence with an avowal that he had nothing to allege. The favour shown to Bothwell had not yet given occasion for scandal, though his character as an adventurous libertine was as notable as his reputation for military hardihood; but as the summer advanced his insolence increased with his influence at court and the general aversion of his rivals. He was richly endowed by Mary from the greater and lesser spoils of the Church; and the three wardenships of the border, united for the first time in his person, gave the lord high admiral of Scotland a position of unequalled power. In the gallant discharge of his duties he was dangerously wounded by a leading outlaw, whom he slew in single combat; and while yet confined to Hermitage Castle he received a visit of two hours from the queen, who rode thither from Jedburgh and back through twenty miles of the wild borderland, where her person was in perpetual danger from the free-booters whom her father's policy had striven and had failed to extirpate. The result of this daring ride was a ten days' fever, after which she removed by short stages to Craigmillar, where a proposal for her divorce from Darnley was laid before her by Bothwell, Murray, Huntly, Argyle, and Lethington, who was chosen spokesman for the rest. She assented on condition that the divorce could be lawfully effected without impeachment of her son's legitimacy; whereupon Lethington undertook in the name of all present that she should be rid of her husband without any prejudice to the child—at whose baptism a few days afterwards Bothwell took the place of the putative father, though Darnley was actually residing under the same roof, and it was not till after the ceremony that he was suddenly struck down by a sickness so violent as to excite suspicions of poison. He was removed to Glasgow, and left for the time in charge of his father; but on the news of his progress towards recovery a bond was drawn up for the execution of the sentence of death which had secretly been pronounced against the twice-turned traitor who had earned his

doom at all hands alike. On the 22nd of the next month (January 1567) the queen visited her husband at Glasgow and proposed to remove him to Craigmillar Castle, where he would have the benefit of medicinal baths; but instead of this resort he was conveyed on the last day of the month to the lonely and squalid shelter of the residence which was soon to be made memorable by his murder. Between the ruins of two sacred buildings, with the town-wall to the south and a suburban hamlet known to ill fame as the Thieves' Row to the north of it, a lodging was prepared for the titular king of Scotland, fitted up with tapestries taken from the Gordons after the battle of Corrichie. On the evening of Sunday, February 9, Mary took her last leave of the miserable boy who had so often and so mortally outraged her as consort and as queen. That night the whole city was shaken out of sleep by an explosion of gunpowder which shattered to fragments the building in which he should have slept and perished; and next morning the bodies of Darnley and a page were found strangled in a garden adjoining it, whither they had apparently escaped over a wall, to be despatched by the hands of Bothwell's attendant confederates.

Upon the view which may be taken of Mary's conduct during the next three months depends the whole debatable question of her character. According to the professed champions of that character, this conduct was a tissue of such dastardly imbecility, such heartless irresolution, and such brainless inconsistency, as for ever to dispose of her time-honoured claim to the credit of intelligence and courage. It is certain that just three months and six days after the murder of her husband she became the wife of her husband's murderer. On February 11 she wrote to the bishop of Glasgow, her ambassador in France, a brief letter of simple eloquence announcing her providential escape from a design upon her own as well as her husband's life. A reward of two thousand pounds was offered by proclamation for discovery of the murderer. Bothwell and others, his satellites or the queen's, were instantly placarded by name as the criminals. Voices were heard by night in the streets of Edinburgh calling down judgment on the assassins. Four days after the discovery of the bodies, Darnley

was buried in the chapel of Holyrood with secrecy as remarkable as the solemnity with which Rizzio had been interred there less than a year before. On the Sunday following, Mary left Edinburgh for Seton Palace, twelve miles from the capital, where scandal asserted that she passed the time merrily in shooting-matches with Bothwell for her partner against Lords Seton and Huntly; other accounts represent Huntly and Bothwell as left at Holyrood in charge of the infant prince. Gracefully and respectfully, with statesman-like yet feminine dexterity, the demands of Darnley's father for justice on the murderers of his son were accepted and eluded by his daughter-in-law. Bothwell, with a troop of fifty men, rode through Edinburgh defiantly denouncing vengeance on his concealed accusers. As weeks elapsed without action on the part of the royal widow, while the cry of blood was up throughout the country, raising echoes from England and abroad, the murmur of accusation began to rise against her also. Murray, with his sister's ready permission, withdrew to France. Already the report was abroad that the queen was bent on marriage with Bothwell, whose last year's marriage with the sister of Huntly would be dissolved, and the assent of his wife's brother purchased by the restitution of his forfeited estates. According to the *Memoirs* of Sir James Melville, both Lord Herries and himself resolved to appeal to the queen in terms of bold and earnest remonstrance against so desperate and scandalous a design; Herries, having been met with assurances of its unreality and professions of astonishment at the suggestion, instantly fled from court; Melville, evading the danger of a merely personal protest without backers to support him, laid before Mary a letter from a loyal Scot long resident in England, which urged upon her consideration and her conscience the danger and disgrace of such a project yet more freely than Herries had ventured to do by word of mouth; but the sole result was that it needed all the queen's courage and resolution to rescue him from the violence of the man for whom, she was reported to have said, she cared not if she lost France, England, and her own country, and would go with him to the world's end in a white petticoat before she would leave him. On March 28 the privy council, in which Bothwell himself sat, ap-

pointed April 12 as the day of his trial; Lennox, instead of the crown, being named as the accuser, and cited by royal letters to appear at 'the humble request and petition of the said Earl Bothwell,' who on the day of the trial had 4,000 armed men behind him in the streets, while the castle was also at his command. Under these arrangements it was not thought wonderful that Lennox discreetly declined the danger of attendance even with 3,000 men ready to follow him, at the risk of desperate street fighting. He pleaded sickness, asked for more time, and demanded that the accused, instead of enjoying special favour, should share the treatment of other suspected criminals. But as no particle of evidence on his side was advanced, the protest of his representative was rejected, and Bothwell, acquitted in default of witnesses against him, was free to challenge any persistent accuser to the ancient ordeal of battle. His wealth and power were enlarged by gift of the parliament which met on the 14th and rose on the 19th of April—a date made notable by the subsequent supper at Ainslie's tavern, where Bothwell obtained the signatures of its leading members to a document affirming his innocence, and pledging the subscribers to maintain it against all challengers, to stand by him in all his quarrels, and finally to promote by all means in their power the marriage by which they recommended the queen to reward his services and benefit the country. On the second day following Mary went to visit her child at Stirling, where his guardian, the earl of Mar, refused to admit more than two women of her train. It was well known in Edinburgh that Bothwell had a body of men ready to intercept her on the way back, and carry her to Dunbar—not, as was naturally inferred, without good assurance of her consent. On April 24, as she approached Edinburgh, Bothwell accordingly met her at the head of 800 spearmen, assured her (as she afterwards averred) that she was in the utmost peril, and escorted her, together with Huntly, Lethington, and Melville, who were then in attendance, to Dunbar Castle. On May 3, Lady Jane Gordon, who had become countess of Bothwell on February 22 of the year preceding, obtained, on the ground of her husband's infidelities, a separation which, however, would not under the old laws of Catholic Scotland have left him

free to marry again; on the 7th, accordingly, the necessary divorce was pronounced, after two days' session, by a clerical tribunal which ten days before had received from the queen a special commission to give judgment on a plea of somewhat apocryphal consanguinity alleged by Bothwell as the ground of an action for divorce against his wife. The fact was studiously evaded or concealed that a dispensation had been granted by the archbishop of St. Andrews for this irregularity, which could only have arisen through some illicit connection of the husband with a relative of the wife between whom and himself no affinity by blood or marriage could be proved. On the day when the first or Protestant divorce was pronounced, Mary and Bothwell returned to Edinburgh with every prepared appearance of a peaceful triumph. Lest her captivity should have been held to invalidate the late legal proceedings in her name, proclamation was made of forgiveness accorded by the queen to her captor in consideration of his past and future services, and her intention was announced to reward them by further promotion; and on the same day (May 12) he was duly created duke of Orkney and Shetland. The duke, as a conscientious Protestant, refused to marry his mistress according to the rites of her church; and she, the chosen champion of its cause, agreed to be married to him, not merely by a Protestant, but by one who before his conversion had been a Catholic bishop, and should therefore have been more hateful and contemptible in her eyes than any ordinary heretic, had not religion as well as policy, faith as well as reason, been absorbed or superseded by some more mastering passion or emotion. This passion or emotion, according to those who deny her attachment to Bothwell, was simply terror—the blind and irrational prostration of an abject spirit before the cruel force of circumstances and the crafty wickedness of men. Hitherto, according to all evidence, she had shown herself on all occasions, as on all subsequent occasions she indisputably showed herself, the most fearless, the most keen-sighted, the most ready-witted, the most high-gifted and high-spirited of women; gallant and generous, skilful and practical, never to be cowed by fortune, never to be cajoled by craft; neither more unselfish in her ends nor more

unscrupulous in her practice than might have been expected from her training and her creed. But at the crowning moment of trial there are those who assert their belief that the woman who on her way to the field of Corrichie had uttered her wish to be a man, that she might know all the hardship and all the enjoyment of a soldier's life, riding forth 'in jack and knapsack'—the woman who long afterwards was to hold her own for two days together without help of counsel against all the array of English law and English statesmanship, armed with irrefragable evidence and supported by the resentment of a nation—showed herself equally devoid of moral and of physical resolution; too senseless to realize the significance and too heartless to face the danger of a situation from which the simplest exercise of reason, principle, or courage must have rescued the most unsuspecting and inexperienced of honest women who was not helplessly deficient in self-reliance and self-respect. The famous correspondence produced next year in evidence against her at the conference of York may have been, as her partisans affirm, so craftily garbled and falsified by interpolation, suppression, perversion, or absolute forgery, as to be all but historically worthless. Its acceptance or its rejection does not in any degree whatever affect, for better or for worse, the rational estimate of her character. The problem presented by the simple existence of the facts just summed up remains in either case absolutely the same.

That the coarse and imperious nature of the hardy and able ruffian who had now become openly her master should no less openly have shown itself even in the first moments of their inauspicious union is what any bystander of common insight must inevitably have foreseen. Tears, dejection, and passionate expressions of a despair 'wishing only for death,' bore fitful and variable witness to her first sense of a heavier yoke than yet had galled her spirit and her pride. At other times her affectionate gaiety would give evidence as trustworthy of a fearless and impenitent satisfaction. They rode out in state together, and if he kept cap in hand as a subject she would snatch it from him and clap it on his head again; while in graver things she took all due or possible care to gratify his ambition, by the insertion of a

clause in their contract of marriage which made their joint signature necessary to all documents of state issued under the sign-manual. She despatched to France a special envoy, the bishop of Dumblane, with instructions setting forth at length the unparalleled and hitherto ill-requited services and merits of Bothwell, and the necessity of compliance at once with his passion and with the unanimous counsel of the nation,—a people who would endure the rule of no foreign consort, and whom none of their own countrymen were so competent to control, alike by wisdom and valour, as the incomparable subject of her choice. These personal merits and this political necessity were the only pleas advanced in a letter to her ambassador in England. But that neither plea would avail her for a moment in Scotland she had ominous evidence on the thirteenth day after her marriage, when no response was made to the usual form of proclamation for a raid or levy of forces under pretext of a campaign against the reivers of the border. On the 6th or 7th of June Mary and Bothwell took refuge in Borthwick Castle, twelve miles from the capital, where the fortress was in the keeping of an adherent whom the diplomacy of Sir James Melville had succeeded in detaching from his allegiance to Bothwell. The fugitives were pursued and beleaguered by the earl of Morton and Lord Hume, who declared their purpose to rescue the queen from the thraldom of her husband. He escaped, leaving her free to follow him or to join the party of her professed deliverers. But whatever cause she might have found since marriage to complain of his rigorous custody and domineering brutality was insufficient to break the ties by which he held her. Alone, in the disguise of a page, she slipped out of the castle at midnight, and rode off to meet him at a tower two miles distant, whence they fled together to Dunbar. The confederate lords on entering Edinburgh were welcomed by the citizens, and after three hours' persuasion Lethington, who had now joined them, prevailed on the captain of the castle to deliver it also into their hands. Proclamations were issued in which the crime of Bothwell was denounced, and the disgrace of the country, the thraldom of the queen, and the mortal peril of her infant son were set forth as reasons for summoning all the lieges

of the chief cities of Scotland to rise in arms on three hours' notice and join the forces assembled against the one common enemy. News of his approach reached them on the night of June 14, and they marched before dawn with 2,200 men to meet him near Musselburgh. Mary meanwhile had passed from Dunbar to Haddington, and thence to Seton, where 1,600 men rallied to her side. On June 15, one month from their marriage day, the queen and Bothwell, at the head of a force of fairly equal numbers but visibly inferior discipline, met the army of the confederates at Carberry Hill, some six miles from Edinburgh. Du Croc, the French ambassador, obtained permission through the influence of Maitland to convey to the queen the terms proposed by their leaders,—that she and Bothwell should part, or that he should meet in single combat a champion chosen from among their number. Bothwell offered to meet any man of sufficient quality; Mary would not assent. As the afternoon wore on their force began to melt away by desertion and to break up for lack of discipline. Again the trial by single combat was proposed, and thrice the proposal fell through, owing to objections on this side or on that. At last it was agreed that the queen should yield herself a prisoner, and Bothwell be allowed to retire in safety to Dunbar with the few followers who remained to him. Mary took leave of her first and last master with passionate anguish and many parting kisses; but in face of his enemies, and in hearing of the cries which burst from the ranks, demanding her death by fire as a murderess and harlot, the whole heroic and passionate spirit of the woman represented by her admirers as a spiritless imbecile flamed out in responsive threats to have all the men hanged and crucified, in whose power she now stood helpless and alone. She grasped the hand of Lord Lindsay as he rode beside her, and swore 'by this hand' she would 'have his head for this.' In Edinburgh she was received by a yelling mob, which flaunted before her at each turn a banner representing the corpse of Darnley with her child beside it invoking on his knees the retribution of Divine justice. From the violence of a multitude in which women of the worst class were more furious than the men she was sheltered in the house of the provost, where she repeatedly showed

herself at the window, appealing aloud with dishevelled hair and dress to the mercy which no man could look upon her and refuse. At nine in the evening she was removed to Holyrood, and thence to the port of Leith, where she embarked under guard, with her attendants, for the island castle of Lochleven. On the 20th a silver casket containing letters and French verses, miscalled sonnets, in the handwriting of the queen, was taken from the person of a servant who had been sent by Bothwell to bring it from Edinburgh to Dunbar. Even in the existing versions of the letters, translated from the lost originals and retranslated from this translation of a text which was probably destroyed in 1603 by order of King James on his accession to the English throne,—even in these possibly disfigured versions, the fiery pathos of passion, the fierce and piteous fluctuations of spirit between love and hate, hope and rage and jealousy, have an eloquence apparently beyond the imitation or invention of art. Three days after this discovery Lord Lindsay, Lord Ruthven, and Sir Robert Melville were despatched to Lochleven, there to obtain the queen's signature of an act of abdication in favour of her son, and another appointing Murray regent during his minority. She submitted, and a commission of regency was established till the return from France of Murray, who, on August 15, arrived at Lochleven with Morton and Athole. According to his own account, the expostulations as to her past conduct which preceded his admonitions for the future were received with tears, confessions, and attempts at extenuation or excuse; but when they parted next day on good terms she had regained her usual spirits. Nor from that day forward had they reason to sink again, in spite of the close keeping in which she was held, with the daughters of the house for bed-fellows. Their mother and the regent's, her father's former mistress, was herself not impervious of her prisoner's lifelong power of seduction and subjugation. Her son George Douglas fell inevitably under the charm. A rumour transmitted to England went so far as to assert that she had proposed him to their common half-brother Murray as a fourth husband for herself; a later tradition represented her as the mother of a child by him. A third report, at least as improbable as either, asserted that a daughter

of Mary and Bothwell, born about this time, lived to be a nun in France. It is certain that the necessary removal of George Douglas from Lochleven enabled him to devise a method of escape for the prisoner on March 25, 1568, which was frustrated by detection of her white hands under the disguise of a laundress. But a younger member of the household, Willie Douglas, aged eighteen, whose devotion was afterwards remembered and his safety cared for by Mary at a time of utmost risk and perplexity to herself, succeeded on May 2 in assisting her to escape by a postern gate to the lake-side, and thence in a boat to the mainland, where George Douglas, Lord Seton, and others were awaiting her. Thence they rode to Hamilton Palace, at Niddry, and next day to Hamilton Palace, round which an army of 6,000 men was soon assembled and whither the new French ambassador to Scotland hastened to pay his duty. The queen's abdication was revoked, messengers were despatched to the English and French courts, and word was sent to Murray at Glasgow that he must resign the regency, and should be pardoned in common with all offenders against the queen. But on the day when Mary arrived at Hamilton Murray had summoned to Glasgow the feudatories of the crown, to take arms against the insurgent enemies of the infant king. Elizabeth sent conditional offers of help to her kinswoman, provided she would accept of English intervention and abstain from seeking foreign assistance; but the messenger came too late. Mary's followers had failed to retake Dunbar Castle from the regent, and made for Dumbarton instead, marching two miles south of Glasgow, by the village of Langside. Here Murray with 4,500 men, under leaders of high distinction, met the 6,000 of the queen's army, whose ablest man, Herries, was as much distrusted by Mary as by every one else, while the Hamiltons could only be trusted to think of their own interests, and were suspected of treasonable designs on all who stood between their house and the monarchy. On May 13, the battle or skirmish of Langside determined the result of the campaign in three quarters of an hour. Kirkcaldy of Grange, who commanded the regent's cavalry, seized and kept the place of advantage from the beginning, and at the first sign of wavering on the other side shattered

at a single charge the forces of the queen, with a loss of one man to three hundred. Mary fled sixty miles from the field of her last battle before she halted at Sanguhar, and for three days of flight, according to her own account, had to sleep on the hard ground, live on oatmeal and sour milk, and fare at night like the owls, in hunger, cold, and fear. On the third day from the rout of Langside she crossed the Solway, and landed at Workington in Cumberland, May 16, 1568. On the 20th Lord Scrope and Sir Francis Knollys were sent from court to carry messages and letters of comfort from Elizabeth to Mary at Carlisle. On June 11 Knollys wrote to Cecil at once the best description and the noblest panegyric extant of the queen of Scots—enlarging, with a brave man's sympathy, on her indifference to form and ceremony, her daring grace and openness of manner, her frank display of a great desire to be avenged of her enemies, her readiness to expose herself to all perils in hope of victory, her delight to hear of hardihood and courage, commending by name all her enemies of approved valour, sparing no cowardice in her friends, but above all things athirst for victory by any means at any price, so that for its sake pain and peril seemed pleasant to her, and wealth and all things, if compared with it, contemptible and vile. What was to be done with such a princess, whether she were to be nourished in one's bosom, above all whether it could be advisable or safe to try any diplomatic tricks upon such a lady, Knollys left for the minister to judge. It is remarkable that he should not have discovered in her the qualities so obvious to modern champions of her character—easiness, gullibility, incurable innocence and invincible ignorance of evil, incapacity to suspect or resent anything, readiness to believe and forgive all things. On July 15, after various delays interposed by her reluctance to leave the neighbourhood of the border, where on her arrival she had received the welcome and the homage of the leading Catholic houses of Northumberland and Cumberland, she was removed to Bolton Castle in North Yorkshire. During her residence here a conference was held at York between her own and Elizabeth's commissioners and those appointed to represent her son as king of Scots. These latter, of whom Murray himself was the chief, privately laid

before the English commissioners the contents of the famous casket. On October 24 the place of the conference was shifted from York to London, where the inquiry was to be held before Queen Elizabeth in council. Mary was already aware that the chief of the English commissioners, the duke of Norfolk, was secretly an aspirant to the peril of her hand; and on October 21 she gave the first sign of assent to the suggestion of a divorce from Bothwell. On October 26 the charge of complicity in the murder of Darnley was distinctly brought forward against her in spite of Norfolk's reluctance and Murray's previous hesitation. Elizabeth, by the mouth of her chief justice, formally rebuked the audacity of the subjects who durst bring such a charge against their sovereign, and challenged them to advance their proofs. They complied by the production of an indictment under five heads, supported by the necessary evidence of documents. The number of English commissioners was increased, and they were bound to preserve secrecy as to the matters revealed. Further evidence was supplied by Thomas Crawford, a retainer of the house of Lennox, tallying so exactly with the text of the Casket Letters as to have been cited in proof that the latter must needs be a forgery. Elizabeth, on the close of the evidence, invited Mary to reply to the proofs alleged before she could be admitted to her presence; but Mary simply desired her commissioners to withdraw from the conference. She declined with scorn the proposal made by Elizabeth through Knollys, that she should sign a second abdication in favour of her son. On January 10, 1569, the judgment given at the conference acquitted Murray and his adherents of rebellion, while affirming that nothing had been proved against Mary—a verdict accepted by Murray as equivalent to a practical recognition of his office as regent for the infant king. This position he was not long to hold; and the fierce exultation of Mary at the news of his murder gave to those who believed in her complicity with the murderer, on whom a pension was bestowed by her unblushing gratitude, fresh reason to fear, if her liberty of correspondence and intrigue were not restrained, the likelihood of a similar fate for Elizabeth. On January 26, 1569, she had been removed from Bolton Castle to Tutbury in Staffordshire, where proposals

were conveyed to her, at the instigation of Leicester, for a marriage with the duke of Norfolk, to which she gave a graciously conditional assent; but the discovery of these proposals consigned Norfolk to the Tower, and on the outbreak of an insurrection in the north Mary, by Lord Hunsdon's advice, was again removed to Coventry, when a body of her intending deliverers was within a day's ride of Tutbury. On January 23 following Murray was assassinated; and a second northern insurrection was crushed in a single sharp fight by Lord Hunsdon. In October Cecil had an interview with Mary at Chatsworth, when the conditions of her possible restoration to the throne in compliance with French demands were debated at length. The queen of Scots, with dauntless dignity, refused to yield the castles of Edinburgh and Dumbarton into English keeping, or to deliver up her fugitive English partisans then in Scotland; upon other points they came to terms, and the articles were signed October 16. On the same day Mary wrote to Elizabeth, requesting with graceful earnestness the favour of an interview which might reassure her against the suggestion that this treaty was a mere pretence. On November 28, she was removed to Sheffield Castle, where she remained for the next fourteen years in charge of the earl of Shrewsbury. The detection of a plot, in which Norfolk was implicated, for the invasion of England by Spain on behalf of Mary, who was then to take him as the fourth and most contemptible of her husbands, made necessary the reduction of her household and the stricter confinement of her person. On May 28, 1572, a demand from both houses of parliament for her execution as well as Norfolk's was generously rejected by Elizabeth; but after the punishment of the traitorous pretender to her hand, on whom she had lavished many eloquent letters of affectionate protestation, she fell into 'a passion of sickness' which convinced her honest keeper of her genuine grief for the ducal caiff. A treaty projected on the news of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, by which Mary should be sent back to Scotland for immediate execution, was broken off by the death of the earl of Mar, who had succeeded Lennox as regent; nor was it found possible to come to acceptable terms on a like understanding with his successor Morton, who in

1577 sent a proposal to Mary for her restoration, which she declined, in suspicion of a plot laid to entrap her by the policy of Sir Francis Walsingham, the most unscrupulously patriotic of her English enemies, who four years afterwards sent word to Scotland that the execution of Morton, so long the ally of England, would be answered by the execution of Mary. But on that occasion Elizabeth again refused her assent either to the trial of Mary or to her transference from Sheffield to the Tower. In 1581 Mary accepted the advice of Catherine de' Medici and Henry III. that she should allow her son's title to reign as king of Scotland conjointly with herself when released and restored to a share of the throne. This plan was but part of a scheme including the invasion of England by her kinsman the duke of Guise, who was to land in the north and raise a Scottish army to place the released prisoner of Sheffield beside her son on the throne of Elizabeth. After the overthrow of the Scottish accomplices in this notable project, Mary poured forth upon Elizabeth a torrent of pathetic and eloquent reproach for the many wrongs she had suffered at the hands of her hostess, and pledged her honour to the assurance that she now aspired to no kingdom but that of heaven. In the spring of 1583 she retained enough of the saintly resignation to ask for nothing but liberty, without a share in the government of Scotland; but Lord Burghley not unreasonably preferred, if feasible, to reconcile the alliance of her son with the detention of his mother. In 1584 the long-suffering earl of Shrewsbury was relieved of his fourteen years' charge through the involuntary good offices of his wife, whose daughter by her first husband had married a brother of Darnley; and their orphan child Arabella, born in England, of royal descent on the father's side, was now, in the hopeful view of her grandmother, a more plausible claimant than the king or queen of Scots to the inheritance of the English throne. In December 1583 Mary had laid before the French ambassador her first complaint of the slanders spread by Lady Shrewsbury and her sons, who were ultimately compelled to confess the falsehood of their imputations on the queen of Scots and her keeper. It was probably at the time when a desire for revenge on her calumniatrix made her think

the opportunity good and safe for discharge of such a two-edged dart at the countess and the queen, that Mary wrote, but abstained from despatching, the famous and terrible letter in which, with many gracious excuses and professions of regret and attachment, she transmits to Elizabeth a full and vivid report of the hideous gossip retailed by Bess of Hardwick regarding her character and person at a time when the reporter of these abominations was on friendly terms with her husband's royal charge. In the autumn of 1584 she was removed to Wingfield Manor under charge of Sir Ralph Sadler and John Somers, who accompanied her also on her next removal to Tutbury in January 1585. A letter received by her in that cold, dark, and unhealthy castle, of which fifteen years before she had made painful and malodorous experience, assured her that her son would acknowledge her only as queen-mother, and provoked at once the threat of a parent's curse and an application to Elizabeth for sympathy. In April 1585 Sir Amyas Paulet was appointed to the office of which Sadler, accused of careless indulgence, had requested to be relieved; and on Christmas Eve she was removed from the hateful shelter of Tutbury to the castle of Chartley in the same county. Her correspondence in cipher from thence with her English agents abroad, intercepted by Walsingham and deciphered by his secretary, gave eager encouragement to the design for a Spanish invasion of England under the prince of Parma—an enterprise in which she would do her utmost to make her son take part, and in case of his refusal would induce the Catholic nobles of Scotland to betray him into the hands of Philip, from whose tutelage he should be released only on her demand, or if after her death he should wish to return, nor then unless he had become a Catholic. But even these patriotic and maternal schemes to consign her child and reconsign the kingdom to the keeping of the Inquisition, incarnate in the widower of Mary Tudor, were superseded by the attraction of a conspiracy against the throne and life of Elizabeth. Anthony Babington, in his boyhood a ward of Shrewsbury, resident in the household of Sheffield Castle, and thus subjected to the charm before which so many victims had already fallen, was now induced to undertake the deliverance of the queen of Scots by

the murder of the queen of England. It is maintained by those admirers of Mary who assume her to have been an almost absolute imbecile, gifted with the power of imposing herself on the world as a woman of unsurpassed ability, that, while cognisant of the plot for her deliverance by English rebels and an invading army of foreign auxiliaries, she might have been innocently unconscious that this conspiracy involved the simultaneous assassination of Elizabeth. In the conduct and detection of her correspondence with Babington, traitor was played off against traitor, and spies were utilized against assassins, with as little scruple as could be required or expected in the diplomacy of the time. As in the case of the Casket Letters, it is alleged that forgery was employed to interpolate sufficient evidence of Mary's complicity in a design of which it is thought credible that she was kept in ignorance by the traitors and murderers who had enrolled themselves in her service,—that one who pensioned the actual murderer of Murray and a would-be murderer of Elizabeth was incapable of approving what her keen and practised intelligence was too blunt and torpid to anticipate as inevitable and inseparable from the general design. In August the conspirators were netted, and Mary was arrested at the gate of Tixall Park, whither Paulet had taken her under pretence of a hunting party. At Tixall she was detained till her papers at Chartley had undergone thorough research. That she was at length taken in her own toils even such a dullard as her admirers depict her could not have failed to understand; that she was no such dastard as to desire or deserve such defenders the whole brief course of her remaining life bore consistent and irrefragable witness. Her first thought on her return to Chartley was one of loyal gratitude and womanly sympathy. She cheered the wife of her English secretary, now under arrest, with promises to answer for her husband to all accusations brought against him, took her new-born child from the mother's arms, and in default of clergy baptized it, to Paulet's Puritanic horror, with her own hands by her own name. The next or the twin-born impulse of her indomitable nature was, as usual in all times of danger, one of passionate and high-spirited defiance, on discovering the seizure of her papers. A fort-

night afterwards her keys and her money were confiscated, while she, bedridden, and unable to move her hand, could only ply the terrible weapon of her bitter and fiery tongue. Her secretaries were examined in London, and one of them gave evidence that she had first heard of the conspiracy by letter from Balington, of whose design against the life of Elizabeth she thought it best to take no notice in her reply, though she did not hold herself bound to reveal it. On September 25 she was removed to the strong castle of Fotheringay in Northamptonshire. On October 6 she was desired by letter from Elizabeth to answer the charges brought against her before certain of the chief English nobles appointed to sit in commission on the cause. In spite of her first refusal to submit, she was induced by the arguments of the vice-chamberlain, Sir Christopher Hatton, to appear before this tribunal on condition that her protest should be registered against the legality of its jurisdiction over a sovereign, the next heir of the English crown.

On October 14 and 15, 1586, the trial was held in the hall of Fotheringay Castle. Alone, 'without one counsellor on her side among so many,' Mary conducted the whole of her own defence with courage incomparable and unsurpassable ability. Pathos and indignation, subtlety and simplicity, personal appeal and political reasoning, were the alternate weapons with which she fought against all odds of evidence or inference, and disputed step by step every inch of debatable ground. She repeatedly insisted on the production of proof in her own handwriting as to her complicity with the project of the assassins who had expiated their crime on the 20th and 21st of the month preceding. When the charge was shifted to the question of her intrigues with Spain, she took her stand resolutely on her right to convey whatever right she possessed, though now no kingdom was left her for disposal, to whomsoever she might choose. One single slip she made in the whole course of her defence; but none could have been more unluckily characteristic and significant. When Burghley brought against her the unanswerable charge of having at that moment in her service, and in receipt of an annual pension, the instigator of a previous attempt on the life of Elizabeth, she had the unwary audacity to cite in her justification the pen-

sions allowed by Elizabeth to her adversaries in Scotland, and especially to her son. It is remarkable that just two months later, in a conversation with her keepers, she again made use of the same extraordinary argument in reply to the same inevitable imputation, and would not be brought to admit that the two cases were other than parallel. But except for this single instance of oversight or perversity her defence was throughout a masterpiece of indomitable ingenuity, of delicate and steadfast courage, of womanly dignity and genius. Finally she demanded, as she had demanded before, a trial either before the estates of the realm lawfully assembled, or else before the queen in council. So closed the second day of the trial; and before the next day's work could begin a note of two or three lines hastily written at midnight informed the commissioners that Elizabeth had suddenly determined to adjourn the expected judgment and transfer the place of it to the star-chamber. Here, on October 25, the commissioners again met; and one of them alone, Lord Zouch, dissented from the verdict by which Mary was found guilty of having, since June 1 preceding, compassed and imagined divers matters tending to the destruction of Elizabeth. This verdict was conveyed to her, about three weeks later, by Lord Buckhurst and Robert Beale, clerk of the privy council. At the intimation that her life was an impediment to the security of the received religion, 'she seemed with a certain unwonted alacrity to triumph, giving God thanks, and rejoicing in her heart that she was held to be an instrument' for the restoration of her own faith. This note of exultation as in martyrdom was maintained with unflinching courage to the last. She wrote to Elizabeth and the duke of Guise two letters of almost matchless eloquence and pathos, admirable especially for their loyal and grateful remembrance of all her faithful servants. Between the date of these letters and the day of her execution wellnigh three months of suspense elapsed. Elizabeth, fearless almost to a fault in face of physical danger, constant in her confidence even after discovery of her narrow escape from the poisoned bullets of household conspirators, was cowardly even to a crime in the face of subtler and more complicated peril. She rejected with resolute dignity the intercession

of French envoys for the life of the queen-dowager of France; she allowed the sentence of death to be proclaimed, and welcomed with bonfires and bell-ringing throughout the length of England; she yielded a respite of twelve days to the pleading of the French ambassador, and had a charge trumped up against him of participation in a conspiracy against her life; at length, on February 1, 1587, she signed the death warrant, and then made her secretaries write word to Paulet of her displeasure that in all this time he should not of himself have found out some way to shorten the life of his prisoner, as in duty bound by his oath, and thus relieve her singularly tender conscience from the guilt of blood-shed. Paulet, with loyal and regretful indignation, declined the disgrace proposed to him in a suggestion 'to shed blood without law or warrant'; and on February 7 the earls of Shrewsbury and Kent arrived at Fotheringay with the commission of the council for execution of the sentence given against his prisoner. Mary received the announcement with majestic tranquillity, expressing in dignified terms her readiness to die, her consciousness that she was a martyr for her religion, and her total ignorance of any conspiracy against the life of Elizabeth. At night she took a graceful and affectionate leave of her attendants, distributed among them her money and jewels, wrote out in full the various legacies to be conveyed by her will, and charged her apothecary Gorion with her last messages for the king of Spain. In these messages the whole nature of the woman was revealed. Not a single friend, not a single enemy, was forgotten; the slightest service, the slightest wrong, had its place assigned in her faithful and implacable memory for retribution or reward. Forgiveness of injuries was as alien from her fierce and loyal spirit as forgetfulness of benefits; the destruction of England and its liberties by Spanish invasion and conquest was the strongest aspiration of her parting soul. At eight next morning she entered the hall of execution, having taken leave of the weeping envoy from Scotland, to whom she gave a brief message for her son; took her seat on the scaffold, listened with an air of even cheerful unconcern to the reading of her sentence, solemnly declared her innocence of the charge conveyed in it and her consolation of the

prospect of ultimate justice, rejected the professional services of Richard Fletcher, of Peterborough, lifted up her voice in Latin against his in English prayer, and when and his fellow-worshippers had fallen silent prayed aloud for the prosperity of her own Church, for Elizabeth, for her son, for all the enemies whom she had commended overnight to the notice of the Spanish invasion, then, with no less courage than had many every hour and every action of her life, received the stroke of death from the waving hand of the headsman.

Mary Stuart was in many respects a creature of her age, of her creed, and of her station; but the noblest and most noteworthy qualities of her nature were independent of rank, opinion, or time. Even detractors who defend her conduct on the plea that she was a dastard and a dupe, compelled in the same breath to retract implied reproach, and to admit, with illogical acclamation and incongruous applause, that the world never saw more splendid courage at the service of more brilliant intelligence; that a braver if not 'a rarer spirit never steered humanity.' A kinder or more faithful friend, a deadlier or more dangerous enemy, it would be impossible to dread or to despise. Passion alone could shake the double fortitude of her impregnable heart and ever active brain. The passion of love, after very sufficient experience, she apparently and naturally outlived; the passion of hatred and vengeance was as inextinguishable in her innate nature as the emotion of loyalty and gratitude. Of repentance it would seem that she knew as little as of fear; having been trained from her infancy in a religion where the Decalogue was supplanted by the Creed. Adept as she was in the most exquisite delicacy of dissimulation, the most salient note of her original disposition was daring rather than subtlety. On the side or behind the voluptuous or intellectual attractions of beauty and culture, she had about her the fresher charm of a fearless and frank simplicity, a genuine and enduring pleasure in small and harmless things no less than in such as were neither. In 1562 she amused herself for some days by living 'with her little troop' in the house of a burgess of St. Andrews 'like a burgess's wife,' assuring the English ambassador that he should not find the queen there,—'nor I know not myself

where she is become.' From Sheffield Lodge, twelve years later, she applied to the archbishop of Glasgow and the cardinal of Guise for some pretty little dogs, to be sent her in baskets very warmly packed—'for besides reading and working, I take pleasure only in all the little animals that I can get.' No lapse of reconciling time, no extent of comparative indulgence, could break her into resignation, submission, or toleration of even partial restraint. Three months after the massacre of St. Bartholomew had caused some additional restrictions to be placed upon her freedom of action, Shrewsbury writes to Burghley that 'rather than continue this imprisonment she sticks not to say she will give her body, her son, and country for liberty'; nor did she ever show any excess of regard for any of the three. For her own freedom of will and of way, of passion and of action, she cared much; for her creed she cared something; for her country she cared less than nothing. She would have flung Scotland with England into the hellfire of Spanish

Catholicism rather than forego the faintest chance of personal revenge. Her profession of a desire to be instructed in the doctrines of Anglican Protestantism was so transparently a pious fraud as rather to afford confirmation than to arouse suspicion of her fidelity to the teaching of her Church. Elizabeth, so shamefully her inferior in personal loyalty, fidelity, and gratitude, was as clearly her superior on the one all-important point of patriotism. The saving salt of Elizabeth's character, with all its wellnigh incredible mixture of heroism and egotism, meanness and magnificence, was simply this; that, overmuch as she loved herself, she did yet love England better. Her best though not her only fine qualities were national and political, the high public virtues of a good public servant: in the private and personal qualities which attract and attach a friend to his friend and a follower to his leader, no man or woman was ever more constant and more eminent than Mary Queen of Scots.

II

THE CHARACTER OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

AMONG the various points of view taken in time past and present by students of a subject which must surely have lost its interest long since if that interest were less than inexhaustible, I have always missed, and wondered at the general oversight which appears to ignore it, one which would most naturally seem to present itself for candid and rational consideration by either party to the argument. Every shade of possible opinion on the matter has found in its various champions every possible gradation of ability in debate. And the universal result, as it appears to an outsider,—to a student of history unconscious alike of prejudice and of prepossession,—is that they who came to curse the memory of Mary Stuart have blessed it as with the blessing of a Balaam, and they who came to bless it, with tribute of panegyric or with testimony in defence, have inevitably and invariably cursed it altogether. To vindicate her from the imputations of her vindicators would be

the truest service that could now be done by the most loyal devotion to her name and fame.

A more thorough, more earnest, and on the whole a more able apology for any disputed or debatable character in all the range of history it would indeed be hard to find than that which has been attempted by Mr. Hosack in his two copious and laborious volumes on *Mary Queen of Scots and her Accusers*. Every point of vantage throughout the intricacies of irreconcilable evidence is clearly seen, is swiftly seized, is manfully defended. And the ultimate outcome of all is the presentation of a figure beside which, I do not say the Mary Stuart of Mr. Froude, but the Mary Stuart of George Buchanan, is an acceptable and respectable type of royal womanhood—a pardonable if not admirable example of human character. Many bitter and terrible things were said of that woman in her lifetime by many fierce and unscrupulous enemies of her person or her creed; many

grave and crushing charges were alleged against her on plausible or improbable grounds of impeachment or suspicion. But two things were never imputed to her by the most reckless ferocity of malice or of fear. No one ever dreamed of saying that Mary Queen of Scots was a fool. And no one ever dared to suggest that Mary Queen of Scots was a coward.

That there are fewer moral impossibilities than would readily be granted by the professional moralist, those students of human character who are not professional moralists may very readily admit. A very short and a very narrow experience will suffice to preserve a man—or for that matter a boy—of average intelligence from any sense of shocked astonishment when his expectation is confronted by 'fears of the brave and follies of the wise,' instances of mercy in the unmerciful or cruelty in the humane. But there is a limit to the uttermost range of such paradoxical possibilities. And that limit is reached and crossed, cleared at a leap and left far out of sight, by the theorist who demands our assent to such a theorem as this: That a woman whose intelligence was below the average level of imbecility, and whose courage was below the average level of a coward's, should have succeeded throughout the whole course of a singularly restless and adventurous career in imposing herself upon the judgment of every man and every woman with whom she ever came into any sort or kind of contact, as a person of the most brilliant abilities and the most dauntless daring. *Credat Catholicus*; for such faith must surely exceed the most credulous capacity of ancient Jew or modern Gentile.

But this is not all, or nearly all. Let us admit, though it be no small admission, that Mary Stuart, who certainly managed to pass herself off upon every one who came near her under any circumstances as the brightest and the bravest creature of her kind in any rank or any country of the world, was dastard enough to be cowed into a marriage which she was idiot enough to imagine could be less than ir retrievable ruin to her last chance of honour or prosperity. The violence of Bothwell and the perfidy of her council imposed forsooth this miserable necessity on the credulous though reluctant victim of brute force on the one hand and treasonable fraud on

the other. Persuaded by the request and convinced by the reasoning of those about her, Lucretia felt nothing less than a duty to accept the hand of Tarquin yet reeking from the blood of Collatinus. The situation is worthy of one of Mr. Gilbert's incomparable ballads or burlesques; and her contemporaries, Catholic or Protestant, friend or rival or ally, may be forgiven if they failed at once to grasp and realize it as a sufficiently plausible solution of all doubts and difficulties not otherwise as rationally explicable. Yet possibly it may not be impossible that an exceptionally stupid girl, reared from her babyhood in an atmosphere of artificial exceptional innocence, might play at once the active and passive part assigned to Mar before and after the execution of the plot against her husband's life, by the traducer who have undertaken her defence. But for this improbability to be possible it is obviously necessary to assume in this pitiable puppet an extent of ignorance to be equally only, and scarcely, by the depth and density of her dullness. A woman utterly wanting in tact, intuition, perception, character or grasp of circumstance—a woman abnormally devoid of such native instincts and such acquired insight as would suffice to preserve all but the dullest of natures from ludicrous indiscretion and perilous indelicacy might perhaps for lack of experience be betrayed into such a succession of mishaps as the training of an ideally rigid convent might have left it difficult or impossible for her father's innocence to foresee. But of the convent in which Mary Stuart had passed her novitiate the Lady Superior was Queen Catherine de' Medici. The virgins who shared the vigils of her maidenhood or brightened the celebrations of her nuptials were such as composed the Queen-Mother's famous 'flying squadron' of high-born harlots, professionally employed in the task of making the worst of Venus Pandemos subserve the purposes of Catholic faith or polity, and occasionally, on the Feast of St. Bartholomew, exhilarated by such diversions as the jocose examination of naked and newly-murdered corpses was an eye to the satisfaction of a curiosity which the secular pen of a modern historian might decline to explain with the frankness of clerical contemporary. The cloistral precinct which sheltered her girlhood from such know-

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ledge of evil as might in after days have been of some protection to her guileless levity was the circuit of a court whose pursuits and recreations were divided between the alcoves of Sodom and the playground of Arceldama. What were the vices of the society described by Brantôme it is impossible, or at least it would be repulsive, to suggest by so much as a hint: but its virtues were homicide and adultery. Knox or Ascham would have given plainer and juster expression, in shorter terms of speech more purely English, to the fact that no man was honoured who could not show blood on his hands, no woman admired who would not boast as loudly of the favours she had granted as her gallants of the favours they had received. It is but a slight matter to add that the girl who was reared from her very infancy in this atmosphere—in the atmosphere of a palace which it would be flattery to call a brothel or a slaughter-house—had for her mother a woman of the blood-stained house of Guise, and for her father the gaberlunzieman or jolly beggar of numberless and nameless traditional adventures in promiscuous erotic intrigue. The question of family is of course very far from conclusive, though certainly it may help 'to thicken other proofs that do demonstrate thinly.' The calendar of saints includes a Borgia; or, to put it perhaps more forcibly, the house of Borgia contains a saint. And some writers—Landor among them, who had little love for the brood—have averred that the Bonaparte family did once produce an honest man and equitable ruler—Louis king of Holland, whose only son gave his life in vain for Italy. It would certainly have been no greater miracle than these, no more startling exception to the general rule, that the daughter of James V. and Mary of Guise should have been a blameless though imbecile creature, an innocent in the least flattering sense of the word, whose blood was very snow-broth and whose brain a very feather. But mere innocence, as distinguished from the absolute idiocy which even her warmest admirers would hesitate to ascribe to her, will hardly suffice to explain her course of conduct in the most critical period of her life. A woman who could play the part assigned to Mary by the Whitakers, Stricklands, Aytouns and Hosacks whose laudations have so cruelly libelled her, must have been either

the veriest imbecile whose craven folly ever betrayed in every action an innate and irresponsible impotence of mind, or at least and at best a good girl of timid temper and weak intellect, who had been tenderly sheltered all her life from any possible knowledge or understanding of evil, from all apprehension as from all experience of wickedness and wrong. Now it is of course just barely possible that a girl might come innocent as Shakespeare's Marina even out of such a house of entertainn. nt as that kept by the last princes of the race of Valois: but it is absolutely and glaringly impossible that she should come forth from it ignorant of evil. And it is not a jot less impossible that an innocent woman who was not animally idiotic or angelically ignorant, a drivelling craven or a thing enskied and sainted, the pitifullest or the purest, the most thick-witted or the most unspotted of her kind, could have borne herself as did Mary after the murder of her caittif husband. Let us assume, though it is no small assumption, that all her enemies were liars and forgers. Let us imagine that except among her adherents there was not a man of any note in all Scotland who was not capable of treason as infamous as that of the English conspirators on her behalf against the life of Elizabeth and the commonwealth of their country. Let us suppose that a Buchanan, for example, was what Mr. Hosack has called him 'the prince of literary prostitutes'; a rascal cowardly enough to put forth in print a foul and formless mass of undigested falsehood and rancorous ribaldry, and venal enough to traffic in the disgrace of his dishonourable name for a purpose as infamous as his act. Let us concede that a Maitland was cur enough to steal that name as a mask for the impudent malice of ingratitude. Let us allow that Murray may have been the unscrupulous traitor and Elizabeth the malignant rival of Marian tradition. Let us admit that the truest solution of a complicated riddle may be that most ingenious theory advocated by Mr. Hosack, which addresses to Darnley instead of Bothwell the most passionate and pathetic of the Casket Letters, and cancels as incongruous forgeries all those which refuse to fit into this scheme of explanation. Let us grant that the forgers were at once as clumsy as Cloten and as ingenious as Iago. The fact remains no

less obvious and obtrusive than before, that it is very much easier to blacken the fame of Mary's confederate enemies than to whitewash the reputation of Bothwell's royal wife. And what manner of whitewash is that which substitutes for the features of an erring but heroic woman those of a creature not above but beneath the human possibility of error or of sin?

But if we reject as incredible the ideal of Prince Labanoff's loyal and single-hearted credulity, does it follow that we must accept the ideal of Mr. Froude's implacable and single-eyed animosity? Was the mistress of Bothwell, the murderess of Darnley, the conspiratrix against the throne and life of her kinswoman and hostess, by any necessary consequence the mere panther and serpent of his fascinating and magnificent study? This seems to me no more certain a corollary than that because she went to the scaffold with a false front her severed head, at the age of forty-five, must have been that 'of a grizzled, wrinkled old woman.' By such flashes of fiery and ostentatious partisanship the brilliant and fervent advocate of the Tudors shows his hand, if I may say so without offence, a little too unconsciously and plainly. And his ultimate conclusion that 'she was a bad woman, disguised in the livery of a martyr,' (vol. xii., ch. 34) seems to me not much better supported by the sum of evidence producible on either side than the counter inference of his most pertinacious antagonist that 'this illustrious victim of sectarian violence and barbarous statecraft will ever occupy the most prominent place in the annals of her sex' (Hosack, vol. ii., ch. 27). There are annals and annals, from the *Acta Sanctorum* to the *Newgate Calendar*. In the former of these records Mr. Hosack, in the latter Mr. Froude, would inscribe—as I cannot but think, with equal unreason—the name of Mary Stuart.

'She was a bad woman,' says the ardent and energetic advocate on the devil's side in this matter, because 'she was leaving the world with a lie on her lips,' when with her last breath she protested her innocence of the charge on which she was condemned to death. But the God of her worship, the God in whom she trusted, the God on whom she had been taught to lean for support of her conscience, would no more have been

offended at this than the God of Dahomey is offended by human sacrifice. Witness all the leading spirits among his servants, in that age if in no other, from pope to king and from king to cutthroat—from Gregory XIII. and Sextus V. to Philip II. and Charles IX., and from Philip II. and Charles IX. to Saulx-Tavannes and Maurevel. To their God and hers a lie was hardly less acceptable service than a murder; Blessed Judas was a servant only less commendable than Saint Cain. Nor, on the whole, would it appear that the lapse of time has brought any perceptible improvement to the moral character of this deity. The *coup d'état* of August 24, 1572, was not an offering of sweeter savour in his expansive and insatiable nostrils than was the St. Bartholomew of December 2, 1571. From the same chair the vicar of the same God bestowed the same approving benediction on Florentine and on Corsican perjurer and murderer. And in a worshipper of this divine devil, in the ward of a Medici or a Bonaparte, it would be an inhuman absurdity to expect the presence or condemn the absence of what nothing far short of a miracle could have implanted—the sense of right and wrong, the distinction of good from evil, the preference of truth to falsehood. The heroine of Fotheringay was by no means a bad woman: she was a creature of the sixteenth century, a Catholic and a queen. What is really remarkable is what is really admirable in her nature, and was ineradicable as surely as it was unteachable by royal training or by religious creed. I desire no better evidence in her favour than may be gathered from the admissions of her sternest judge and bitterest enemy. 'Throughout her life,' Mr. Froude allows, 'she never lacked gratitude to those who had been true to her.—Never did any human creature meet death more bravely.' Except in the dialect of the pulpit, she is not a bad woman of whom so much at least must be said and cannot be denied. Had she been born the man that she fain would have been born, no historian surely would have refused her a right to a high place among other heroes and above other kings. All Mr. Froude's vituperative terms cannot impair the nobility of the figure he presents to our unapproving admiration: all Mr. Hosack's sympathetic phrases cannot exalt the poverty of the spirit he exposes for

our unadmiring compassion. For however much we may admire the courage he ascribes to her at the last, we cannot remember with less than contemptuous pity the pusillanimous imbecility which on his showing had been the distinctive quality of her miserable life. According to her champion, a witness against her more pitiless than John Knox or Edmund Spenser, she had done nothing in her time of trial that an innocent woman would have done, and left nothing undone that an innocent woman could have studiously abstained from doing, if she had not been in the idiotic sense an innocent indeed. But it is in their respective presentations of the closing scene at Fotheringay that the incurable prepossession of view which is common to both advocates alike springs suddenly into sharpest illustration and relief. Mr. Froude cannot refrain from assuming, on grounds too slight for Macaulay to have accepted as sufficient for the damnation of a Jacobite, that on receipt of her death-warrant the queen of Scots 'was dreadfully agitated,' and 'at last broke down altogether,' before the bearers of the sudden intelligence had left her. Now every line of the narrative preceding this imputation makes it more and more insuperably difficult to believe that in all her dauntless life Queen Mary can ever have been 'dreadfully agitated,' except by anger and another passion at least as different from fear. But this exhibition of prepossession is nothing to the grotesque nakedness of Mr. Hosack's. At a first reading it is difficult for a reader to believe the evidence of his eyesight when he finds a historian who writes himself 'barrister at-law,' and should surely have some inkling of the moral weight or worth of evidence as to character, deliberately asserting that in her dying appeal for revenge to the deadliest enemy of England and its queen, Mary, after studious enumeration of every man's name against whom she bore such resentment as she desired might survive her death, and strike them down with her dead hand by way of retributive sacrifice, 'exhibited an unparalleled instance of feminine forbearance and generosity' (the sarcasm implied on womanhood is too savage for the most sweeping satire of a Thackeray or a Pope) 'in omitting the name of Elizabeth.' *O sancta simplicitas!* Who shall say after this that

the practice of the legal profession is liable to poison the gushing springs of youth's ingenuous trustfulness and single-minded optimism?

An advocate naturally or professionally incapable of such guileless confidence and ingenuous self-betrayal is Father John Morris, 'Priest of the Society of Jesus,' and editor of 'The Letter-books of Sir Amias Paulet, Keeper of Mary Queen of Scots': a volume nothing less than invaluable as well as indispensable to all serious students of the subject in hand. Writers of genius and impetuosity such as Mr. Froude's and the late Canon Kingsley's lay themselves open at many points of minor importance to the decisive charge on the wary fence of an antagonist expert in the fine art of controversy: but their main or ultimate positions may prove none the less difficult to carry the process of countermining or other sacerdotal tactics. Father Morris is not quite so hard on his client as Mr. Hosack: for by admitting something of what is undeniable in the charges of history against her he attenuates the effect and diminishes the prominence of his inevitable and obvious prepossessions: and though he suggests (p. 275) that 'perhaps Mary was not quite "the fier woman" Mr. Froude imagines her to have been,' he does not pretend to exhibit her as the watery thing of tears and terrors held up to our compassion by the relentless if unconscious animosity of the implacable counsel for her defence.

On one point (p. 143) the pleading of Father Morris must in no inconsiderable measure command the sympathy of all Englishmen who honestly love fair play, and that not only when it plays into their own hands. It is surely much more than high time, after the lapse of three centuries, that honest and generous men of different creeds and parties should be equally ready to do justice, if not to each other's God,—since Gods are by necessity of nature irreconcilable and internecine.—at least to the memories of their common countrymen, who played their part manfully in their day on either side with fair and loyal weapons of attack and defence. We regard with disgust and the horror of revolted conscience that vile and execrable doctrine which assures us in childhood that the glory of martyrdom depends on the martyr's orthodoxy of opinion, on the

accuracy of his reckoning or the justice of his conjecture as to spiritual matters of duty or of faith, on the happiness of a guess or the soundness of an argument; but surely it profits us little to have cleared our conscience of such a creed if we remain incapable of doing justice to Jesuit and Calvinist, creedsman and atheist, alike. It profits us little if we are to involve in one ignominy with the unscrupulous and treasonous intrigues of Parsons and Garnet the blameless labours and the patient heroism of Edmund Campion. So far, then, Father Morris has a good card in hand, and plays it well and fairly, when he pleads, for example, against Mr. Froude's charges, and on behalf of his own famous Society, that 'Gilbert Gifford had no "Jesuit training," and "the Order" never had anything to do with him;—but it is necessary to note that all through Mr. Froude's *History* he habitually styles "Jesuits" those who never had anything in the world to do with the Society of which St. Ignatius Loyola was the founder.' Gilbert Gifford was a traitor, and any man must be eager to avoid the disgrace of any connection, though never so remote or oblique, with a traitor's infamy. But I hope it may not be held incompatible with all respect for the conscientious labours of Father Morris, and with all the gratitude for help and obligation conferred by them, to remark with due deference that a champion of Jesuits against the malignant errors of calumnious misrepresentation would be wise to avoid all occasion given to heretical pravity for a scoff on the old scores of pious fraud or suggestion of falsehood. Exactly two hundred and five pages after this pathetic protest of conscious virtue and candid indignation against the inexcusable injustice of an anti-Catholic historian, this denouncer of Mr. Froude's unfair dealing and unfounded statements, 'the parallel of which it would be difficult to find in any one claiming to occupy the judicial position of a historian,' affords the following example of his own practical respect for historical justice and accuracy of statement.

'Not only,' he says, with righteous disgust at such brutality, 'not only would Paulet deprive Mary of Melville and du Préau, but, writing too from his own sick bed, he betrays his wish to remove the medical attendants also, though his prisoner was in chronic ill health.'

The whole and sole ground for such an imputation is given, with inconsistent if not unwary frankness, on the very next page but one in the text of Paulet's letter to Davison.

'The physician, apothecary, and the surgeon have been so often allowed' to this lady by her Majesty's order, that I may not take upon me to displace them without special warrant, referring the same to your better consideration.¹

It is scarcely by the display of such literary tactics as these that a Jesuit will succeed in putting to shame the credulity of unbelievers who may be so far misguided by heretical reliance on a groundless tradition as to attribute the practice of holy prevarication, and the doctrine of an end which sanctifies the most equivocal means of action or modes of argument, to the ingenuous and guileless children of Ignatius. For refutation of these inexplicable calumnies and explosion of this unaccountable error we must too evidently look elsewhere.

An elder luminary of the Roman Church, the most brilliant and impudent chronicler of courtly brothelry between the date of Petronius and the date of Grammont, has left on record that when the news came to Paris of the execution at Fotheringay the general verdict passed by most of her old acquaintances on the Queen Dowager of France was that her death was a just if lamentable retribution for the death of Chastelard. The despatch of a disloyal husband by means of gunpowder was not, in the eyes of these Catholic moralists, an offence worth mention if set against the execution of a loyal lover, 'even in her sight he loved so well.' That the luckless young rhymester and swordsman had been Mary's favoured lover—a circumstance which would of course have given no scandal whatever to the society in which they had grown up to years of indiscretion—can be neither affirmed nor denied on the authority of any positive and incon-

¹ 'Who would have thought,' says Father Morris, just seventy-four pages earlier, with a triumphant sneer at Mr. Froude's gratuitous inferences, 'who would have thought that all this could have been drawn out of Paulet's postscript?' Who would have thought that the merest novice in controversy could have laid himself so heedlessly open to such instant and inevitable retort?

trovertible proof; and the value of such moral if not legal evidence as we possess depends mainly on the credit which we may be disposed to assign to the reported statement of Murray.¹ Knox, who will not generally be held capable of deliberate forgery and lying, has left an account of the affair which can hardly be regarded as a possible misrepresentation or perversion of fact, with some grain of discoloured and distorted truth half latent in a heap of lies. Either the falsehood is absolute, or the conclusion is obvious.

The first sentences of his brief narrative may be set down as giving merely an austere and hostile summary of common rumours. That Chastelard 'at that tyme passed all otheris in credytt with the Quene'; that 'in dānsing of the Purpose, (so terme thei that danse, in the which man and woman talkis secreteatlie—wyese men wold judge such fānsionis more lyke to the bordell than the comelynes of honest wemen,) in this danse the Quene chosed Chattelett, and Chattelett took the Quene'; that 'Chattelett had the best dress'; that 'all this winter' (1563) 'Chattelett was so familiare in the Quenis cabinett, ayre and laitt, that scarslye could any of the Nobilitie have access unto hir'; that 'the Quene wold ly upoun Chattelettis shoulder, and sometymes prively she wold steall a kyss of his neck'; these are records which we may or may not pass by as mere court gossip retailed by the preacher, and to be taken with or without discount as the capable and equanimous reader shall think fit. We may presume however that the prophet-humourist did not append the following comment without sardonic intention. 'And all this was honest yneuch; for it was the gentill

entreatment of a stranger.' The kernel of the matter lies in the few sentences following.

'But the familiaritie was so great, that upoun a nyght, he prively did convoy him self under the Quenis bed; but being espyed, he was commanded away. But the bruyte arysing, the Quene called the Erle of Murray, and bursting forth in a womanlie affectioun, charged him, "That as he loved hir, he should slay Chattelett, and let him never speak word." The other, at the first, maid promesse so to do; but after calling to mynd the judgementis of God pronounced against the scheddaris of innocent bloode, and also that none should dye, without the testimonye of two or thre witnesses, returned and fell upoun his kneis befor the Quene, and said, "Madam, I besek your Grace, cause me not tack the bloode of this man upoun me. Your Grace has entreated him so familiarlie befor, that ye have offended all your Nobilitie; and now yf he shalbe secreteatlie slane at your awin commandment, what shall the world judge of it? I shall bring him to the presence of Justice, and let him suffer be law according to his deserving." "Oh," said the Quene, "ye will never let h'm speak?" "I shall do," said he, "Madam, what in me lyeth to saiff your honour."'²

'Upon this hint I spake,' when in the last year of my life as an undergraduate I began my play of *Chastelard*; nor have I to accuse myself, then or since, of any voluntary infraction of recorded fact or any conscious violation of historical chronology, except—to the best of my recollection—in two instances: the date of Mary's second marriage, and the circumstances of her last interview with John Knox. I held it as allowable to anticipate by two years the event of Darnley's nuptials, or in other words to postpone for two years the event of Chastelard's execution, as to compile or condense into one dramatic scene the details of more than one conversation recorded by Knox between Mary and himself.

To accept the natural and unavoidable inference from the foregoing narrative, assuming of course that it is not to be dismissed on all accounts as pure and simple falsehood, may seem equivalent to an admission that the worst view ever yet taken of Queen Mary's

¹ Mr. Hosack, with even unusual infelicity, observes (ii. 494) that 'the insinuations regarding Chastelard (*sic*) to be found in Knox were circulated long after the event.' According to the 'chronological notes' of Mr. David Laing (*Works of John Knox*, vol. i. p. 20) it is in 1566, just three years 'after the event,' that 'he appears to have written the most considerable portion of his History of the Reformation; having commenced the work in 1559 or 1560.' And whatever else may be chargeable against the memory of John Knox, this, I should imagine, is the first time that he has ever been held up to historic scorn as an insinuating antagonist.

² *The History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Book IV.: *The Works of John Knox*; collected and edited by David Laing. Vol. ii., p. 368.

character is at least no worse than was undeniably deserved. And yet, without any straining of moral law or any indulgence in paradoxical casuistry, there is something if not much to be offered in her excuse. To spare the life of a suicidal young monomaniac who would not accept his dismissal with due submission to the inevitable and suppression of natural regret, would probably in her own eyes have been no less than ruin in her character under the changed circumstances and in the transformed atmosphere of her life. As, in extenuation of his perverse and insuppressible persistency in thrusting himself upon the compassion or endurance of a woman who possibly was weary of his homage, it may doubtless be alleged that Mary Stuart was hardly such a mistress as a man could be expected readily to resign, or perhaps, at Chastelard's age, to forego with much less reluctance than life itself; so likewise may it be pleaded, on the other hand that the queen of Scotland could not without at least equal unreason be expected to sacrifice her reputation and imperil her security for the sake of a cast-off lover who could not see that it was his duty as a gentleman of good sense to submit himself and his passion to her pleasure and the force of circumstances. The act of Chastelard was the act of a rebel as surely as the conduct of Darnley three years afterwards was the conduct of a traitor; and by all the laws then as yet unrepealed, by all precedents and rights of royalty, the life of the rebellious lover was scarce less unquestionably forfeit than the life of the traitorous consort. Nobody in those days had discovered the inestimable secret of being royalists or Christians by halves. At least, it was an unpromising time for any one who might attempt to anticipate this popular modern discovery.

It must be admitted that Queen Mary was generally and singularly unlucky in her practical assertion of prerogative. To every one of her royal descendants, with the possible exception of King Charles the Second, she transmitted this single incapacity by way of counterpoise to all the splendid and seductive gifts which she likewise bequeathed to not a few of their luckless line. They were a race of brilliant blunders, with obtuse exceptions interspersed. To do the right thing at the wrong time, to fascinate many

and satisfy none, to display every kind of faculty but the one which might happen to be wanted, was as fatally the sign of a Stuart as ever ferocity was of a Claudius or perjury of a Bonaparte. After the time of Queen Mary there were no more such men born into the race as her father and half-brother. The habits of her son were as suggestive of debased Italian blood in the worst age of Italian debasement as the profitless and incurable cunning with which her grandson tricked his own head off his shoulders, the swarthy levity and epicurean cynicism of his elder son, or the bloody piety and sullen profligacy of his younger. The one apparently valid argument against the likelihood of their descent from Rizzio is that Darnley would undoubtedly seem to have pledged what he called his honour to the fact of his wife's infidelity. Towards that unhappy traitor her own conduct was not more merciless than just, or more treacherous than necessary, if justice was at all to be done upon him. In the house of Medici or in the house of Lorraine she could have found and cited at need in vindication of her strategy many far less excusable examples of guile as relentless and retaliation as implacable as that which lured or hunted a beardless Judas to his doom. If the manner in which justice was done upon him will hardly be justified by the most perverse and audacious lover of historical or moral paradox, yet neither can the most rigid upholder of moral law in whom rigour has not got the upper hand of reason deny that never was a lawless act committed with more excuse or more pretext for regarding it as lawful. To rid herself of a traitor and murderer who could not be got rid of by formal process of law was the object and the problem which the action of Darnley had inevitably set before his royal consort. That the object was attained and the problem solved with such inconceivable awkwardness and perfection of mismanagement is proof that no infusion of Guisian blood or training of Medicean education could turn the daughter of an old heroic northern line into a consummate and cold intriguer of the southern Catholic pattern. The contempt of Catherine for her daughter-in-law when news reached Paris of the crowning blunder at Kirk of Field must have been hardly expressible by human utterance. At her best and

worst alike, it seems to my poor apprehension that Mary showed herself a diplomatist only by education and force of native ability brought to bear on a line of life and conduct most alien from her inborn impulse as a frank, passionate, generous, unscrupulous, courageous and loyal woman, naturally self-willed and trained to be self-seeking, born and bred an imperial and royal creature, at once in the good and bad or natural and artificial sense of the words. In such a view I can detect no necessary incoherence; in such a character I can perceive no radical inconsistency. But 'to assert,' as Mr. Hosack says (ch. 27), 'that any human being,' neither a born idiot nor a spiritless dastard, 'could have been guilty' of such utterly abject and despicable conduct as the calumnious advocates of her innocence find themselves compelled to impute to her, 'is,' as I have always thought and must always continue to think, 'an absurdity which refutes itself.' The theory that an 'unscrupulous oligarchy at length accomplished her ruin by forcing her'—of all things in the world—'to marry Bothwell' is simply and amply sufficient, if accepted, to deprive her of all claim on any higher interest or any nobler sympathy than may be excited by the sufferings of a beaten hound. Indeed, the most impossible monster

of incongruous merits and demerits which can be found in the most chaotic and incoherent work of Euripides or Fletcher is a credible and coherent production of consistent nature if compared with Mr. Hosack's heroine. Outside the range of the clerical and legal professions it should be difficult to find men of keen research and conscientious ability who can think that a woman of such working brain and burning heart as never faltered, never quailed, never rested till the end had come for them of all things, could be glorified by degradation to the likeness of a brainless, heartless, sexless and pusillanimous fool. Supposing she had taken part in the slaying of Darnley, there is every excuse for her; supposing she had not, there is none. Considered from any possible point of view, the tragic story of her life in Scotland admits but of one interpretation which is not incompatible with the impression she left on all friends and all foes alike. And this interpretation is simply that she hated Darnley with a passionate but justifiable hatred, and loved Bothwell with a passionate but pardonable love. For the rest of her career, I cannot but think that whatever was evil and ignoble in it was the work of education or of circumstance; whatever was good and noble, the gift of nature or of God.

LOCRINE

A TRAGEDY

DEDICATION

TO ALICE SWINBURNE

I

THE love that comes and goes like wind or
fire

Hath words and wings wherewith to speak
and flee.

But love more deep than passion's deep de-
sire,

Clear and inviolable as the unsounded sea,
What wings of words may serve to set it
free,

To lift and lead it homeward? Time and
death

Are less than love: or man's live spirit saith
False, when he deems his life is more than
breath.

II

No words may utter love; no sovereign song
Speak all it would for love's sake. Yet
would I

Fain cast in moulded rhymes that do me
wrong

Some little part of all my love: but why
Should weak and wingless words be fain
to fly?

For us the years that live not are not dead:
Past days and present in our hearts are wed:
My song can say no more than love hath said.

III

Love needs nor song nor speech to say what
love

Would speak or sing, were speech and song
not weak

To bear the sense-belated soul above
And bid the lips of silence breathe and
speak.

Nor power nor will has love to find or seek

412

Words indiscoverable, ampler strains of
song

Than ever hailed him fair or showed him
strong:

And less than these should do him worse than
wrong.

IV

We who remember not a day wherein

We have not loved each other,—who can
see

No time, since time bade first our days begin,
Within the sweep of memory's wings, when
we

Have known not what each other's love
must be,—

We are well content to know it, and rest on
this,

And call not words to witness that it is.
To love aloud is oft to love amiss.

V

But if the gracious witness borne of words

Take not from speechless love the secret
grace

That binds it round with silence, and engirds
Its heart with memories fair as heaven's
own face,

Let love take courage for a little space
To speak and be rebuked not of the soul,
Whose utterance, ere the unwitting speech be
whole,

Rebukes itself, and craves again control.

VI

A ninefold garland wrought of song-flowers
nine

Wound each with each in chance-inwoven
accord
Here at your feet I lay as on a shrine
Whereof the holiest love that lives is lord.
With faint strange hues their leaves are
freaked and scored:
The fable-flowering land wherein they grew
Hath dreams for stars, and grey romance for
dew:
Perchance no flower thence plucked may
flower anew.

VII

No part have these wan legends in the sun
Whose glory lightens Greece and gleams
on Rome.
Their elders live: but these—their day is
done,
Their records written of the wind in foam
Fly down the wind, and darkness takes
them home.
What Homer saw, and Virgil dreamed, was
truth,
And dies not, being divine: but whence, in
sooth,
Might shades that never lived win deathless
youth?

VIII

The fields of fable, by the feet of faith
Untrodden, bloom not where such deep
mist drives.
Dead fancy's ghost, not living fancy's wraith,
Is now the storied sorrow that survives
Faith in the record of these lifeless lives.
Yet Milton's sacred feet have lingered there,
His lips have made august the fabulous air,
His hands have touched and left the wild
weeds fair.

IX

So, in some void and thought-untrammelled
hour,
Let these find grace, my sister, in your
sight,
Whose glance but cast on casual things hath
power
To do the sun's work, bidding all be bright
With comfort given of love: for love is
light.
Were all the world of song made mine to give,
The best were yours of all its flowers that live:
Though least of all be this my gift, forgive.

July 1887.

PERSONS REPRESENTED

LOCRINE, *King of Britain.*
CAMBER, *King of Wales, brother to LOC-*
RINE.
MADAN, *son to LOCRINE and GUENDOLEN.*
DEBON, *Lord Chamberlain.*

GUENDOLEN, *Queen of Britain, cousin and*
wife to LOCRINE.
ESTRILD, *a German princess, widow of the*
Scythian king HUMBER.
SABRINA, *daughter to LOCRINE and ESTRILD.*

Scene, BRITAIN

ACT I

SCENE I.—*Troynovant. A Room in the*
Palace

Enter GUENDOLEN and MADAN

GUENDOLEN

Child, hast thou looked upon thy grandsire
dead?

MADAN

Ay.

GUENDOLEN

Then thou sawest our Britain's heart and head
Death-stricken. Seemed not there my sire to
thee
More great than thine, or all men living? We
Stand shadows of the fathers we survive:
Earth bears no more nor sees such births
alive.

MADAN

Why, he was great of thews—and wise, thou
sav'st:
Yet seems my sire to me the fairer-faced—
The kinglier and the kindlier.

GUENDOLEN

Yea, his eyes
Are liker seas that feel the summering skies
In concord of sweet colour—and his brow
Shines gentler than my father's ever: thou,
So seeing, dost well to hold thy sire so dear.

MADAN

I said not that his love sat yet so near
My heart as thine doth: rather am I thine,
Thou knowest, than his.

GUENDOLEN

Nay—rather seems Locrine
Thy sire than I thy mother.

MADAN

Wherefore?

GUENDOLEN

Boy,
Because of all our sires who fought for Troy
Most like thy father and my lord Locrine,
I think, was Paris.

MADAN

How may man divine
Thy meaning? Blunt am I, thou knowest,
of wit;
And scarce yet man—men tell me.

GUENDOLEN

Ask not it,
I meant not thou shouldst understand—I
spake
As one that sighs, to ease her heart of ache,
And would not clothe in words her cause for
sighs—
Her naked cause of sorrow.

MADAN

Wert thou wise,
Mother, thy tongue had chosen of two things
one—
Silence, or speech.

GUENDOLEN

Speech had I chosen, my son,
I had wronged thee—yea, perchance I have
wronged thine ears
Too far, to say so much.

MADAN

Nay, these are tears
That gather toward thine eyelids now. Thou
hast broken
Silence—if now thy speech die down un-
spoken,
Thou dost me wrong indeed—but more than
mine
The wrong thou dost thyself is.

GUENDOLEN

And Locrine—
Were not thy sire wronged likewise of me?

MADAN

Yea.

GUENDOLEN

Yet—I may choose yet—nothing will I say
More.

MADAN

Choose, and have thy choice; it galls not me.

GUENDOLEN

Son, son! thy speech is bitterer than the sea.

MADAN

Yet, were the gulfs of hell not bitterer, thine
Might match thy son's, who hast called my
sire—Locrine—

Thy lord, and lord of all this land—the king
Whose name is bright and sweet as earth in
spring,

Whose love is mixed with Britain's very life
As heaven with earth at sunrise—thou, his
wife,

Hast called him—and the poison of the word
Set not thy tongue on fire—I lived and
heard—
Coward.

GUENDOLEN

Thou liest.

MADAN

If then thy speech rang true,
Why, now it rings not false.

GUENDOLEN

Thou art treacherous too—
His heart, thy father's very heart is thine—
O, well beseems it, meet it is, Locrine,
That liar and traitor and changeling he should
be
Who, though I bare him, was begot by thee.

MADAN

How have I lied, mother? Was this the lie,
That thou didst call my father coward, and I
Heard?

GUENDOLEN

Nay—I did but liken him with one
Not all unlike him; thou, my child, his son,
Art more unlike thy father.

MADAN

Was not then,
Of all our fathers, all recorded men,
The man whose name, thou sayest, is like his
name—
Paris—a sign in all men's mouths of shame?

GUENDOLEN

Nay, save when heaven would cross him in
the fight,
He bare him, say the minstrels, as a knight—
Yea, like thy father.

MADAN

Shame then were it none
Though men should liken me to him?

GUENDOLEN

My son,
I had rather see thee—see thy brave bright
head,
Strong limbs, clear eyes—drop here before
me dead.

MADAN

If he were true man, wherefore?

GUENDOLEN

False was he;
No coward indeed, but faithless, trothless—
we

Hold therefore, as thou sayest, his princely
name
Unprincely—dead in honour—quick in shame.

MADAN

And his to mine thou likenest?

GUENDOLEN

Thine? to thine?
God rather strike thy life as dark as mine
Than tarnish thus thine honour! For to me
Shameful it seems—I know not if it be—
For men to lie, and smile, and swear, and lie,
And bear the gods of heaven false witness. I
Can hold not this but shameful.

MADAN

Thou dost well.
I had liefer cast my soul alive to hell
Than play a false man false. But were he
true
And I the traitor—then what heaven should
do
I wot not, but myself, being once awake
Out of that treasonous trance, were fain to
slake
With all my blood the fire of shame wherein
My soul should burn me living in my sin.

GUENDOLEN.

Thy soul? Yea, there—how knowest thou,
boy, so well?—
The fire is lit that feeds the fires of hell.
Mine is aflame this long time now—but
thine—
O, how shall God forgive thee this, Locrine,
That thou, for shame of these thy treasons
done,
Hast rent the soul in sunder of thy son?

MADAN

My heart is whole yet, though thy speech be
fire
Whose flame lays hold upon it. Hath my sire
Wronged thee?

GUENDOLEN

Nay, child, I lied—I did but rave—
I jested—was my face, then, sad and grave,
When most I jested with thee? Child, my
brain

Is wearied, and my heart worn down with pain:

I thought awhile, for very sorrow's sake,
To play with sorrow—try thy spirit, and take
Comfort—God knows I know not what I
said,
My father, whom I loved, being newly dead.

MADAN

I pray thee that thou jest with me no more
Thus.

GUENDOLEN

Dost thou now believe me?

MADAN

No.

GUENDOLEN

I bore

A brave man when I bore thee.

MADAN

I desire

No more of laud or leasing. Hath my sire
Wronged thee?

GUENDOLEN

Never. But wilt thou trust me now?

MADAN

As trustful am I, mother of mine, as thou.

Enter LOCRINE.

LOCRINE

The gods be good to thee! How farest thou?

GUENDOLEN

Well.

Heaven hath no power to hurt me more: and
hell

No fire to fear. The world I dwelt in died
With my dead father. King, thy world is
wide

Wherein thy soul rejoicingly puts trust:
But mine is strait, and built by death of dust.

LOCRINE

Thy sire, mine uncle, stood the sole man, then,
That held thy life up happy? Guendolen,

Hast thou nor child nor husband—or are w
Worth no remembrance more at all of thee

GUENDOLEN

Thy speech is sweet; thine eyes are flower
that shine:

If ever siren bare a son, Locrine,
To reign in some green island and bear swa
On shores more shining than the front of da
And cliffs whose brightness dulls the morn
ing's brow,

That son of sorceries and of seas art thou.

LOCRINE

Nay, now thy tongue it is that plays on mer
And yet no siren's honey, Guendolen,
Is this fair speech, though soft as breathes th
south,

Which thus I kiss to silence on thy mouth.

GUENDOLEN

Thy soul is softer than this boy's of thine:
His heart is all toward battle. Was it min
That put such fire in his? for none that hear
Thy flatteries—nay, I take not back th
word—

A flattering lover lives my loving lord—
Could guess thine hand so great with spea
or sword.

LOCRINE

What have I done for thee to mock wit
praise

And make the boy's eyes widen? All m
days

Are worth not all a week, if war be all,
Of his that loved no bloodless festival—

Thy sire, and sire of slaughters: this wa
one

Who craved no more of comfort from th
su
But light to lighten him toward battle: I
Love no such life as bids men kill or die.

GUENDOLEN

Wert thou not woman more in word than act
Then unrevenged thy brother Albanact
Had given his blood to guard his realm and
thine:

But he that slew him found thy stroke
Locrine,

Strong as thy speech is gentle.

LOCRINE

God assoil

The dead our friends and foes!

GUENDOLEN

goodly spoil

Was that thine hand made then by Humber's
banks

Of all who swelled the Scythian's riotous
ranks

With storm of inland surf and surge of steel:
None there were left, if tongues ring true, to
feel

The yoke of days that breathe submissive
breath

More bitter than the bitterest edge of death.

LOCRINE

None.

GUENDOLEN

This was then a day of blood. I heard,
But know not whence I caught the wandering
word,

Strange women were there of that outland
crew,

Whom ruthlessly thy soldiers ravening slew.

LOCRINE

Nay, Scythians then had we been, worse than
they.

GUENDOLEN

These that were taken, then, thou didst not
slay?

LOCRINE

I did not say we spared them.

GUENDOLEN

Slay nor spare?

LOCRINE

How if they were not?

GUENDOLEN

What albeit they were?

Small hurt, meseems, my husband, had it
been

27

Though British hands had haled a Scythian
queen—

If such were found—some Roman foul and
fierce—

To death—or aught we hold for shame's sake
worse.

LOCRINE

For shame's own sake the hand that should
not fear

To take such monstrous work upon it here,
And did not wither from the wrist, should be
Hewn off ere hanging. Wolves or men are
we,

That thou shouldst question this?

GUENDOLEN

Not wolves, but men,

Surely: for beasts are loyal.

LOCRINE

Guendolen,

What irks thee?

GUENDOLEN

Nought save grief and love; Locrine,
A grievous love, a loving grief is mine.
Here stands my husband: there my father
lies:

I know not if there live in either's eyes
More love, more life of comfort. This our
son

Loves me: but is there else left living one
That loves me back as I love?

LOCRINE

Nay, but how

Has this wild question fired thine heart?

GUENDOLEN

Not thou!

No part have I—nay, never had I part—
Our child that hears me knows it—in thine
heart.

Thy sire it was that bade our hands be one
For love of mine, his brother: thou, his son,
Didst give not—no—but yield thy hand to
mine,

To mine thy lips—not thee to me, Locrine.

Thy heart has dwelt far off me all these years;
Yet have I never sought with smiles or tears

To lure or melt it meward. I have borne—
I that have borne to thee this boy—thy scorn,
Thy gentleness, thy tender words that bite
More deep than shame would, shouldst thou
spurn or smite

These limbs and lips made thine by contract
—made

No wife's, no queen's—a servant's—nay, thy
shade.

The shadow am I, my lord and king, of thee,
Who art spirit and substance, body and soul
to me.

And now,—nay, speak not—now my sire is
dead

Thou think'st to cast me crownless from thy
bed

Wherein I brought thee forth a son that now
Shall perish with me, if thou wilt—and thou
Shalt live and laugh to think of us—or yet
Play faith more foul—play falsen, and forget.

LOCRINE

Sharp grief has crazed thy brain. Thou
knowest of me—

GUENDOLEN

I know that nought I know, Locrine, of thee.

LOCRINE

What bids thee then revile me, knowing no
cause?

GUENDOLEN

Strong sorrow knows but sorrow's lawless
laws.

LOCRINE

Yet these should turn not grief to raging fire.

GUENDOLEN

They should not, had my heart my heart's
desire.

LOCRINE

Would God that love, my queen, could give
thee this!

GUENDOLEN

Thou dost not call me wife—nor call'st amiss.

LOCRINE

What name should serve to stay this fitful
strife?

GUENDOLEN

Thou dost not ill to call me not thy wife.

LOCRINE

My sister wellnigh wast thou once: and
now—

GUENDOLEN

Thy sister never I: my brother thou.

LOCRINE

How shall man sound this riddle? Read
me.

GUENDOLEN

As loves a sister, never loved I thee.

LOCRINE

Not when we played as twinborn child with
child?

GUENDOLEN

If then thou thought'st it, both were sore be-
guiled.

LOCRINE

I thought thee sweeter then than summer
doves.

GUENDOLEN

Yet not like theirs—woe worth it! were our
loves.

LOCRINE

No—for they meet and flit again apart.

GUENDOLEN

And we lived linked, inseparate—heart to
heart.

LOCRINE

Is this the grief that wrings and vexes thine

GUENDOLEN

Thy mother laughed when thou wast born
Locrine.

LOCRINE

Did she not well? sweet laughter speaks no
scorn.

GUENDOLEN

And thou didst laugh, and wept'st not, to be
born.

LOCRINE

Did I then ill? didst thou, then, weep to be?

GUENDOLEN

The same star lit not thee to birth and me.

LOCRINE

Thine eyes took light, then, from the fairer star.

GUENDOLEN

Nay; thine was nigh the sun, and mine afar.

LOCRINE

Too bright was thine to need the neighbouring sun.

GUENDOLEN

Nay, all its life of light was wellnigh done.

LOCRINE

If all on thee its light and life were shed
And darkness on thy birthday struck it dead,
It died most happy, leaving life and light
More fair and full in love's more than kind
sight.

GUENDOLEN

Art thou so thankful, king, for love's kind sake?

Would I were worthier thanks like these I take!

For thanks I cannot render thee again.

LOCRINE

Too heavy sits thy sorrow, Guendolen,
Upon thy spirit of life: I bid thee not
Take comfort while the fire of grief is hot
Still at thine heart, and scarce thy last keen
tear

Dried: yet the gods have left thee comfort here.

GUENDOLEN

Comfort? In thee, fair cousin—or my son?

LOCRINE

What hast thou done, Madan, or left undone?
Toward thee and me thy mother's mood to-day
Seems less than loving.

MADAN

Sire, I cannot say.

LOCRINE

Enough: an hour or half an hour is more
Than wrangling words should stuff with
barren store.

Comfort may'st thou bring to her, if I may
none,

When all her father quickens in her son.
In Cornish warfare if thou win thee praise,
Thine shall men liken to thy grandsire's days.

GUENDOLEN

To Cornwall must he fare and fight for thee?

LOCRINE

If heart be his—and if thy will it be.

GUENDOLEN

What is my will worth more than wind or
foam?

LOCRINE

Why, leave is thine to hold him here at home.

GUENDOLEN

What power is mine to speed him or to stay?

LOCRINE

None—should thy child cast love and shame
away.

GUENDOLEN

Most duteous wast thou to thy sire—and mine.

LOCRINE

Yea, truly—when their bidding sealed me
thine.

GUENDOLEN

Thy smile is as a flame that plays and flits.

LOCRINE

Yet at my heart thou knowest what fire there
sits.

GUENDOLEN

Not love's—not love's—toward me love burns
not there.

LOCRINE

What wouldst thou have me search therein
and swear?

GUENDOLEN

Swear by the faith none seeking there may find—

LOCRINE

Then—by the faith that lives not in thy kind—

GUENDOLEN

Ay—women's faith is water. Then, by men's—

LOCRINE

Yea—by Locrine's, and not by Guendolen's—

GUENDOLEN

Swear thou didst never love me more than now.

LOCRINE

I swear it—not when first we kissed. And thou?

GUENDOLEN

I cannot give thee back thine oath again.

LOCRINE

If now love wane within thee, lived it then?

GUENDOLEN

I said not that it waned. I would not swear—

LOCRINE

That it was ever more than shadows were?

GUENDOLEN

—Thy faith and heart were aught but shadow and fire.

LOCRINE

But thou, meseems, hast loved—thy son and sire.

GUENDOLEN

And not my lord: I cross and thwart him still.

LOCRINE

Thy grief it is that wounds me—not thy will.

GUENDOLEN

Wound? if I would, could I forsooth wound thee?

LOCRINE

I think thou wouldst not, though thine hands were free.

GUENDOLEN

These hands, now bound in wedlock fast to thine?

LOCRINE

Yet were thine heart not then dislinked from mine.

GUENDOLEN

Nay, life nor death, nor love whose child is hate,

May sunder hearts made one but once by fate.

Wrath may come down as fire between them—life

May bid them yearn for death as man for wife—

Grief bid them stoop as son to father—shame

Brand them, and memory turn their pulse to flame—

Or falsehood change their blood to poisoned wine—

Yet all shall rend them not in twain, Locrine.

LOCRINE

Who knows not this? but rather would I know

What thought distempers and distunes thy woe.

I came to wed my grief awhile to thine
For love's sake and for comfort's—

GUENDOLEN

Thou, Locrine?

To-day thou knowest not, nor wilt learn to-morrow,

The secret sense of such a word as sorrow.

Thy spirit is soft and sweet: I well believe
Thou wouldst, but well I know thou canst not

grieve.
The tears like fire, the fire that burns up

tears,
The blind wild woe that seals up eyes and

ears,
The sound of raging silence in the brain

That utters things unutterable for pain,
The thirst at heart that cries on death for

ease,
What knows thy soul's live sense of pangs like

these?
LOCRINE

Is no love left thee then for comfort?

GUENDOLEN

Thine?

LOCRINE

Thy son's may serve thee, though thou mock
at mine.

GUENDOLEN

Ay—when he comes again from Cornwall

LOCRINE

Nay;

If now his absence irk thee, bid him stay.

GUENDOLEN

I will not—yea, I would not, though I might,
Go, child: God guard and grace thine hand
in fight!

MADAN

My heart shall give it grace to guard my head.

LOCRINE

Well thought, my son: but scarce of thee well
said.

MADAN

No skill of speech have I: words said or sung
Help me no more than hand is helped of
tongue:

Yet, would some better wit than mine, I wis,
Help mine, I fain would render thanks for
this.

GUENDOLEN

Think not the boy I bare thee too much mine,
Though slack of speech and halting: I divine
Thou shalt not find him faint of heart or
hand,

Come what may come against him.

LOCRINE

Nay, this land

Bears not alive, nor bare it ere we came,
Such bloodless hearts as know not fame from
shame,

Or quail for hope's sake, or more faithless
fear,

From truth of single-sighted manhood, here
Born and bred up to read the word aright
That sunders man from beast as day from
night.

That red rank Ireland where men burn and
slay

Girls, old men, children, mothers, sires, and
say

These wolves and swine that skulk and strike
do well,
As soon might know sweet heaven from
ravenous hell.

GUENDOLEN

Ay: no such coward as crawls and licks the
dust

Till blood thence licked may slake his murder-
ous lust

And leave his tongue the suppler shall be
bred,

I think, in Britain ever—if the dead
May witness for the living. Though my son
Go forth among strange tribes to battle, none
Here shall he meet within our circling seas
So much more vile than vilest men as these.
And though the folk be fierce that harbour
there

As once the Scythians driven before thee were,
And though some Cornish water change its
name

As Fiumer then for furtherance of thy fame,
And take some dead man's on it—some dead
king's

Slain of our son's hand—and its watersprings
Wax red and radiant from such fire of fight
And swell as high with blood of hosts in
flight—

No fiercer foe nor worthier shall he meet
Than then fell grovelling at his father's feet.
Nor, though the day run red with blood of
men

As that whose hours rang round thy praises
then,

Shall thy son's hand be deeper dipped therein
Than his that gat him—and that held it sin
To spill strange blood of barbarous women—
wives

Or harlots—things of monstrous names and
lives—

Fit spoil for swords of harsher-hearted folk;
Nor yet, though some that dared and 'scaped
the stroke

Be fair as beasts are beauteous,—fit to make
False hearts of fools bow down for love's foul
sake,

And burn up faith to ashes—shall my son
Forsake his father's ways for such an one
As whom thy soldiers slew or slew not—thou
Hast no remembrance of them left thee now.

Even therefore may we stand assured of this:
 What lip soever lure his lip to kiss,
 Past question—else were he nor mine nor
 thine—
 This boy would spurn a Scythian concubine.

LOCRINE

Such peril scarce may cross or charm our
 son,
 Though fairer women earth or heaven sees
 none
 Than those whose breath makes mild our wild
 south-west
 Where now he fares not forth on amorous
 quest.

GUENDOLEN

Wilt thou not bless him going, and bid him
 speed?

LOCRINE

So be it: yet surely not in word but deed
 Lives all the soul of blessing or of ban
 Or wrought or won by manhood's might for
 man.
 The gods be gracious to thee, boy, and give
 Thy wish its will!

MADAN

So shall they, if I live.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*Gardens of the Palace*

Enter CAMBER and DEBON

CAMBER

Nay, tell not me: no smoke of lies can
 smother
 The truth which lighter through thy lies: I
 see
 Whose trust it is that sees a liar of thee,
 And how thy falsehood, man, has faith for
 mother.
 What, is not thine the breast wherein my
 brother
 Seals all his heart up? Had he put in me
 Faith—but his secret has thy tongue for key,
 And all his counsel opens to none other.
 Thy tongue, thine eye, thy smile unlocks his
 trust
 Who puts no trust in man.

DEBON

Sir, then were I
 A traitor found more perfect fool than knave
 Should I play false, or turn for gold to do
 A gem worth all the gold beneath the sky
 The diamond of the flawless faith he gave
 Who sealed his trust upon me.

CAMBER

What art thou?
 Because thy beard ere mine were black w
 grey
 Art thou the prince, and I thy man? I s
 Thou shalt not keep his counsel from me.

DEBON

Now,
 Prince, may thine old born servant lift h
 brow
 As from the dust to thine, and answer—Na
 Nor canst thou turn this nay of mine to ye
 With all the lightning of thine eyes, I trow
 Nor this my truth to treason.

CAMBER

God us aid!
 Art thou not mad? Thou knowest wha
 whispers crawl
 About the court with serpent sound and
 speed,
 Made out of fire and falsehood; or if made
 Not all of lies—it may be thus—not all—
 Black yet no less with poison.

DEBON

Prince, indeed
 I know the colour of the tongues of fire
 That feed on shame to slake the thirst of hate;
 Hell-black, and hot as hell: nor age nor state
 May pluck the fangs forth of their foul desire:
 I that was trothplight servant to thy
 A king more kingly than the fro
 That bade our lives bow down
 When death laid hold on him—f
 hire,
 Prince, would I lie to thee: nay, w
 Falsehood? thou knowest I would not.

CAMBER

Why, thou art old;
 To thee could falsehood bear but fruitless
 fruit—

Lean grafts and sour. I think thou wouldst not.

DEBON

Wales

In such a lord lives happy: young and bold
And yet not mindless of thy sire King Brute,
Who loved his loyal servants even as they
Loved him. Yea, surely, bitter were the
fruit,

Prince Camber, and the tree rotten at root
That bare it, whence my tongue should take
to-day

For thee the taste of poisonous treason.

CAMBER

Nay,

What boots it though thou plight thy word to
boot?

True servant wast thou to my sire King
Brute,

And Brute thy king true master to thee.

DEBON

Yea.

Troy, ere her towers dropped hurtling down
in flame,

Bare not a son more noble than the sire
Whose son begat thy father. Shame it were
Beyond all record in the world of shame,
If they that hither bore in heart that fire
Which none save men of heavenly heart may
bear

Had left no sign, though Troy were spoiled
and sacked,

That heavenly was the seed they saved.

CAMBER

No sign?

Though nought my fame be,—though no
praise of mine

Be worth men's tongues for word or thought
or act—

Shall fame forget my brother Albanact,
Or how those Huns who drank his blood for
wine

Poured forth their own for offering to Loc-
rine?

Though all the soundless maze of time were
tracked,

No men should man find nobler.

DEBON

Surely none.

No man loved ever more than I thy brothers,
Prince.

CAMBER

Ay—for them thy love is bright like spring,
And colder toward me than the wintering sun.
What am I less—what less am I than others,
That thus thy tongue discrowns my name of
king,

Dethrones my title, disanoints my state,
And pricks me down but petty prince?

DEBON

My lord—

CAMBER

Ay? must my name among their names stand
scored

Who keep my brother's door or guard his
gate?

A lordling—princeling—one that stands to
wait—

That lights him back to bed or serves at
board.

Old man, if yet thy foundering brain record
Aught—if thou know that once my sire was
great,

Then must thou know he left no less to me,
His youngest, than to those my brethren born,
Kingship.

DEBON

I know it. Your servant, sire, am I,
Who lived so long your sire's.

CAMBER

And how had he
Endured thy silence or sustained thy scorn?
Why must I know not what thou knowest of?

DEBON

Why?

Hast thou not heard, king, that a true man's
trust

Is king for him of life and death? Locrine
Hath sealed with trust my lips—nay, prince,
not mine—

His are they now.

CAMBER

Thou art wise as he, and just,
And secret. God requite thee! yea, he must,
For man shall never. If my sword here
shine
Sunward—God guard that reverend head of
thine!

DEBON

My blood should make thy sword the sooner
rust,
And rot thy fame for ever. Strike.

CAMBER

Thou knowest
I will not. Am I Scythian born, or Greek,
That I should take thy bloodshed on my
hand?

DEBON

Nay—if thou seest me soul to soul, and show-
est
Mercy—

CAMBER

Thou think'st I would have slain thee?
Speak.

DEBON

Nay, then I will, for love of all this land:
Lest, if suspicion bring forth strife, and fear
Hatred, its face be withered with a curse;
Lest the eyeless doubt of unseen ill be worse
Than very truth of evil. Thou shalt hear
Such truth as falling in a base man's ear
Should bring forth evil indeed in hearts per-
verse;

But forth of thine shall truth, once known,
disperse

Doubt: and dispersed, the cloud shall leave
thee clear

In judgment—nor, being young, more merci-
less,

I think, than I toward hearts that erred and
yearned,

Struck through with love and blind with fire
of life

Enkindled. When the sharp and stormy
stress

Of Scythian ravin round our borders burned
Eastward, and he that faced it first in strife,

King Albanact, thy brother, fought and fell,
Locrine our lord, and lo dliest born of you,—

Thy chief, my prince, and mine—against
them drew

With all the force our southern strengths
might tell,

And by the strong mid water's seaward swell
That sunders half our Britain met and slew

The prince whose blood baptized its fame
anew

And left no record of the name to dwell
Whereby men called it ere it wore his name,

Humber; and wide on wing the carnage went
Along the drenched red fields that felt the
tramp

At once of fliers and slayers with feet like
flame:

But the king halted, seeing a royal tent
Reared, with its ensign crowning all the
camp,

And entered—where no Scythian spoil he
found,

But one fair face, the Scythian's sometime
prey,

A lady's whom their ships had borne away
By force of warlike hand from German
ground,

A bride and queen by violent power fast
bound

To the errant helmsman of their fierce array.
And her, left lordless by that ended fray.

Our lord beholding loved, and hailed, and
crowned

Queen.

CAMBER

Queen! and what perchance of Guendolen?
Slept she forsooth forgotten?

DEBON

Nay, my lord

Knows that albeit their hands were precon-
tract

By Brute your father dying, no man of men
May fasten hearts with hands in one accord.

The love our master knew not that he lacked
Fulfilled him even as heaven by dawn is
filled

With fire and light that burns and blinds and
leads

All men to wise or witless works or deeds,
Beholding, ere indeed he wist or willed,

Eyes that sent flame through veins that age
had chilled.

CAMBER

Thine—with that grey goat's fleece on chin,
sir? Needs

Must she be fair: thou, wrapt in age's weeds,
Whose blood, if time hath touched it not and
stilled,

The sun's own fire must once have kindled,—
thou

Sing praise of soft-lipped women? doth not
shame

Sting thee, to sound this minstrel's note, and
gild
A girl's proud face with praises, though her
brow
Were bright as dawn's? And had her grace
no name
For men to worship by? Her name?

DEBON

Estrild.

CAMBER

My brother is a prince of paramours—
Eyes coloured like the springtide sea, and
hair
Bright as with fire of sundawn—face as fair
As mine is swart and worn with haggard
hours,
Though less in years than his—such hap was
ours
When chance drew forth for us the lots that
were
I did close in time's clenched hand: and now I
swear,
Though his be goodlier than the stars or
flowers,
I would not change this head of mine, or
crown
Scarce worth a smile of his—thy lord Loc-
rine's—
For that fair head and crown imperial: nay,
Not were I cast by force of fortune down
Lower than the lowest lean serf that prowls
and pines
And loathes for fear all hours of night and
day.

DEBON

What says my lord? how means he?

CAMBER

Vex not thou
Thine old hoar head with care to learn of me
This. Great is time, and what he wills to be
Is here or ever proof may bring it: now,
Now is the future present. If thy vow
Constrain thee not, yet would I know of thee
One thing: this lustrous love-bird, where is
she?
What nest is hers on what green flowering
bough
Deep in what wild sweet woodland?

DEBON

Good my lord,
Have I not sinned already—flawed my faith,
To lend such ear even to such royal suit?

CAMBER

Yea, by my kingdom hast thou—by my
sword,
Yea. Now speak on.

DEBON

Yet hope—or honour—saith
I did not ill to trust the blood of Brute
Within thee. Not prince Hector's sovereign
soul,
The light of all thy lineage, more abhorred
Treason than all his days did Brute my lord.
My trust shall rest not in thee less than whole.

CAMBER

Speak, then: too long thou falterest nigh the
goal.

DEBON

There is a bower built fast beside a ford
In Essex, held in sure and secret ward
Of woods and walls and waters, still and sole
As love could choose for harbourage: there
the king
Keeps close from all men now these seven
years since
The light wherein he lives: and there hath
she
Borne him a maiden child more sweet than
spring.

CAMBER

A child her daughter? there now hidden?

DEBON

Prince,

What ails thee?

CAMBER

Nought. This river's name?

DEBON

The Ley.

CAMBER

Nigh Leytonstone in Essex—called of old
By men thine elders Duroilitum? There

Are hind and fawn couched close in one green
lair?

Speak: hast thou not my faith in pawn, to
hold

Fast as my brother's heart this love, untold
And undivined of all men? must I swear
Twice—I, to thee?

DEBON

But if thou set no snare,
Why shine thine eyes so sharp? I am over-
bold:
Sir, pardon me.

CAMBER

My sword shall split thine heart
With pardon if thou palter with me.

DEBON

Sir,
There is the place: but though thy brow be
grim
As hell—I knew thee not the man thou art—
I will not bring thee to it.

CAMBER

For love of her?
Nay—better shouldst thou know my love of
him.
[Exeunt.]

ACT II

SCENE I.—*The banks of the Ley*

Enter ESTRILD and SABRINA

SABRINA

But will my father come not? not to-day,
Mother?

ESTRILD

God help thee! child, I cannot say.
Why this o. all days yet in summer's sight?

SABRINA

My birthday!

ESTRILD

That should bring him—if it may.

SABRINA

May should be must: he must not be
His faith was pledged to me as king
'nright.

ESTRILD

Small fear he should not keep it—if he n

SABRINA

Might! and a king's might his? do
bear sway
For nought, that aught should keep him h
till night?
Why didst thou bid God help me wh
sought
To know but of his coming?

ESTRILD

Even for nought
But laughter even to think how strait a bo
Shuts in the measure of thy sight and thou
Who seest not why thy sire hath heed
aught
Save thee and me—nor wherefore men st
crowned
And girt about with empire.

SABRINA

Have they found
Such joy therein as meaner things ha
wrought?
Sing me the song that ripples round a
round.

ESTRILD (*sings*):—

Had I wist, quoth spring to the swallow,
That earth could forget me, kissed
By summer, and lured to follow
Down ways that I know not, I,
My heart should have waxed not high:
Mid March would have seen me die,
Had I wist.

Had I wist, O spring, said the swallow,
That hope was a sunlit mist
And the faint light heart of it hollow,
Thy woods had not heard me sing,
Thy winds had not known my wing;
It had faltered ere thine did, spring,
Had I wist.

SABRINA

That song is hardly even as wise as I—
Nay, very foolishness it is. To die

In March before its life were well on wing,
Before its time and kindly season—why
Should spring be sad—before the swallows
fly—

Enough to dream of such a wintry thing?
Such foolish words were more unmeet for
spring

Than snow for summer when his heart is
high;

And why should words be foolish when they
sing?

The song-birds are not.

ESTRILD

Dost thou understand,
Child, what the birds are singing?

SABRINA

All the land
Knows that: the water tells it to the rushes
Aloud, and lower and softer to the sand:
The flower-fays, lip to lip and hand in hand,
Laugh and repeat it all till darkness hushes
Their singing with a word that falls and
crushes

All song to silence down the river-strand
And where the hawthorns hearken for the
thrushes.

And all the secret sense is sweet and wise
That sings through all their singing, and
replies

When we would know if heaven be gay or
grey

And would not open all too soon our eyes
To look perchance on no such happy skies
As sleep brings close and waking blows away.

ESTRILD

What gives thy fancy faith enough to say
This?

SABRINA

Why, meseems the sun would hardly rise
Else, nor the world be half so glad of day.

ESTRILD

Why didst thou crave of me that song, Sa-
brine?

SABRINA

Because, methought, though one were king
or queen

And had the world to play with, if one missed

What most were good to have, such joy, I
ween,

Were woful as a song with sobs between
And well might wall for ever, 'Had I wist!'
And might my father do but as he list,
And make this day what other days have
been,

I should not shut to-night mine eyes unvisited.

ESTRILD

I wis thou wouldst not.

SABRINA

Then I would he were
No king at all, and save his golden hair
Wore on his gracious head no golden crown.
Must he be king for ever?

ESTRILD

Not if prayer
Could lift from off his heart that crown of
care
And draw him toward us as with music
down.

SABRINA

Not so, but upward to us. He would but
frown

To hear thee talk as though the woodlands
there

Were built no lordlier than the wide-walled
town.

Thou knowest, when I desire of him to see
What manner of crown that wreath of towers
may be

That makes its proud head shine like older
Troy's,

His brows are bent even while he laughs on
me

And bids me think no more thereon than he,
For flowers are serious things, but towers are
toys.

ESTRILD

Ay, child; his heart was less care's throne
than joy's,

Power's less than love's friend ever: and with
thee

His mood that plays is blither than a boy's.

SABRINA

I would the boy would give the maid her will.

ESTRILD

Has not thine heart as mine has here its fill:

SABRINA

So have our hearts while sleeping—till they
w ke.

ESTRILD

Too soon is this for waking: sleep thou still.

SABRINA

Bid then the dawn sleep, and the world lie
chill.

ESTRILD

This nest is warm for one small wood-dove's
sake.

SABRINA

And warm the world that feels the sundawn
break.

ESTRILD

But hath my fledgeling cushat here slept ill?

SABRINA

No plaint is this, but pleading, that I make.

ESTRILD

Plead not against thine own glad life: the
plea

Were like a wrangling babe's that fain would
be

Free from the help its hardy heart contemns,
Free from the hand that guides and guards
it, free

To take its way and sprawl and stumble.
Seel

Have we not here enough of diadems
Hung high round portals pillared smooth
with stems

More fair than marble?

SABRINA

This is but the Ley:
I fain would look upon the lordlier Thames.

ESTRILD

A very water-bird thou art: the river
So draws thee to it that, seeing, my heart-
strings quiver

And yearn with fear lest peril teach thee fear
Too late for help or daring to deliver.

SABRINA

Nay, let the wind make willows weep
shiver:

Me shali nor wind nor water, while I hear
What goodly words saith each in other's
And which is given the gift, and which
giver,

I know not, but they take and give
cheer.

ESTRILD

Howe'er this be, thou hast no heed of mine
To take so little of this life of thine

I gave and would not see thee cast away
For childishness in childhood, though
shine

For me sole comfort, for my lord Locrine
Chief comfort in the world.

SABRINA

Nay, mother, nay,
Make me not weep with chiding: wilt thou
say

I love thee not? Hark! see, my sire for sign
I hear his horse.

ESTRILD

He comes!

SABRINA

He comes to-day!
[Exeunt]

SCENE II.—*Troynovant. A Room in the
Palace*

Enter GUENDOLEN and CAMBER

GUENDOLEN

I know not, sir, what ails you to desire
Such audience of me as I give.

CAMBER

What ails
Me, sister? Were the heart in me no higher
Than his who heeds no more than harpers'
tales
Such griefs as set a sister's heart on fire—

GUENDOLEN

Then were my brother now at rest in Wales
And royal.

CAMBER

Am I less than royal here?

GUENDOLEN

Even here as there alike, sir.

CAMBER

Dost thou fear

Nothing?

GUENDOLEN

My princely cousin, not indeed
Much that might hap at word or will of thine.

CAMBER

Ay—meanest am I of my father's seed,
If men misjudge not, cousin; and Locrine
Noblest.

GUENDOLEN

Should I gainsay their general rede,
My heart would mock me.

CAMBER

Such a spirit as mine
Being spiritless—my words heartless—mine
acts
Faint shadows of Locrine's or Albanact's?

GUENDOLEN

Nay—not so much—I said not so. Say thou
What thou wouldst have—if aught thou
wouldst—with me.

CAMBER

No man might see thine eyes and lips and
brow
Who would not—what he durst not crave of
thee.

GUENDOLEN

Ay, verily? And thy spirit exalts thee now
So high that these thy words fly forth so free,
And fain thine act would follow—flying above
Shame's reach and fear's? What gift may
this be? Love?
Or liking? or compassion?

CAMBER

Take not thus
Mine innocent words amiss, nor wrest awry
Their piteous purpose toward thee.

GUENDOLEN

Piteous!

Who lives so low and looks upon the sky
As would desire—who shares the sun with us
That might deserve thy pity?

CAMBER

Thou.

GUENDOLEN

Not I,

Though I were cast out hence, cast off, dis-
crowned,
Abject, ungirt of all that guards me round,
Naked. What villainous madness, knave
and king,
Is this that puts upon thy babbling tongue
Poison?

CAMBER

The truth is as a snake to sting
That breathes ill news: but where its fang
hath stung
The very pang bids health and healing spring.
God knows the grief wherewith my spirit is
wrung—
The spirit of thee so scorned, so misesteemed,
So mocked with strange misprision and mis-
deemed
Merciless, false, unbrotherly—to take
Such task upon it as may burn thine heart
With bitterer hatred of me that I spake
What, had I held my peace and crept apart
And tamed my soul to silence for thy sake
And mercy toward the royal thing thou art,
Chance haply might have made a fiery
sword
To slay thee with—slay thee, and spare thy
lord.

GUENDOLEN

Worse had it done to slay my lord, and spare
Me. Wilt thou not show mercy toward me?
Then
Strike with that sword mine heart through—
if thou dare.
All know thy tongue's edge deadly.

CAMBER

Guendolen,

Thou seest me like a vassal bound to bear
All bitter words that bite the hearts of men
From thee, so be it this please thy wrath. I
stand
Slave of thy tongue and subject of thine hand,

And pity thee. Take, if thou wilt, my head;
Give it my brother. Thou shalt hear me
 speak
First, though the soothfast word that hangs
 unsaid
As yet, being spoken,—alt' it this hand be
 weak
And faint this heart, thou sayest—should
 strike thee dead
Even with that rose of wrath on brow and
 cheek.

GUENDOLEN

I hold not thee too faint of heart to slay
Women. Say forth whate'er thou hast heart
 to say.

CAMBER

Silence I have not heart to keep, and see
Scorn and derision gird thee round with
 shame,
Not knowing what all thy serfs who mock at
 thee
Know, and make mirth and havoc of thy
 name.
Does this not move thee?

GUENDOLEN

How should aught move me
Fallen from such tongues as falsehood finds
 the same—
Such tongues as fraud or treasonous hate
 o'erscurfs
With leprous lust—a prince's or a serf's?

CAMBER

That lust of the evil-speaking tongue which
 gives
Quick breath to deadly lies, and stings to life
The rottenness of falsehood, when it lives,
Falls dumb, and leaves the lie to bring forth
 strife.
The liar will say no more—his heart misgives
His knaveship—should he sunder man and
 wife?
Such, sister, in thy sight, it seems, am I.
Yet shalt thou take, to keep or cast it by.
The truth of shame I would not have thee
 hear,—
Not might I choose,—but choose I may not.

GUENDOLEN

And truth? Shame never toward thine
 heart came near,

Shame

And all thy life hath hung about thy name
Nor ever truth drew nigh the lips that f
Whitens, and makes the blood that f
 them tame.
Speak all thou wilt—but even for shame,
 sooth,
Talk not of shame—and tell me not of tr

CAMBER

Then shalt thou hear a lie. Thy loving l
Loves none save thee; his heart's pulse be
 in thine;
No fairer woman, captive of his sword,
Caught ever captive and subdued Lochrine
The god of lies bear witness. At the ford
Of Humber blood was never shed like wi
Our brother Albanact lived, fought, and di
Never: and I that swear it have not lied.

GUENDOLEN

Fairer?

CAMBER

They say it: but what are lies to thee?

GUENDOLEN

Art thou nor man nor woman?

CAMBER

Man.

Nay—I trust—

GUENDOLEN

And hast heart to make thy spoil of me?

CAMBER

Would God I might!

GUENDOLEN

Thou art made of lies and lust—
Earth's worst is all too good for such to see,
And yet thine eyes turn heavenward—as they
 must,
Being man's—if man be such as thou—and
 soil
The light they see. Thou hast made of me
 thy spoil,
Thy scorn, thy profit—yea, my whole soul's
 plunder
Is all thy trophy, thy triumphal prize
And harvest reaped of thee; nay, trampled
 under

And rooted up and scattered. Yet the skies
That see thy trophies reared are full of thun-
der,
And heaven's high justice loves not lust and
lies.

CAMBER

Ill then should fare thy lord—if heaven be
just,
And lies be lies, and lawless love be lust.

GUENDOLEN

Thou liest. I know my lord and thee. Thou
liest.

CAMBER

If he be true and truth be false, I lie.

GUENDOLEN

Thou art lowest of all men born—while he
sits highest.

CAMBER

Ay—while he sits. How long shall he sit
high?

GUENDOLEN

If I but whisper him of thee, thou diest.

CAMBER

I fear not, if till then secure am I.

GUENDOLEN

Secure as fools are hardy live thou still.

CAMBER

While ill with good is guerdoned, good with
ill.

GUENDOLEN

I have it in my mind to take thine head.
Dost thou not fear to put me thus in fear?

CAMBER

I fear nor man nor woman, quick nor dead:
And dead in spirit already stand'st thou here.

GUENDOLEN

Thou dar'st not swear my lord hath wronged
my bed.
Thou dar'st but smile and mutter, lie and
leer.

CAMBER

I swear no queen bore ever crown or brow
Who meeklier bore a heavier wrong than
thou.

GUENDOLEN

From thee will I bear nothing. Get thee
hence:
Thine eyes defile me. Get thee from my
sight

CAMBER

The gods defend thee, soul and spirit and
sense,
From sense of things thou dar'st not read
aright!
Farewell.

[Exit.

GUENDOLEN

Fare thou not well, and be defence
Far from thy soul cast naked forth by night!
Hate rose from hell a liar: love came divine
From heaven: yet she that bore thee bore
Locrine.

[Exit.

ACT III

SCENE I.—*Troynovant. A Room in the
Palace*

Enter LOCRINE and DEBON

LOCRINE

Thou knowest not what she knows or dreams
of? why
Her face is dark and wan, her lip and eye
Restless and red as fever? Hast thou kept
Faith?

DEBON

Has my master found my faith a lie
Once all these years through? have I strayed
or slept
Once, when he bade me watch? what proof
has leapt
At last to light against me?

LOCRINE

Surely, none.

Weep not.

DEBON

My lord's grey vassal hath not wept
Once, even since darkness covered from the
sun

The woman's face—the sole sweet wifelike
one—

Whose memory holds his heart yet fast: but
now

Tears, were old age not poor in tears, might
run

Free as the words that bid his stricken brow
Burn and bow down to hear them.

LOCRINE

Hast not thou
Held counsel—played the talebearer whose
tales

Bear plague abroad and poison, knowing not
how—

Not with my wife nor brother?

DEBON

Nought avails
Falseness: and truth it is the king of Wales
So plied me, sir, with force of craft and
threat—

LOCRINE

That thou, whose faith swerves never, flags
nor fails

Nor falters, being as stars are loyal, yet
Wast found as those that fall from heaven
forget

Their station, shoot and shudder down to
death

Deep as the pit of hell? What snares were
set

To take thy soul—what mist of treasonous
breath

Made blind in thee the sense that quickeneth
In true men's inward eyesight when they
know

And know not how they know the word it
saith,

The warning word that whispers loud or
low—

I ask not: be it enough these things are so.
Thou hast played me false.

DEBON

Nay, now this long time since
We have seen the queen's face wan with wrath
and woe—

Have seen her lip writhe and her eyelid wince
To take men's homage—proof that might
convince

Of grief inexpiable and insatiate shame
Her spirit in all men's judgment.

LOCRINE

But the prince—
My brother, whom thou knowest by pr
not fame,

A coward whose heart is all a flickering fla
That fain would burn and dares not—wh
had he

The poison that he gave her? Speak:
came

By chance—nushap—most haplessly for t
Who hadst my heart in thine, and mad
me

No more than might for folly's sake or fea
Be loved for even such eyes as his to see

Old and that wast, I would not see thy tea
God comfort thy dishonour!

DEBON

All these years
Have I not served thee?

LOCRINE

Yea. So cheer the

DEBON

Cheered be the traitor, whom the true ma
cheers?

Nay, smite me: God can be not such as th
And will not damn me with forgiveness
How

Hast thou such heart, to comfort such as me
God's thunder were less fearful than the brow
That frowns not on thy friend found false to
thee.

Thy friend—thou said'st thy friend. Strange
friends are we

Nay, slay me—na slay me rather.

LOCRINE

Take comfort God's reach—end
shall be will

Here as of old accomplished not in
All good with that none may make a sound.
Thy works and mine are ripples on the sea.
Take heart, I say we know not their end.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE II.—Gardens of the Palace

Enter CAMBER and MADAN

CAMBER

Has no man seen thee?

MADAN

Had he seen, and spoken,
He should lose its tongue. I am far
away
In Cornwall.

CAMBER

Where the front of war is broken
By the set of the lance—
Shall I have to pay—thou surely
Knowest—
Thou shalt give knowledge
To the babes, and the old
And the young—
Thou shalt be all to me?

I think
I can smite and burn and strangle
Without leave of his parting lord
His tongue that else were sharper than a
Sword
The throat it sprang from.

CAMBER

Nephew mine,
I ever loved thee—not thy sire Locrine
—and very and only love of thee
I desire, or ever even thy mother
Loved thee, ere to know of thee and me
Which loves her best—her and thy sire my
brother.

MADAN

He being away, far hence—and so none
Other—
He—should share the knowledge?

CAMBER

Surely not
He. Knowest thou whither hence he went?

MADAN

God wot,
No, haply toward some hidden paramour.

CAMBER

Alas! that should set not, for thy mother's sake,
And thine, the heart in thee on fire?

MADAN

An hour
Is less than even the time wherein we take
Breath to let loose the word that fain would
break,
And cannot, even for passion,—if we set
An hour against the length of life: and yet
Less in account of life should be those hours—
Should be? should be not, live not, be not
known,
Not thought of, not remembered even as
ours,—
Whereon the flesh or fancy bears alone
Rule that the soul repudiates for its own,
Rejects and mocks and mourns for, and re-
claims
Its nature, none the ignobler for the shames
That were but shadows on it—shed but shade
And perished. If thy brother and king, my
sire—

CAMBER

No king of mine is he—we are equal, weighed
Aright in state, though here his throne stand
higher

MADAN

So be it, if even some earth-born fire
Have the loftiest head that earth
Sees rose from a charm of baser birth
And force like than the sacred spell
That link in my mother, what were
this
To her or to me?

CAMBER

To her no more than hell
To souls cast forth who hear all hell-fire hiss
All round them, and who feel the red worm's
kiss
Shoot mortal poison through the heart that
rests
Immortal: serpents suckled at her breasts,
Fire feeding on her limbs, less pain should be
Than sense of pride laid waste and love laid
low,
If she be queen or woman: and to thee—

MADAN

To me that wax not woman though I know
This, what shall hap or hap not?

CAMBER

Were it so,
It should not irk thee, she being wronged
alone;
Thy mother's bed, and not thy father's
throne,
Being soiled with usurpation. Ay? but say
That now mine uncle and her sire liet dead
And helpless now to help her, or affray
The heart wherein her ruin and thine were
bred,
Not she were cast forth only from his bed,
But thou, loathed issue of a contract loathed
Since first their hands were joined not but
betrothed,
Wert cast forth out of kingship? stripped of
state,
Unmade his son, unseated, unallowed,
Discrowned, disorbed, discredited—thou, but
late
Prince, and of all men's throats acclaimed
aloud,
Of all men's hearts accepted and avowed
Prince, now proclaimed for some sweet bas-
tard's sake
Peasant?

MADAN

Thy sire was sure less man than snake,
Though mine miscall thee brother.

CAMBER

Coward or mad?
Which might one call thee rather, whose
harsh heart
Envenoms so thy tongue toward one that had
No thought less kindly—toward even thee
that art
Kindless—than best beseems a kinsman's
part?

MADAN

Lay not on me thine own foul shame, whose
tongue
Would turn my blood to poison, while it stung
Thy brother's fame to death. I know my
sire
As shame knows thee—and better no man
knows
Aught.

CAMBER

Have thy will, then: take thy full desire
Drink dry the draught of ruin: bid all blow
Welcome: being harsh with friends, be mild
with foes,
And give shame thanks for buffets. Yet
thought—
But how should help avail where heart
nought?

MADAN

Yet—thou didst think to help me?

CAMBER

Kinsman, a
My hand had held the field beside thine own
And all wild hills that know my rallying cry
Had poured forth war for heart's pure love
alone
To help thee—wouldst thou heed me—to the
throne.

MADAN

For pure heart's love? what wage holds love
in fee?
Might half my kingdom serve? Nay, more
not me,
Fair uncle: should I cleave the crown in
twain
And gird thy temples with the goodlier hall?
Think'st thou my debt might so be paid
again—
Thy sceptre made a more imperial staff
Than sways as now thy hill-folk?

CAMBER

Dost thou laugh?
Were this too much for kings to give and take?
If warrior Wales do battle for thy sake,
Should I that kept thy crown for thee be held
Worth less than royal guerdon?

MADAN

Keep thine own,
And let the loud fierce knaves thy brethren
quelled
Ward off the wolves whose hides should line
thy throne,
Wert thou no coward, no recreant to the bone,
No liar in spirit and soul and heartless heart,
No slave, no traitor—nought of all thou art.
A thing like thee, made big with braggart
breath,

Whose tongue shoots fire, whose promise
poisons trust,
Would cast a shieldless soldier forth to death
And wreck three realms to sate his rancorous
lust
With ruin of them who have weighed and
found him dust.
Get thee to Wales: there strut in speech and
swell:
And thence betimes *Cloud* speed thee safe to
hell.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

ACT IV

SCENE I.—*The banks of the Ley*

Enter LOCRINE and ESTRILD

LOCRINE

If thou didst ever love me, love me now.
I am weary at heart of all on earth save thee.
And yet I lie: and yet I lie not. Thou—
Dost thou not think for love's sake scorn of
me?

ESTRILD

As earth of heaven: as morning of the sun.

LOCRINE

Nay, what thinks evening, whom he leaves
undone?

ESTRILD

Thou madest me queen and woman: though
my life
Were taken, these thou couldst not take again,
The gifts thou gavest me. More am I than
wife,
Whom, till my tyrant by thy strength were
slain
And by thy love my servile shame cast out,
My naked sorrows clothed and girt about
With princelier pride than binds the brows of
queens,
Thou sawest of all things least and lowest
alive.

What means thy doubt?

LOCRINE

Fear knows not what it means:
And I was fearful even of clouds that drive

Across the dawn, and die—of all, of nought—
Winds whispering on the darkling ways of
thought,
Sunbeams that flash like fire, and hopes like
fears
That slay themselves, and live again, and die.
But in mine eyes thy light is, in mine ears
Thy music: I am thine, and more than I,
Being half of thy sweet soul.

ESTRILD

Woe worth me then:
For one requires thee wholly.

LOCRINE

Guendolen?

ESTRILD

I said she was the fairer—and I lied not.

LOCRINE

Thou art the fairest fool alive.

ESTRILD

But she,
Being wise, exceeds me: yet, so she divide
not
Thine heart, my best-beloved of liars, with
me,
I care not—nor I will not care. Some part
She hath had, it may be, of thy fond false
heart—
Nay, couldst thou choose? but now, though
she be fairer,
Let her take all or none: I will not be
Partaker of her perfect sway, nor sharer
With any on earth more dear or less to thee.
Nay, be not wroth: what wilt thou have me
say?

That I can love thee less than she can? Nay,
Thou knowest I will not ill to her; but she—
Would she not burn my child and me with
fire
To wreak herself, who loved thee once, on
thee?

LOCRINE

Thy fear is darker, child, than her desire.

ESTRILD

I fear not her at all: I would not fear
The one thing fearful to me yet, who here

Sit walled around with waters and with woods
From all things fearful but the fear of change.

LOCRINE

Fear thou not that: for nothing born eludes
Time; and the joy were sorrowful and
strange

That should endure for ever. Yea, I think
Such joy would pray for sorrow's cup to
drink,

Such constancy desire an end, for mere
Long weariness of watching. Thou and I
Have all our will of life and loving here,—
A heavenlier heaven on earth: but we shall
die,

And if we died not, love we might outlive
As now shall love outlive us.

ESTRILD

We?

LOCRINE

Forgive!

ESTRILD

King! and I held thee more than man!

LOCRINE

Thou art more than I—more strong and wise;
I know
Thou couldst not live one hour if love were
not.

ESTRILD

And thou?

LOCRINE

I would not. All the world were woe,
And all the day night, if the love I bear thee
Were plucked out of the life wherein I wear
thee
As crown and comfort of its nights and days.

ESTRILD

Thou liest—for love's sake and for mine—
and I

Lie not, who swear by thee whereon I gaze
I hold no truth so hallowed as the lie
Wherewith my love redeems me from the
snare

Dark doubt had set to take me.

LOCRINE

Wilt thou swear—
—By what thou wilt soever—by the sun
That sees us—by the light of all the
flowers—

By this full stream whose waves we hear
run—

By all that is nor mine nor thine, but ours
That thou didst ever doubt indeed? or dre
That doubt, whose breath bids love of l
misdeem,

Were other than the child of hate and hell
The liar first-born of falsehood?

ESTRILD

Nay—I think—
God help me!—hardly. Never? can I te
When half our soul and all our senses sink
From dream to dream down deathward, sl
with sleep,
How may faith hold assurance fast, or ke
Her power to cast out fear for love's sake

LOCRINE

I
Could doubt not thee, waking or sleeping.

ESTRILD

No
Thou art not mad. How should the sun
sky
Betray the sun? cast out the sunshine? S
Art thou to me as light to heaven: shoul
light
Die, were not heaven as hell and noon a
night?
And wherefore should I hold more dear tha
life
Death? Could I live, and lack thee? Tho
O king,
Hast lands and lordships—and a royal wife—
And rule of seas that tire the seamew
wing—

And fame as far as fame can travel; I,
What have I save this home wherein to die
Except thou love me? Nay, nor home wen
this,

No place to die or live in, were I sure
Thou didst not love me. Swear not by thi
kiss

That love lives longer—faith may more en
dure—

Than one poor kiss that passes with the
breath
Of lips that gave it life at once and death.
Why shouldst thou swear, and wherefore
should I trust?
When day shall drive not night from heaven,
and night
Shall chase not day to deathward, then shall
dust
Be constant—and the stars endure the sight
Of dawn that shall not slay them.

LOCRINE

By thine eyes
—Turned stormier now than stars in bare-
blown skies
Wherethrough the wind rings menace,—I will
swear
Nought: so shall fear, mistrust, and jealous
hate
Lie foodless, if not fangless. Thou, so fair
That heaven might change for thee the seal of
fate,
How darest thou doubt thy power on souls of
men?

ESTRILD

What vows were those that won thee Guen-
dolen?

LOCRINE

I swore not so to her. Thou knowest—

ESTRILD

Not I.
Thou knowest that I know nothing.

LOCRINE

Nay, I know
That nothing lives under the sweet blue sky
Worth thy sweet heeding, wouldst thou think
but so,
Save love—wherewith thou seest thy world
fulfilled.

ESTRILD

Ay,—would I see but with thine eyes.

LOCRINE

Estrild!

ESTRILD

No soft reiteration of my name
Can sing my sorrow down that comes and
goes

And colours hope with fear and love with
shame.

Rose hast thou called , were I like the
rose,

Happier were I than woman: she survives
Not by one hour, like us of longer lives,
The sun she lives in and the love he gives
And takes away: but we, when love grows
sere,

Live yet, while trust in love no longer lives,
Nor drink for comfort with the dying year
Death.

LOCRINE

Wouldst thou drink forgetfulness for wine
To heal thine heart of love toward me?

ESTRILD

Locrine,

Locrine!

LOCRINE

Thou wouldst not: do not mock me then,
Saying out of evil heart, in evil jest,
Thy trust is dead to meward.

ESTRILD

King of men,

Wouldst thou, being only of all men lord-
liest,

Be lord of women's thoughts and loving
fears?

Nay, wert thou less than lord of worlds and
years,

Of stars and suns and seasons, couldst thou
dream

To take such empire on thee?

LOCRINE

Nay, not I—

No more than she there playing beside the
stream

To slip within a stormier stream and die.

ESTRILD

She runs too near the brink. Sabrina!

LOCRINE

See,

Her hands are lily-laden: let them be
A flower-sweet symbol for us.

Enter SABRINA

SABRINA

Sire! O sire,
See what fresh flowers—you knew not these
before—
The spring has brought, to serve my heart's
desire,
Forth of the river's barren bed! no more
Will I rebuke these banks for sterile sloth
When spring restores the woodlands. By
my troth,
I hoped not, when you came again, to bring
So large a tribute worth so full a smile.

LOCRINE

Child! how should I to thee pay tribute?

ESTRILD

Thou hast not kissed her.

LOCRINE

Dare my lips defile
Heaven? O my love, in sight of her and
thee
I marvel how the sun should look on me
And spare to turn his beams to fire.

ESTRILD

Hears, and is troubled.

SABRINA

Did I wrong, to say
'Sire'? but you bade me say so. He is mild,
And will not chide me. Father!

ESTRILD

Hear'st thou?

LOCRINE

I hear. I would the world beyond our sight
Were dead as worlds forgotten.

ESTRILD

Her?

Wouldst thou fright

LOCRINE

Hath all sense forsaken me? Sabrina,
Thou dost not fear me?

SABRINA

No. But when your eyes
Wax red and dark, with flaughts of fire
tween,
I fear them—or they fright me.

LOCRINE

Wert thou wise
They would not. Never have I looked
thee
So.

SABRINA

Nay—I fear not what might fall on me
Here laughs my father—here my mother
smiles—
Here smiles and laughs the water—what
should I
Fear?

LOCRINE

Nought more fearful than the water
wiles—
Which whoso fears not ere he fear shall die.

SABRINA

Die? and is death no less an ill than dread?
I had liefer die than be nor quick nor dead.
I think there is no death but fear of death.

LOCRINE

Of death or life or anything but love
What knowest thou?

SABRINA

Less than these, my mother saith—
Less than the flowers that seeing all heaven
above
Fade and wax hoar or darkened, lose their
trust
And leave their joy and let their glories rust
And die for fear ere winter wound them: we
Live no less glad of snowtime than of spring
It cannot change my father's face for me
Nor turn from mine away my mother's.

King
They call thee: hath thy kingship made thee
less
In height of heart than we are?

LOCRINE

No, and yes.
Here sits my heart at height of hers and thine,

Laughing for love: here not the quiring birds
Sing higher than sings my spirit: I am here
Locrine,

Whom no sound vexes here of swords or
words,
No cloud of thought or thunder: were my
life
Crowned but as lord and sire of child and
wife,
Throned but as prince of woodland, bank and
bower,
My joys were then imperial, and my state
Firm as a star, that now is as a flower.

SABRINA

Thou shouldst not then—if joy grow here so
great—
Part from us.

LOCRINE

No: for joy grows elsewhere scant.

SABRINA

I would fain see the towers of Troynovant.

LOCRINE

God keep thine eyes fulfilled with sweeter
sights,
And this one from them ever!

SABRINA

Why? Men say
Thine halls are full of guests, princes and
knights,
And lordly musters of superb array;
Why are we thence alone, and alway?

ESTRILD

Peace,
Child: let thy babble change its note, or
cease
Here; is thy sire not wiser—by God's grace—
Than I or thou?

LOCRINE

Wouldst thou too see fulfilled
The fear whose shadow fallen on joy's fair
face
Strikes it more sad than sorrow's own?
Estrild,
Wast thou then happier ere this wildwood
shrine

Hid thee from homage, left thee but Locrine
For worshipper less worthy grace of thee
Than those thy sometime suppliants?

ESTRILD

Nay; my lord
Takes too much thought—if tongues ring true
—for me.

LOCRINE

Such tongues ring falser than a broken chord
Whose jar distunes the music.

ESTRILD

Wilt thou stay
But three nights here?

LOCRINE

I had need be hence to-day.

ESTRILD

Go.

SABRINA

But I bid thee tarry; what am I
That thou shouldst heed not what I bid thee?

LOCRINE

Queen
And empress more imperious and more high
And regent royaller than time hath seen
And mightier mistress of thy sire and thrall:
Yet must I go. But ere the next moon fall
Again will I grow happy.

ESTRILD

Who can say?

LOCRINE

So much can I—except the stars combine
Unseasonably to stay me.

ESTRILD

Let them stay
The tides, the seasons rather. Love! Loc-
rine!
I never parted from thee, nor shall part,
Save with a fire more keen than fire at heart:
But now the pang that wrings me, soul and
sense,
And turns fair day to darkness deep as hell,
Warns me, the word that seals thy parting
hence—
'Farewell'—shall bid us never more fare well.

SABRINA

Lol she too bids thee tarry; dost thou not Hear?

LOCRINE

Might I choose, small need were hers, God wot,
Or thine, to bid me tarry. When I come Again—

SABRINA

Thou shalt not see me: I will hide
From sight of such a sire—or bow down dumb
Before him—strong and hard as he in pride—
And so thou shalt not hear me.

LOCRINE

So now say I.

Who can tell?

ESTRILD

God keep my lord!

LOCRINE

Farewell.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*Troynovant. A Room in the Palace*

Enter GUENDOLEN and MADAN

GUENDOLEN

Come close, and look upon me. Child or man,—

I know not how to call thee, being my child,
Who know not how myself am called, nor can—

God witness—tell thee what should she be styled

Who bears the brand and burden set on her
That man hath set on me—the lands are wild
Whence late I bade thee hither, swift of spur
As he that rides to guard his mother's life;
Thou hast found nought loathlier there,
nought hatefuller

In all the wilds that seethe with fluctuant strife,

Than here besets thine advent. Son, if thou
Be son of mine, and I thy father's wife—

MADAN

If heaven be heaven, and God be God.

GUENDOLEN

We know not if they be. Give me thine hand.

Thou hast mine eyes beneath thy father's brow,—

And therefore bears it not the traitor's brand
Swear—But I would not bid thee swear vain

Nor bind thee ere thine own soul understand
Ere thine own heart be molten with my pain

To do such work for bitter love of me
As haply, knowing my heart, thou wert not fain—

Even thou—to take upon thee—bind o thee—

Set all thy soul to do or die.

MADAN

I swear.

GUENDOLEN

And though thou sworest not, yet the thing should be.

The burden found for me so sore to bear
Why should I lay on any hand but mine.

Or bid thine own take part therein, and wear
A father's blood upon it—here—for sign?

Ay, now thou pluck'st it forth of hers to whom
Thou sworest and gavest it plighted. O

Locrine,

Thy seed it was that sprang within my womb,
Thine, and none other—traitor born and liar.

False-faced, false-tongued—the fire of hell
consume

Me, thee, and him for ever!

MADAN

Hath my sire

Wronged thee?

GUENDOLEN

Thy sire? my lord? the flower of men?
How?

MADAN

For thy tongue was tipped but now with fire—

With fire of hell—against him.

GUENDOLEN

Now, and then,
Are twain; thou knowest not women, how
their tongue

Takes fire, and straight learns patience:

Guendolen

Is there no more than crownless woman,
wrung

At heart with anguish, and in utterance mad
As even the meanest whom a snake hath
stung

So near the heart that all the pulse it had
Grows palpitating poison. Wilt thou know
Whence?

MADAN

Could heal it, then mine own were glad.

GUENDOLEN

What think'st thou were the bitterest wrong,
the woe

Least bearable by woman, worst of all
That man might lay upon her? Nay, thou
art slow:

Speak: though thou speak but folly. Silent?
Call

To mind whatso thou hast ever heard of ill
Most monstrous, that should turn to fire and
gall

The milk and blood of maid or mother—
still

Thou shalt not find, I think, what he hath
done—

What I endure, and die not. For my will
It is that holds me yet alive, O son,
Till all my wrong be wroken, here to keep
Fast watch, a living soul before the sun,
Anhungered and athirst for night and sleep,
That will not slake the ravin of her thirst
Nor quench her fire of hunger, till she reap
The harvest loved of all men, last as first—
Vengeance.

MADAN

What wrong is this he hath done thee?
Words

Are edgeless weapons: live we blest or curst,
No jot the more of evil or good engirds
The life with bitterest curses compassed
round

Or girt about with blessing. Hinds and
herds

Wage threats and brawl and wrangle: wind
and sound

Suffice their souls for vengeance: we require
Deeds, and till place for these and time be
found

Silence. What bids thee bid me slay my sire?

GUENDOLEN

I praise the gods that gave me thee: thine
heart

Is none of his, no changeling's in desire,
No coward's as who begat thee: mine thou
art

All, and mine only. Lend me now thine ear:
Thou knowest—

What a . . . holds thy lips apart
And strikes thee . . . Am I bound to hear
What thou to speak . . . bound not?

GUENDOLEN

How my lord,
Our lord, thy sire—the king whose throne is
here
Imperial—smote and drove the wolf-like
horde

That raged against us from the raging east,
And how their chief sank in the unsounded
ford

He thought to traverse, till the floods in-
creased

Against him, and he perished: and Locrine
Found in his camp for sovereign spoil to feast
The sense of power with lustier joy than wine
A woman—Dost thou mock me?

MADAN

And a fair
Woman, if all men lie not, mother mine—
I have heard so much. And then?

GUENDOLEN

Thou dost not dare
Mock me?

MADAN

I know not what should make thee mad
Though this and worse, howbeit it irk thee,
were.

Art thou discrowned, dethroned, disrobed,
unclad

Of empire? art thou powerless, bloodless,
old?

This were some hurt: but now—thou shouldst
be glad

To take this chance upon thee, and to hold
So large a lordly happiness in hand

As when my father's and thy lord's is cold
Shall leave in thine the sway of all this land.

GUENDOLEN

And thou? no she-wolf whelps upon the wold
Whose brood is like thy mother's.

MADAN

Nay—I stand
A man thy son before thee.

GUENDOLEN

And a bold
Man: is thine heart flesh, or a burning brand
Lit to burn up and turn for thee to gold
The kingship of thy sire?

MADAN

Why, blessed or banned,
We thrive alike—thou knowest it—why, but
now
I said so,—scarce the glass has dropped one
sand—
And thou didst smile on me—and all thy
brow
Smiled.

GUENDOLEN

Thou dost love then, thou, thy mother
yet—
Me, dost thou love a little? None but thou
There is to love me; for the gods forget—
Nor shall one hear of me a prayer again;
Yea, none of all whose thrones in heaven are
set
Shall hear, nor one of all the sons of men.

MADAN

What wouldst thou have?

GUENDOLEN

Thou knowest.

MADAN

I know not. Speak.

GUENDOLEN

Have I kept silence all this while?

MADAN

What then?
What boots it though thy word, thine eye, thy
cheek,
Seem all one fire together, if that fire

Sink, and thy face change, and thine heart
wax weak,
To hear what deed should slake thy
desire
And satiate thee with healing? This alone
Except thine heart be softer toward my
Still than a maid's who hears a wood-d
moan
And weeps for pity—this should comfort
thee:
His death.

GUENDOLEN

And sight of Madan on his throne?

MADAN

What ailed thy wits, mother, to send for me?

GUENDOLEN

Yet shalt thou not go back.

MADAN

Why, what should
Do here, where vengeance has not heart to
And wrath dies out in weeping? Let it die
And let me go.

GUENDOLEN

I did not bid thee spare.

MADAN

Speak then, and bide me smite.

GUENDOLEN

Thy father?

MADAN

Ay—

If thus it please my mother.

GUENDOLEN

This?

Dost thou dare?

MADAN

Nay, I lust not after empire so
That for mine own hand I should haply care
To take this deed upon it: but the blow,
Thou sayest, that speeds my father forth of
life,
Speeds too my mother forth of living woe
That till he dies may die not. If his wife
Set in his son's right hand the sword to slay—
No poison brewed of hell, no treasonous
knife—

The sword that walks and shines and smites
by day,
Not on his hand who takes the sword shall
cleave
The blood that clings on hers who gives it.

GUENDOLEN

Yea—
So be it. What levies wilt thou raise, to
heave
Thy father from his seat?

MADAN

Let that be nought
Of all thy care: do thou but trust—believe
Thy son's right hand no feebler than thy
thought,
If that be strong to smite—and thou shalt see
Vengeance.

GUENDOLEN

I will. But were thy musters brought
Whence now thou art come to cheer me, this
should be
A sign for us of comfort.

MADAN

Dost thou fear
Signs?

GUENDOLEN

Nay, child, nay—thou art harsh as heaven
to me—
I would but have of thee a word of cheer.

MADAN

I am weak in words: my tongue can match
not thine,
Mother.
Voices within] The king!

GUENDOLEN

Hear'st thou?
Voices within.] The king!

MADAN

I hear.
Enter LOCRINE

LOCRINE

How fares my queen?

GUENDOLEN

Well. And this child of mine—
How he may fare concerns not thee to know?

LOCRINE

Why, well I see my boy fares well.

GUENDOLEN

Locrine,
Thou art welcome as the sun to fields of snow.

LOCRINE

But hardly would they hail the sun whose
face
Dissolves them deathward. Was thy mean-
ing so?

GUENDOLEN

Make answer for me, Madan.

LOCRINE

In thy place?
The boy's is not beside thee.

GUENDOLEN

Speak, I say.

MADAN

God guard my lord and father with his grace!

LOCRINE

Well prayed, my child.

GUENDOLEN

Children—who can but pray—
Pray better, if my sense not err, than we.
The God whom all the gods of heaven obey
Should hear them rather, seeing—as gods
may see—
How pure of purpose is their perfect prayer.

LOCRINE

I think not else—the better then for me.
But ours—what manner of child is this? the
hair
Buds flowerwise round his darkening lips and
chin,
This hand's young hardening palm knows
how to bear
The sword-hilt's poise that late I laid the
in—
Ha? doth not it?

GUENDOLEN

Thine enemies know that well.

MADAN

I make no boast of battles that have been;
But, so God help me, days unborn shall tell
What manner of heart my father gave me.

LOCRINE

I doubt thee not.

Good.

GUENDOLEN

In Cornwall they that fell
So found it, that of all their large-limbed
brood
No bulk is left to brave thee.

LOCRINE

Yea, I know

Our son hath given the wolf our foes for food
And won him worthy praise from friend or
foe;
And heartier praise and trustier thanks from
none,
Boy, than thy father pays thee.

GUENDOLEN

Wouldst thou show
Thy love, thy thanks, thy fatherhood in one,
Thy perfect honour—yea, thy right to stand
Crowned, and lift up thine eyes against the
sun

As one so pure in heart, so clean of hand,
So loyal and so royal, none might cast
A word against thee burning like a brand,
A sound that withers honour, and makes fast
The bondage of a recreant soul to shame—
Thou shouldst, or ever an hour be overpast,
Slay him.

LOCRINE

Thou art mad.

GUENDOLEN

What, is not then thy name
Locrine? and hath this boy done ill to thee?
Hath he not won him for thy love's sake
fame?
Hath he not served thee loyalty? is he
So much thy son, so little son of mine,
That men might call him traitor? May they
see

The brand across his brow that re-
thine?

How shouldst thou dare—how dream
him live?

Is he not loyal? art not thou Locrine?

What less than death for guerdon should
thou give

My son who hath done thee service?
thou hast given—

Who hast found me truer than falsehood
forgive—

Shame for my guerdon: yea, my heart
riven

With shame that once I loved thee.

LOCRINE

Guendole

A woman's wrath should rest not unforgotten
Save of the slightest of the sons of men:
And no such slight and shameful thing as
As would not yield thee pardon.

GUENDOLEN

Slay me then

LOCRINE

Thee, or thy son? but now thou bad'st
die.

GUENDOLEN

Thou liest: I bade thee slay him.

LOCRINE

Art thou mad?

Indeed?

GUENDOLEN

O liar, is all the world a lie?

I bade thee, knowing thee what thou art—
bade

My lord and king and traitor slay my son
A heartless hand that lacks the power it has
Smite one whose stroke shall leave it strength-
less—one

Whose loyal loathing of his shame in thee
Shall cast it out of eyeshot of the sun.

LOCRINE

Thou bad'st me slay him that he might—
slay me?

GUENDOLEN

Thou hast said—and yet thou hast lied not

LOCRINE

Heli's own hate
Brought never forth such fruit as thine.

GUENDOLEN

But he
Is the issue of thy love and mine, by fate
Made one to no good issue. Didst thou trust
That grief should give to men disconsolate
Comfort, and treason bring forth truth, and
dust
Blossom? What love, what reverence, what
regard,
Shouldst thou desire, if God or man be just,
Of this thy son, or me more evil-starred,
Whom scorn salutes his mother?

LOCRINE

How should scorn
Draw near thee, girl about with power for
guard,
Power and good fame? unless reproach be
born
Of these thy violent vanities of mood
That fight against thine honour.

GUENDOLEN

Dost thou mourn
For that? Too careful art thou for my good
Too tender and too true to me and mine,
For shame to make my heart or thine his
food
Or scorn lay hold upon my fame or thine.
Art thou not pure as honour's perfect heart—
Not treason-cankered like my lord Locrine,
Whose likeness shows thee fairer than thou
art
And falser than thy loving care of me
Would bid my faith believe thee?

LOCRINE

What strange part
Is this that changing passion plays in thee?
Know'st thou me not?

GUENDOLEN

Yea—witness heaven and hell,
And all the lights that lighten earth and sea,
And all that wrings my heart, I know thee
well.
How should I love and hate and know thee
not?

LOCRINE

Thy voice is as the sound of dead love's knell.

GUENDOLEN

Long since my heart has told it—and forgot
All save the cause that haue the death-bell
sound
And cease and bring forth silence.

LOCRINE

Is thy lot
Less fair and roval, girl with power and
crowned,
Than might fulfil the loftiest heart's desire?

GUENDOLEN

Not air but fire it is that rings me round—
Thy voice makes all my brain a wheel of fire.
Man, what have I to do with pride of power?
Such pride perchance it was that moved my
sire
To bid me wed—woe worth the woful
hour!—
His brother's son, the brother's born above
Him as above me thou, the crown and flower
Of Britain, gentler-hearted than the dove
And mightier than the sunward eagle's wing:
But nought moved me save one thing only—
love.

LOCRINE

I know it.

GUENDOLEN

Thou knowest? but this thou knowest not,
king,
How near of kin are bitter love and hate—
Nor which of these may be the deadlier thing.

LOCRINE

What wouldst thou?

GUENDOLEN

Death. Would God my heart were great!
Then would I slay myself.

LOCRINE

I dare not fear
That heaven hath marked for thee no fairer
fate.

GUENDOLEN

Ay! wilt thou slay me then—and slay me
here?

LOCRINE

Mock not thy wrath and me. No hair of
thine
Would I—thou knowest it—hurt; nor vex
thine ear
With answering wrath more vain than fumes
of wine.
I have wronged and am not wronged thee.
Whence or when.
Strange whispers rose that turned thy heart
from mine
I would not know for shame's sake, Guen-
dolen,
And honour's that I bear thee.

GUENDOLEN

Didst thou deem
I would outlive with thee the scorn of men,
A slave enthroned beside a traitor? Seem
These eyes and lips and hands of mine a
slave's
Uplift for mercy toward thee? Such a dream
Sets realms on fire, and turns their fields to
graves.

LOCRINE

No dream is mine that does thee less than
right:
Albeit thy words be wild as warring waves,
I know thee higher of heart than shame could
smite
And queenlier than thy queenship.

GUENDOLEN

Dost thou know
What day records to day and night to night—
How he whose wrath was rained as hail or
snow
On Troy's adulterous towers, when treacher-
ous flame
Devoured them, and our fathers' roofs lay
low,
And all their praise was turned to fire and
shame—
All-righteous God, who herds the stars of
heaven
As sheep within his sheepfold—God, whose
name
Compels the wandering clouds to service,
given
As surely as even the sun's is—loves or hates
Treason? He loved our sires: were they
forgiven?

Their walls upreared of gods, their
gates,
Might these keep out his justice? W
thou
To make thy will more strong and su
fate's?
Thy fate am I, that falls upon thee no
Wilt thou not slay me yet—and slay th
So shall thy fate change, and unb
brow
That now looks mortal on thee.

LOCRINE

What is d
Lies now past help or pleading: nor w
Plead with thee, knowing that love h
forth is none
Nor trust between us till the day we di
Yet, if thy name be woman,—if thine ho
Be not burnt up with fire of hell, and li
Not wounded even to death,—albeit we
Let there not be between us war, but p
Though love may be not.

GUENDOLEN

Peace? The man thou
Craves—and shame bids not breath wi
him cease—
Craves of the woman that thou knowest
Peace? Ay, take hands at parting, and
lease
Each heart, each hand, each other: shall
lamb,
The lamb-like woman, born to cower a
bleed,
Withstand his will whose choice may save
damn
Her days and nights, her word and thoug
and deed—
Take heart to outdare her lord the lion
How
Should this be—if the lion's imperial seed
Lift not against his sire as brave a brow
As frowns upon his mother?—Peace be th
Between us: none may stand before thee now
No son of thine keep faith with Guendole

MADAN

I have heid my peace perforce, it seems, to
long,
Being slower of speech than sons of mean
men.

But seeing my sire hath done my mother wrong,
My hand is hers to serve against my sire.

GUENDOLEN

And God shall make thine hand against him strong.

LOCRINE

Ay: when the hearthstead flames, the roof takes fire.

GUENDOLEN

Woe worth his hand who set the hearth on flame!

LOCRINE

Curse not our fathers; though thy fierce desire
Drive thine own son against his father, shame
Should rein thy tongue from speech too shameless.

GUENDOLEN

Ayl
And thou, my holy-hearted lord,—the same
Whose hand was laid in mine and bound to lie

There fast for ever if faith be found on earth—
If truth be true, and shame not wholly die—
Hast thou not made thy mockery and thy mirth,

Thy laugh and thy scorn, of shame? But we,

Thy wife by wedlock and thy son by birth,
Who have no part in a heart and soul with thee,
Will bear no part in a name and life
With one who hath made his child and me.

Thy true-born son, and thy true wife,
Will see thee dead or perish with thy men
About thee; bid them gird their loins for strife

More dire than theirs who storm the wild
wolf's den;

For if thou dare not slay us here to-day
Thou art dead.

LOCRINE

Thou knowest I dare not, Guendolen,
Dare what the ravenous beasts whose life is prey
Dream not of doing, though drunk with blood-
shed.

GUENDOLEN

No:
Thou art gentle and beasts are honest: no such way

Lies open towards thy fearful foot: not so
Shalt thou find surety from these foes of thine.

Woe worth thee therefore! yea, a sevenfold woe

Shall God through us rain down on thee,
Locrine.

Hadst thou the heart God hath not given thee—then

Our blood might run before thy feet like wine
And wash thy way toward sin in sight of men
Smooth, soft, and safe. But if thou shed it not—

If Madan live to look on Guendolen

Living—I wot not what shall be—I wot

What shall not—thou shalt have no joy to live

More than have they for whom God's wrath grows hot.

LOCRINE

God's grace is no such gift as thou canst give.
Queen, or withheld. Farewell.

GUENDOLEN

I dare not say
Farewell.

LOCRINE

And why?

GUENDOLEN

Thou hast not said—Forgive.

LOCRINE

I say it—I have said. Thou wilt not hear me?

GUENDOLEN

Nay.
[Exeunt.]

ACT V

SCENE I.—Fields near the Severn

Enter on one side LOCRINE and his army: on the other side GUENDOLEN, MADAN, and their army

LOCRINE

Stand fast, and sound a parley.

MADAN

Halt: it seems
They would have rather speech than strokes
of us.

LOCRINE

This light of dawn is like an evil dream's
That comes and goes and is not. Yea, and
thus

Our hope on both sides wavering dares allow
No light but fire to bid us die or live.

—Son, and my wife that was, my rebels now,
That here we stand with death to take or
give

I call the sun of heaven, God's likeness
wrought

On darkness, whence all spirits breathe and
shine,

To witness, is no work of will or thought
Conceived or bred in brain or heart of mine.

Ye have levied wars against me, and com-
pelled

My will unwilling and my power withheld
To strike the stroke I would not, when I
might.

Will ye not yet take thought, and spare these
men

Whom else the blind and burning fire of fight
Must feed upon for pasture? Guendolen,

Had I not left thee queen in Troynovant,
Though wife no more of mine, in all this land

No hand had risen, no eye had glared askant.
Against me: thine is each man's heart and
hand

That burns and strikes in all this battle raised
To serve and slake thy vengeance. With my
son

I plead not, seeing his praise in arms dis-
praised

For ever, and his deeds of truth undone
By patricidal treason. But with thee

Peace would I have, if peace again may be
Between us. Blood by wrath unnatural shed

Or spent in civic battle burns the land
Whereon it falls like fire, and brands as red

The conqueror's forehead as the warrior's
hand.

I pray thee, spare this people: reign in peace
With separate honours in a several state:

As love that was hath ceased, let hatred
cease:

Let not our personal cause be made t
fate

That damns to death men innocent, and
turns

The joy of life to darkness. Thine alone
Is all this war: to slake the flame that bur

Thus high should crown thee royal, and e
throne

Thy praise in all men's memories. If th
wilt,

Peace let there be: if not, be thine the gui

GUENDOLEN

Mine? Hear it, heaven,—and men, be
witness! Mine

The treachery that hath rent our realm
twain—

Mine, mine the adulterous treasure. No
Locrine,

Not he, found loyal to my love in vain,
Hath brought the civic sword and fire

On British fields and homesteads, clothed
with joy,

Crowned with content and comfort: I, h
wife.

Have brought on Troynovant the fires
Tr

He lifts his head before the sun of heaven
And swears it—lies, and lives. Is God's

bright sword
Broken, wherewith the gates of Troy—th

seven
Strong gates that gods who built them hel

in ward—
Were broken even as wattled reeds with fire

Son, by what name shall honour call thy sire

MADAN

How long shall I and all these mail-clad men
Stand and give ear, or gape and catch at flies

While ye wage warring words that wound not
When

Have I been found of you so wordy-wise
That thou or he should tell to counsel one

So slow of speech and wit as thou and he,
Who know my hand no sluggard, know your

son?
Till speech be clothed in iron, bid not me

Speak.

LOCRINE

Yet he speaks not ill.

GUENDOLEN

Did I not know
 Mine honour perfect as thy shame, Locrine,
 Now might I say, and turn to pride my woe,
 Mine only were this boy, and none of thine.
 But what thou mayest I may not. Where
 are they
 Who ride not with their lord and sire to-day?
 Thy secret Scythian and your changeling
 child,
 Where hide they now their heads that lurk
 not hidden
 There where thy treason deemed them safe,
 and smiled?
 When arms were levied, and thy servants
 bidden
 About thee to withstand the doom of men
 Whose loyal angers flamed upon our side
 Against thee, from thy smooth-skinned she-
 wolf's den
 Her whelp and she sought covert unespied,
 But not from thee far off. Thou hast borne
 them hither
 For refuge in this west that stands for thee
 Against our cause, whose very name should
 wither
 The hearts of them that hate it. Where is
 she?
 Hath she not heart to keep thy side? or
 thou,
 Dost thou think shame to stand beside her
 now
 And bid her look upon thy son and wife?
 Nay, she should ride at thy right hand and
 laugh
 To see so fair a lordly field of strife
 Shine for her sake, whose lips thy love bids
 quaff
 For pledge of trustless troth the blood of men.

LOCRINE

Should I not put her in thine hand to slay?
 Hell hath laid hold upon thee, Guendolen,
 And turned thine heart to hell-fire. Be thy
 prey
 Thyself, the wolfish huntress: and the blood
 Rest on thine head that here shall now be spilt.

GUENDOLEN

Let it run broader than this water's flood
 Swells after storm, it shall not cleanse thy
 guilt.

Give now the word of charge; and God do
 right
 Between us in the fiery courts of fight.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*The banks of the Severn*

Enter ESTRILD and SABRINA

SABRINA

When will my father come again?

ESTRILD

God knows,

Sweet,

SABRINA

Hast thou seen how wide this water flows—
 How smooth it swells and shines from brim
 to brim,
 How fair, how full? Nay, then thine eyes
 are dim.
 Thou dost not weep for fear lest evil men
 Or that more evil woman—Guendolen
 Didst thou not call her yesternight by
 name?—
 Should put my father's might in arms to
 shame?
 What is she so to levy shameful strife
 Against my sire and thee?

ESTRILD

His wifel his wifel

SABRINA

Why, that art thou.

ESTRILD

Woe worth me!

SABRINA

Nay, woe worth
 Her wickedness! How may the heavens and
 earth
 Endure her?

ESTRILD

Heaven is fire, and earth a sword,
 Against us.

SABRINA

May the wife withstand her lord
 And war upon him? Nay, no wife is she—
 And no true mother thou to mock at me.

ESTRILD

Yea, no true wife or mother, child, am I.
Yet, child, thou shouldst not say it—and bid
me die.

SABRINA

I bid thee live and laugh at wicked foes
Even as my sire and I do. What! 'God
knows.'

Thou sayest, and yet art fearful? Is he not
Righteous, that we should fear to take the lot
Forth of his hand that deals it? And my sire,
Kind as the sun in heaven, and strong as fire,
Hath he not God upon his side and ours,
Even all the gods and stars and all their
powers?

ESTRILD

I know not. Fate at sight of thee should
break
His covenant—doom grow gentle for thy
sake.

SABRINA

Wherefore?

ESTRILD

Because thou knowest not wherefore.
Child,
My days were darkened, and the ways were
wild
Wherethrough my dark doom led me toward
this end,
Ere I beheld thy sire, my lord, my friend,
My king, my stay, my saviour. Let thine
hand
Lie still in mine. Thou canst not under-
stand,
Yet would I tell thee somewhat. Ere I knew
If aught of evil or good were false or true,
If aught of life were worth our hope or fear,
There fell on me the fate that sets us here.
For in my father's kingdom oversea—

SABRINA

Thou wast not born in Britain?

ESTRILD

Woe is me,
No: happier hap had mine perchance been
then.

SABRINA

And was not I? Are these all stranger men?

ESTRILD

Ay, wast thou, child—a Briton born:
give
Thy name the grace on British tongues to

SABRINA

Is that so good a gift of God's—to die
And leave a name alive in memory? I
Would rather live this river's life, and
Held of no less or more account than I
Lo, how he lives and laughs! and hat
name,
Thou sayest—or one forgotten even of
That lives on poor men's lips and fa
down

To nothing. But thy father? and his cro
Did he less hate the coil of it than mine,
Or love thee less—nay, then he were
thine—

Than he, my sire, loves me?

ESTRILD

And wilt thou he
All? Child, my child, love born of I
more dear
Than very love was ever! Harken the
This plague, this fire, that hunts us—G
dolen—
Was wedded to thy sire ere I and he
Cast ever eyes on either. Woe is me!
Thou canst not dream, sweet, what my
would say
And not affright thee.

SABRINA

Thou affright me? Nay
Mock not. This evil woman—when
knew
Thee, this my sweet good mother, wise
true—
He cast from him and hated.

ESTRILD

Yea—and now
For that shall haply he and I and thou
Die.

SABRINA

What is death? I never saw his face
That I should fear it.

ESTRILD

Whether grief or grace
Or curse or blessing breathe from it, and gi

Aught worse or better than the life we live,
I know no more than thou knowest; per-
chance,
Less. When we sleep, they say, or fall in
trance,
We die awhile. Well spake thine innocent
breath—
I think there is no death but fear of death.

SABRINA

Did I say this? but that was long ago—
Months. Now I know not—yet I think I
know—
Whether I fear or fear not it. Hard by
Men fight even now—they strike and kill and
die
Red-handed; nay, we hear the roar and see
The lightning of the battle: can it be
That what no soul of all these brave men
fears
Should sound so fearful save in foolish ears?
But all this while I know not where it lay,
Thy father's kingdom.

ESTRELD

Far from here away
It lies beyond the wide waste water's bound
That clasps with bitter waves this sweet land
round.
Thou hast seen the great sea never, nor canst
dream
How fairer far than earth's most lordly stream
It rolls its royal waters here and there,
Most glorious born of all things anywhere,
Most fateful and most godlike; fit to make
Men love life better for the sweet sight's
sake
And less fear death if death for them should
be
Shrined in the sacred splendours of the sea
As God in heaven's mid mystery. Night and
day
Forth of my tower-girt homestead would I
stray
To gaze thereon as thou upon the bright
Soft river whence thy soul took less delight
Than mine of the outer sea, albeit I know
How great thy joy was of it. Now—for so
The high gods willed it should be—once at
morn
Strange men there landing bore me thence
forlorn
Across the wan wild waters in their bark,

I wist not where, through change of light and
dark,
Till their fierce lord, the son of spoil and
strife,
Made me by forceful marriage rites his wife.
Then sailed they toward the white and flower-
sweet strand
Whose free folk follow on thy father's hand,
And warred against him, slaying his brother:
and he
Hurled all their force back hurtling toward
the sea,
And slew my lord their king; but me he gave
Grace, and received not as a wandering slave,
But one whom seeing he loved for pity: why
Should else a sad strange woman such as I
Find in his fair sight favour? and for me
He built the bower wherein I bare him thee,
And whence but now he hath brought us
westward, here
To abide the extreme of utmost hope or fear.
And come what end may ever, death or life,
I live or die, if truth be truth, his wife;
And none but I and thou, though day wax
dim,
Though night grow strong, hath any part in
him.

SABRINA

What should we fear, then? whence might
any fear
Fall on us?

ESTRELD

Ah! Ah me! God answers here.

Enter LOCRINE, wounded

LOCRINE

Praised be the gods who have brought me
safe—to die
Beside thee. Nay, but kneel not—rise, and
fly
Ere death take hold on thee too. Bid the
child
Kiss me. The ways all round are wide and
wild—
Ye may win safe away. They deemed me
dead—
My last friends left—who saw me fallen, and
fled—
No shame is theirs—they fought to the end.
But ye,
Fly: not your love can keep my life in me—
Not even the sight and sense of you so near.

SABRINA

How can we fly, father?

ESTRILD

She would not fear—
Thy very child is she—no heart less high
Than thine sustains her—and we will not fly.

LOCRINE

So shall their work be perfect. Yea, I know
Our fate is fallen upon us, and its woe.
Yet have we lacked not gladness—and this
end
Is not so hard. We have had sweet life to
friend,
And find not death our enemy. All men
born
Die, and but few find evening one with morn
As I do, seeing the sun of all my life
Lighten my death in sight of child and wife.
I would not live again to lose that kiss,
And die some death not half so sweet as this.
[Dies.]

ESTRILD

Thou thought'st to cleave in twain my life
and thine?
To cast my hand away in death, Locrine?
See now if death have drawn thee far from
me! [Stabs herself].

SABRINA

Thou diest, and hast not slain me, mother?

ESTRILD

Thee?
Forgive me, child! and so may they forgive.
[Dies.]

SABRINA

O mother, canst thou die and bid me live?

Enter GUENDOLEN, MADAN, and Soldiers

GUENDOLEN

Dead? Ah! my traitor with his harlot fled
Hellward?

MADAN

Their child is left thee.

GUENDOLEN

SABRINA

Thou hast slain my mother and sire—
hast slain thy lord—
Strike now, and slay me.

GUENDOLEN

Smite her with thy sword!

MADAN

I know not if I dare. I dare not.

GUENDOLEN

Shame
Consume thee!—Thou—what call they, g
thy name?
Daughter of Estrild,—daughter of Locrine,
Daughter of death and darkness!

SABRINA

Yet not this
Darkness and death are come on us, and the
Whose servants are they: heaven behind th
now
Stands, and withholds the thunder: yet
me
He gives thee not, who helps and comfort
thee,
Power for one hour of darkness. Ere this
hand
Can put forth power to slay me where I stand
Safe shall I sleep as these that here lie slain

GUENDOLEN

She dares not—though the heart in her b
fain,
The flesh draws back for fear. She dares not

SABRINA

See
I change no more of warring words with
thee.
O father, O my mother, here am I:
They hurt me not who can but bid me die
[She leaps into the river]

GUENDOLEN

Save her! God pardon me!

MADAN

The water whirls
She! not dead? Down out of sight her tender face, and hurles

Her soft light limbs to deathward. God
forgive—

Thee, sayest thou, mother? Wouldst thou
bid her live?

GUENDOLEN

What have we done?

MADAN

The work we came to do.

That God, thou said'st, should stand for
judge of you

Whose judgment smote with mortal fire and
sword

Troy, for such cause as bade thee slay thy
lord.

Now, as between his fathers and their foes
The lord of gods dealt judgment, winged with
woes

And girt about with ruin, hath he sent
On these destruction.

GUENDOLEN

Yea.

MADAN

Art thou content?

GUENDOLEN

The gods are wise who lead us—now to smite,
And now to spare: we dwell but in their
sight

And work but what their will is. What hath
been

Is past. But these, that once were king and
queen,

The sun, that feeds on death, shall not con-
sume

Naked. Not I would sunder tomb from
tomb

Of these twain foes of mine, in death made
one—

I, that when darkness hides me from the sun
Shall sleep alone, with none to rest by me.

But thou—this one time more I look on thee—
Fair face, brave hand, weak heart that wast
not mine—

Sleep sound—and God be good to thee,
Locrine.

I was not. She was fair as heaven in spring
Whom thou didst love indeed. Sleep, queen
and king,

Forgiven; and if—God knows—being dead,
ye live,

And keep remembrance yet of me—forgive.

[*Exeunt.*]

THE SISTERS

A TRAGEDY

TO THE

LADY MARY GORDON

THIS PLAY IS GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED

BY HER AFFECTIONATE NEPHEW

DEDICATION

I

BETWEEN the sea-cliffs and the sea there
sleeps

A garden walled about with woodland, fair
As dreams that die or days that memory keeps
Alive in holier light and lovelier air
Than clothed them round long since and
blessed them there

With less benignant blessing, set less fast
For seal on spirit and sense, than time has
cast

For all time on the dead and deathless past.

II

Beneath the trellised flowers the flowers that
shine

And lighten all the lustrous length of way
From terrace up to terrace bear me sign
And keep me record how no word could
say

What perfect pleasure of how pure a day
A child's remembrance or a child's delight
Drank deep in dreams of, or in present sight
Exulted as the sunrise in its might.

III

The shadowed lawns, the shadowing pi
the ways

That wind and wander through a world
flowers,

The radiant orchard where the glad sun
gaze

Dwells, and makes most of all his happy
hours,

The field that laughs beneath the cliff top
towers,

The splendour of the slumber that enthral
With sunbright peace the world within the
walls,

Are symbols yet of years that love recalls

IV

But scarce the sovereign symbol of the sea
That clasps about the loveliest land alive

With loveliness more wonderful, may be
Fit sign to show what radiant dreams survive

Of suns that set not with the years that
drive

Like mists before the blast of dawn, but
still
Through clouds and gusts of change that
chafe and chill
Lift up the light that mocks their wrathful
will.

V

A light unshaken of the wind of time
That laughs upon the thunder and the
threat
Of years that thicken and of clouds that
climb
To put the stars out that they see not set,
And bid sweet memory's rapturous faith
forget.
But not the lightning shafts of change can
slay
The life of light that dies not with the day,
The glad live past that cannot pass away.

VI

The many-coloured joys of dawn and noon
That lit with love a child's life and a boy's,
And kept a man's in concord and in tune
With lifelong music of memorial joys
Where thought held life and dream in equi-
poise,
Even now make child and boy and man seem
one,
And days that dawned beneath the last year's
sun
As days that even ere childhood died were
done.

VII

The sun to sport in and the cliff to scale,
The sea to clasp and wrestle with, till
breath

For rapture more than weariness would fail,
All-golden gifts of dawn, whose record
saith
That time nor change may turn their life to
death,
Live not in loving thought alone, though
there
The life they live be lovelier than they were
When clothed in present light and actual air.

VIII

Sun, moon, and stars behold the land and
sea
No less than ever lovely, bright as hope
Could hover, or as happiness can be:
Fair as of old the lawns to sunward slope,
The fields to seaward slant and close and
ope:
But where of old from strong and sleepless
wells
The exulting fountains fed their shapely
shells,
Where light once dwelt in water, dust now
dwells.

IX

The springs of earth may slacken, and the
sun
Find no more laughing lustre to relume
Where once the sunlight and the spring
seemed one;
But not on heart or soul may time or doom
Cast aught of drought or lower with aught
of gloom
If past and future, hope and memory, be
Ringed round about with love, fast bound and
free,
As all the world is girdled with the sea.

PERSONS REPRESENTED

SIR FRANCIS DILSTON.
SIR ARTHUR CLAVERING.
FRANK DILSTON, son to SIR FRANCIS.
REGINALD CLAVERING, cousin to SIR ARTHUR.

ANNE DILSTON { twin-sisters and coheir-
MABEL DILSTON { es, formerly wards of SIR
FRANCIS.

Scene, CLAVERING HALL, NORTHUMBERLAND.

Time, 1816.

CHARACTERS IN THE INTERLUDE

ALVISE VIVARINI, represented by REGINALD
CLAVERING.

GALASSO GALASSI, represented by FRANK
DILSTON.

BEATRICE SIGNORELLI, represented by MA
DILSTON.

FRANCESCA MARIANA, represented by AN
DILSTON.

ACT I

SCENE I.—*A morning room*

ANNE and MABEL

ANNE

April again, and not a word of war.
Last year, and not a year ago, it was
That we sat wondering when good news
would come.

MABEL

And had not heard or learnt in lesson-books
If such a place there was as Waterloo.
And never dreamed that—

ANNE

Well?

MABEL

That it would be
So soon for ever such a name for us
As Blenheim or Trafalgar.

ANNE

No. For us?

We don't remember Blenheim—and we had
No cousin wounded at Trafalgar. Still,
If Redgie had been old enough to serve—

MABEL

I wish he had chosen the navy.

ANNE

And come home

Unhurt?

MABEL

No; I forgot. Of course he might
Have died like Nelson—and gone home with
him.

ANNE

Home? Reginald's not quite so tired of li
I fancy, though he frets at being kept in,
As to look up—outside this world—for hom

MABEL

No.

ANNE

Will you tell me—but you will not—me,
Even—

MABEL

What? Anything I can I wil

ANNE

Perhaps you cannot—what he said to you
Yesterday?

MABEL

What?

ANNE

You will not now, I know.

MABEL

Where?

ANNE

When and where? If you must needs be
told,
At nine last evening in the library.

MABEL

Nothing—but what I meant to tell you.

ANNE

Yes?

You meant to tell me that he said, my dear,
What?

MABEL

Anne!

ANNE

You thought I knew?

MABEL

I thought I must
Have said it without speaking.

ANNE

Reginald!
And so you really mean to love the boy
You played with, rode with, climbed with,
laughed at, made
Your tempter—and your scapegoat—when
you chose
To ride forbidden horses, and break bounds
On days forbidden? Love! Of course you
like—
And then how can you love him?

MABEL

Is dislike
Mother of love? Then you—to judge by
signs—
Must love Frank Dilston dearly.

ANNE

So I might,
If—if I did not hate him.

MABEL

Then you do.
I'm glad. I always liked him.

ANNE

What has he
Done, that a woman—or a girl—should like
Him?

MABEL

Need a man—or boy—do anything
More than be true and bright and kind and
brave
And try to make you like him?

ANNE

That spoils all.
He should not try.

MABEL

I'll tell him not to try.

Enter REGINALD CLAVERING and FRANK
DILSTON

ANNE

Redgie! You've not been riding?

REGINALD

Have I, Frank?

FRANK

You'd have me tell a lie to get you off?

ANNE

You stupid pair of schoolboys! Really,
Frank,
You should not let him.

FRANK

I can't lick him, Anne;
We two—or you alone—might manage.

ANNE

Why,
The grooms must know he should not mount
a horse
Yet.

REGINALD

Would you have me never ride again
Because last year I got a fall?

ANNE

Appeal
To Mabel.

REGINALD

She was always hard on me.

MABEL

Always.

ANNE

You mean that I encouraged you
To risk your neck when we were girl and
boy?
Make him sit down, Frank.

REGINALD

There. And now we'll talk
Of something—not of nothing.

ANNE

Of your play?

REGINALD

That's ready. How about your stage?

ANNE

Indeed? But is it

REGINALD

It's just one little act, you know—
Enough for four and not too much, I hope,
To get by heart in half a pair of days.

ANNE

In one day? No: I am slow at learning
verse—
Even if my part were shorter than the rest.

REGINALD

It is.

ANNE

Ah! Thank you.

FRANK

Mabel's I have read.

It's longer.

MABEL

As the whole affair is short,
It cannot be much longer. You should rest,
Redgie. Come out and feed the pheasants,
Anne.

[*Exeunt ANNE and MABEL.*]

REGINALD

How like old times it is, when we came back
From Eton! You remember, Frank, we
played
—What was it?—once.

FRANK

'What was it?' There's no such play.
There's 'What you will': perhaps we played
'Twelfth Night'
In frocks and jackets. Might we now not
play
'Love's Labour's Lost'?

REGINALD

'A Midsummer Night's Dream':
I know, because I played Lysander—you
Demetrius.

FRANK

How the female parts were cast
You don't remember?

REGINALD

Helena was Anne,
I think, and Hermia Mabel.

FRANK

Change the

REGINALD

Ah, yes. All friends from more than two
miles round
Came in to our Yuletide gathering through
the snows.
How quick and bright Anne's acting was
you two
Bore off the palms all round: Mabel and
Were somewhere short of nowhere.

FRANK

Will you now
Retaliate? She and you were plotting this
Must we suppose, last evening?

REGINALD

She and I,
Frank? We should make but poor co-
spirators.

FRANK

I hope so, and I think so. Seriously,
May not I ask—?

REGINALD

If she and I are friends?
Surely a man may ask and answer that,
If—as you do—he knows it. If you mean
More—I would hardly tell a brother this,
Who had not been so close a friend of mine
Always, and had no right to ask me this—
No.

FRANK

Then she does not think—she has no
cause—
She cannot think you love her?

REGINALD

Can I tell?
But this I can tell—she shall never come
To think or dream I do, and vex herself,
By any base and foolish fault of mine.

FRANK

But if she loves you, Redgie?

REGINALD

No, my boy.
She does not. Come, we need not talk of
that.

I think mock-modesty a mincing lie—
The dirtiest form of self-conceit that is,
Quite, and in either sense the vainest. You
She may not love just yet—but me, I know,
She never will. I ought to say 'Thank God,'
Being poor, and knowing myself unworthy
her

--A younger son's son, with a closed career
Should peace prove now as stable as it looks—
If I on my side loved her as I should
And if I knew she would be, as I fear—
No, hope she will, happier with you than me
I can't do that, quite; if I could, and did,
I should be just a little less unfit
To dream that she could love me—which I
don't.

FRANK

You don't mean that you want me——

REGINALD

I do mean

I want her to be happy: as for you,
If I don't want you to be miserable
It only shows I am not quite a cur.

FRANK

You never were: but if you meant me well,
What made you go campaigning and come
back
A hero?

REGINALD

Six months' service! Don't you be
A fool—or flatterer.

FRANK

Still, you have (worse luck!)
Such heavy odds—a wound, and Waterloo

REGINALD

If I—or you—had lost an eye or arm,
That wouldn't make us Nelsons.

FRANK

Something like.

REGINALD

Well, you can do that in the hunting-field.

FRANK

I wish I had you in the playing-fields
Again.

REGINALD

We can't just settle it with fists.
But, if you asked me, as of course you don't
And won't, what she and I were talking of
Last evening, I could tell you—and I will.
I asked her if she thought it possible
That two such baby friends and playfellows
As she and Anne had been with you and me
Could, when grown up, be serious lovers.

FRANK

Well—

Was that not making love to her? And
what
Did she say?

REGINALD

Hardly. No. Certainly not.

FRANK

And then?

REGINALD

The bell rang, and we went to dress
For dinner.

FRANK

What did she say—if she did—
To make you ask her that?

REGINALD

Something she did—
At least, I thought so—like a fool. And now
We'll talk no more about it. Mind you,
Frank,
I didn't—could I possibly?—forget
That just because I love her—more than you
I won't say—she must never dream I do
If I can help it.

FRANK

Then, in heaven's name, why
Say what you say you did?

REGINALD

Don't fret yourself.
No harm was meant or done. But if she does
Love you—if you can win her—as I think
(There!)—you're the happiest fellow ever
born.

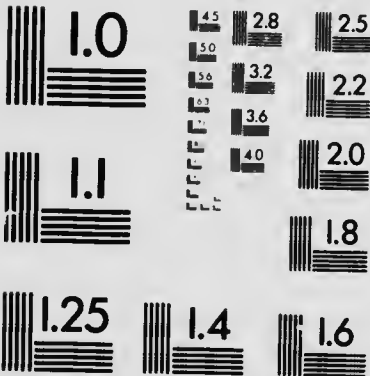
FRANK

And you're the best, Redgie. By Jove! she
ought
To love you, if she knew how you love her.



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REGINALD

And that, please God, she never will. When
you

And she are married, if you tell her so,
You'll play the traitor, not to me but her—
Make her unhappy for the minute. Don't.
She would be sorrier than I'm worth, you
know,

To think of any sorrow not her own
And given by her unconsciously. She had
Always the sweetest heart a girl could have.
'Sweet heart'! she might have been the first
girl born
Whose lover ever called her by the name.

FRANK

Redgie, I don't know what to say to you.

REGINALD

Say nothing. Talk about our play.

FRANK

Your play!
We are like to play, it seems, without a stage,
Another, and a sadder.

REGINALD

Don't be sure.
My play is highly tragic. Italy,
Steel, poison, shipwreck—

FRANK

One you made at school,
Is it? I know what those were.

REGINALD

Wait and see.

Enter SIR FRANCIS DILSTON

SIR FRANCIS

Well, Frank,—how are you, Reginald?—you
let
Mabel go out—and unattended?

FRANK

Come,
Father, you would not have me (think how
she
Would hate it!) hang about her like a burr?

SIR FRANCIS

No—no. But there's a medium, sir, betwixt
Neglect and persecution.

FRANK

Well, I hope
And think I've hit that medium.

SIR FRANCIS

Reginald
If you were Mabel's lover, or in hope
To be her lover, could you slight her so?

REGINALD

I can't imagine that condition.

SIR FRANCIS

Then
You youngsters are no more your fathers'
sons
Than moles are sons of eagles.

FRANK

Say, father.

Rats of course

SIR FRANCIS

Eh! was that an epigram?
The point, my boy? Because we worry you

FRANK

Because we scuttle where you used to spring
And nibble when you used to bite. At least
You say so—or they say so.

SIR FRANCIS

Heaven forbid!
Tom Jones and Lovelace were not gods
ours.
But if we meant to win and keep a heart
Worth winning and worth keeping, Frank, you
knew
We must not seem to slight it. 'Pique and
soothe,'
Young Byron bids you—don't stand off and
gape.
There may be better means than his, if
you
Love as I trust you love her. There's the
bell.
[Exeunt

SCENE II.—*In the Garden*

FRANK and MABEL

FRANK

I may not say what any man may say?

MABEL

To me? And any man, you think, may say
Foolish and heartless things to me? or is it
Only the heir of Heronshaw who claims
A right so undeniable?

FRANK

Is the taunt
Fair to yourself or me? You do not think——

MABEL

You have the right to inake mock love to me?
I do not.

FRANK

How have you the right to call
Truth mockery, knowing I love you?

MABEL

How should I
Know it? If you mistake me now for Anne,
You may mistake her presently for me.

FRANK

Anne?

MABEL

If you care for either cousin—much,
It ought, by all I ever heard or read,
To be the one you are always bickering with.

FRANK

She does not like me.

MABEL

She does not dislike.

FRANK

Her liking would not help nor her dislike
Forbid me to be happy. You perhaps—
I can't guess how you can—may think so:
she

Cannot. And if I did—worse luck for me!—
What chance should I have? Can you not
have seen

—Not once—not ever—how her face and eyes
Change when she looks at Redgie?

MABEL

What!—Absurd!
You love her, and are mad with jealousy.

FRANK

Mad if I am, my madness is to love
You. But you must have seen it.

MABEL

I am not
Jealous.

FRANK

You need not have an eye to see it.
Her voice might tell you, when she speaks to
him.

MABEL

The tone is just like yours or mine. Of
course
We all make much—or something—of him
now;
Since he came back, I mean.

FRANK

From Waterloo;
I knew it—an interesting young cousin.
Well,
He does deserve his luck, I know; he did
Always: and you were always good to him.

MABEL

He always needed somebody, poor boy,
To be so.

FRANK

Ah, if that were all! Because
His guardian, my good father,—good to me
Always—his cousin, in whose grounds we now
Walk and discuss him—and his school-
masters,
You think, were apt——

MABEL

To ill-use him? No; nor yet
Misunderstand him: that I did not mean.
But she who knew him and loved him best is
gone—
His aunt and mine—your mother.

FRANK

Yes: she did
Love him! she must have loved his mother
more
Than many sisters love each other.

MABEL

More
Than I love Anne or Anne loves me? I hope
Not. But when death comes in—and leaves
behind

A child for pledge and for memorial, love
Must naturally feel more—I want the word;
More of a call upon it—not a claim—
A sort of blind and dumb and sweet appeal
Out of the dark, and out of all the light
That burns no more but broods on all the
past—

A glowworm on a grave. And you, I know,
Were never jealous: all the house knew that,
And loved you for it as we did.

FRANK

Ah—as you
Did! I'd have had you love me more than
they,
If it had not been too great and sweet a thing
For me to dream of.

MABEL

Do not dream at all.
What good can come of dreaming?

FRANK

Less than none,
If dreaming, doubt, or fear, should take away
The little comfort, such as it is—God knows,
Not much, though precious—that your kind
last words
Gave me. Too kind they were, Mabel. I
was.
And am, jealous of Redgie; more to-night
Than ever: but I will not be.

MABEL

I am sure
You will not. Why?

FRANK

Because I know—I am sure,
Mabel—more sure than you can be of me
Or I can of myself—he would not grudge
Nor envy me my happiness if you
Could bring yourself to make me happy.

MABEL

Why
Should he?

FRANK

Ask him.

MABEL

A pretty thing to ask
But, Frank, it's good, and very good, of
To say so—if you care for me at all,
And think it possible I could care for him

FRANK

I think it more than possible: but he
Does not. You'll have to tell him. Do
let Anne
Hear you.

MABEL

I would not let her, certainly,
If I were tempted to propose to you.
Do you think that girls—that women do so
things?

FRANK

No: but I do think—think, by heaven
know—
He will not tell you what a child might see
That he can love, and does, better than I
And all his heart is set on you. But Anne
Loves him: you must have seen it.

MABEL

You love him
And do not know it, and take me for him
seeing
Her features in my face, and thinking she
Loves Redgie: is not this the truth?
— Frank,
Or change your name for one that means
lie—
Iscaiot or Napoleon.

FRANK

God forbid!
I tell you what I am sure of, as I am sure
I wish I were not.

MABEL

Sure? How can you be

FRANK

Are you not sure? Be honest. Can you
You doubt he would have told you—what
won't

And can't—had he been heir of Heronshaw
Or Anyshaw? You might have spared that
taunt,
Mabel. But can you say it? You never
were
A liar, and never can be. Tell him then
The truth he will not tell you.

MABEL

What if he
Rejects me? This is past a joke.

FRANK

It is.

MABEL

I knew you could not love me. Why make
love?

FRANK

I love you; but I see how you love him;
And think you are right. He loves you more
than I—
Yes, more than I can—more than most men
could

Love even you. You are no mate for me,
I am no mate for you, the song says. Well,
So be it. God send you happiness with him!
He has done more than give you up—give up
All chance of you—he would not take the
chance
That honour, as he thought, forbade. Do
you
Reward him.

MABEL

God reward you, Frank! You see
—It's true—I love him.

FRANK

And he will not speak.
Tell him to-morrow—and come in to-night.
[*Exeunt.*]

ACT II

SCENE I.—*Another part of the grounds*

Enter SIR ARTHUR CLAVERING and
REGINALD

SIR ARTHUR

I'm glad you love the old place: to have you
here—

You and the Dilstons—brings my father's
time
Back. I might almost be your father,
though;
Yours, or your cousins'—Frank's or Mabel's.
Time
Slips on like water.

REGINALD

Very softly, here;
Less like the Kielder than the Deadwater
Till both make up the Tyne.

SIR ARTHUR

It wearies you,
Cousin? Make haste then and grow strong
and stout,
And ride away to battle: till you can,
I mean to keep you prisoner and be proud
I have a guest who struck beside the Duke
An English stroke at Waterloo.

REGINALD

Beside,
Arthur? There's no one born can boast of
that.
The best we can—the very best of us—
Say for each other, is just, we followed him—
His hand and eye and w^ord and thought—
and did
What might be of our duty.

SIR ARTHUR

Well, my boy,
Did he do more? You're just a hothead
still—
The very schoolboy that I knew you first—
On fire with admiration and with love
Of some one or of something, always. Now,
Who is it—besides your general? who—or
which?
Anne's chestnut shell, or Mabel's golden
fire—
Her emerald eyes, or Anne's dark violets—
ch?
You have them both (a happy hero you!)
Dancing attendance on your highness. Here
Comes Mabel: have you not a glove to throw?

Enter MABEL

Dear cousin, make him talk to you: to me

He will not; and I have not time to dance
Attendance on him. *[Exit.]*

REGINALD

Arthur's jokes are not
Diamonds for brilliance; but he's good.

MABEL

Are you?

REGINALD

You never asked me that of old times.

MABEL

No:

That was superfluous: all the household
knew
How good a boy you were.

REGINALD

And you? A girl
There was who loved the saddle as well as I,
And was not slower at breaking bounds.

MABEL

You have not

Forgiven me what you suffered for my sake
So often—much too often.

REGINALD

No, of course.

How should I?

MABEL

You remember our old rides—
Tell me about your ride at Waterloo.

REGINALD

More like a swim against a charging sea
It was, than like a race across the moors
Yonder.

MABEL

But when a breaker got you down—
When you lay hurt it might have been to
death—
Will you not tell me what you thought of then?

REGINALD

No.

MABEL

Nothing?

REGINALD

Nothing I can tell you of.

MABEL

Was all a mist and whirlwind—like the sea
Out yonder when the north-east wind
high?

That I can fancy. But when sense
back

You thought of nothing you can tell me
Reginald? nothing?

REGINALD

Nothing I can tell
Any one—least of all, women or men,
Frank's wife that is to be, Mabel.

MABEL

And when

Has Frank concealed her from all eyes
yours?

You are too sharp-sighted, Redgie.

REGINALD

Did she

Ask me just now what if she knew—she told
Have known the answer that I could
make—

It was not right or kind to ask?

MABEL

Not she.

REGINALD

Mabel!

MABEL

She's innocent, at least.

REGINALD

You mean—

MABEL

I mean she is not here. Nor anywhere
But in the silliest dreamiest brain alive—
The blindest head cheating the trustiest heart
That ever made a man—untrustworthy.
You did not dream or think of any
friend—

Anne, Frank, or me—when you were lying
cut down,
Helpless, that hideous summer night?

now

You will not speak or stir? O, Reginald!
Must I say everything—and more—and
Nothing?

REGINALD

My love! Mabel! What can I?

MABEL

Just that again.

REGINALD

How can it be?

MABEL

How could it not be?

REGINALD

How have I deserved

This?

MABEL

How can I tell you? Do you tell me
Now, what you would not tell Frank's wife.

REGINALD

I need not tell you.

MABEL

Tell me, though.

REGINALD

I thought,
Between the shoots and swoonings, off and
on,
How hard it was, if anything was hard
When one was dying for England, not to see
Mabel, when I could see the stars. I thought
How sweet it was to know they shone on her
Asleep or waking, here at home. I thought
I could have wished, and should not wish, to
send
My whole heart's love back as my life went
out,
To find her here and clasp her close and say
What I could never—how much I had loved
her. Then
I thought how base and bad a fool I was
To dream of wishing what would grieve her.
Then
I think I fell asleep.

MABEL

And that was all,

Redgie?

REGINALD

And that was all, Mabel.

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MABEL

You did—

You did not think, if she had known—if she,
Asleep and dreaming here, had dreamed of
it—

What love she would have sent you back for
yours—

Yours—how could she be worth it? Did you
not

See, as you lay—know, as your pain sank
down

And died and left you yet not quite asleep—
How past all words she loved you? Reginald!
You did not?

REGINALD

How should I have dreamed of heaven?
I'm not a saint, Mabel.

MABEL

And what am I

Who ask a man what, being the man he is,
He will not ask me—and am not ashamed?

REGINALD

You are more than ever a man whom heaven
loved best
Saw shining out of heaven in dreams—more
dear,
More wonderful than angels. How you can
Care for me really and truly—care for me,
It beats my wits to guess.

MABEL

It's very strange,

Of course: what is there in you to be loved?

REGINALD

There's many a true word said in jest. But
you'
Why, all the world might fall down at your
feet
And you not find a man in all the world
Worth reaching out your hand to raise. And
I!
The best luck never finds the best man out,
They say; but no man living could deserve
This.

MABEL

Well, you always were the best to me;
The brightest, bravest, kindest boy you were
That ever let a girl misuse him—make

His loving sense of honour, courage, faith,
Devotion, rods to whip him—literally,
You know—and never by one word or look
Protested. You were born a hero, sir.
Deny it, and tell a louder lie than when
You used to take my faults upon you. How
I loved you then, and always! Now, at last,
You see, you make me tell it: which is not
As kind as might be, or as then you were.

REGINALD

I never was or could be fit for you
To glance on or to tread on. You, whose
face

Was always all the light of all the world
To me—the sun of suns, the flower of flowers,
The wonder of all wonders—and your smile
The light that lit the dawn up, and your voice
A charm that might have thrilled and stilled
the sea—

You, to put out that heavenly hand of yours
And lift up me to heaven, above all stars
But those God gave you for your eyes on
earth

That all might know his angel!

MABEL

There—be still.

Enter FRANK (at a distance)

Here comes our bridesman—and our match-
maker.

He told me that he loved me yesterday,
But that you loved me better—more than he,
And, Redgie, that you would not tell me so
Till I had made an offer for your hand.
A prophet, was he not?

REGINALD

Did he say that?

I'd like to black his boots.

MABEL

You weren't his fag,
Were you?—Well, Frank, you told me yester-
day
Nothing but truth: and this has come of it.

FRANK

Your hand in Redgie's? All goes right, then?

MABEL

I did not give him, I confess, a chance.

REGINALD

Frank, I can't look you in the face—and
I hope and think I have not played you false.

FRANK

Well, if you swore you had, Redgie my
I'd not believe you. You play false, indeed.
To look me in the face and tell me that
Would need more brass than nature gave
brows.

REGINALD

But how to look at father in the face—
Upon my honour. You must help
Frank.

FRANK

And that I will, Redgie. But don't
dream
He'll think there's any need of any help,
Excuse, or pretext for you. Any fool
Must have foreseen it.

MABEL

Yes—I think he must.
Any but one, at least—who would not so
Frank, I proposed to him—I did. He
So scandalously stupid!

FRANK

Ah, you know,
I told you. That was unavoidable.

REGINALD

You sons and daughters of good luck
wealth
Make no allowance—cannot, I suppose—
For such poor devils as poor relations.
Frank,
I think I see you—in my place, I mean—
Making the least love in the world to her
Letting her dream you loved her!

FRANK

Well, did you?

MABEL

He did.

REGINALD

I don't know how I did.

All:
a chance.

face—and yet
played you false.

Redgie my boy,
my false, indeed!
tell me that
nature gave you

in the face—
must help me,

But don't you

of any help,
Any fool

think he must.
would not see.
I did. He is

you know,
oldable.

good luck and

, I suppose—
poor relations.

ce, I mean—
world to her—
her!

Well, did you?

I did.

MABEL But I
Know.
FRANK
I can guess. He never dropped a word
Nor looked a look to say it—and so you knew.

MABEL
Yes; that was it.

FRANK
When I go courting, then,
I'll take a leaf out of old Redgie's book,
And never risk a whisper—never be
Decently civil. Well, it's good to see
How happy you two are.

MABEL
Hush! Here comes Anne.

Enter ANNE

ANNE
I heard what Frank said. And I hope you
are
Happy, and always will be.

REGINALD
Thanks. And yet
I know I ought not.

ANNE
Complimentary, that,
To Mabel.

REGINALD
Understands.
Of course.
She always understood you.

REGINALD
Did she? No:
She always made too much of me—and now
Much more too much than ever. God knows
why.

ANNE
God knows what happiness I wish you both.

REGINALD
Thank her, Mabel.

MABEL
I can't. She frightens me.
Anne!

ANNE
Am I grown frightful to all of you?
Are you afraid of me, Reginald?

REGINALD
What
Can ail you, Mabel? What can frighten you?

ANNE
Excitement—passionate happiness—I see.
Enough to make a girl—before men's eyes—
Shrink almost from her sister.

MABEL
Anne, you knew
This was to be—if Redgie pleased.

ANNE
I did;
And did not doubt it would be.

FRANK
These are strange
Congratulations. Anne, you must have
thought
It would not.

ANNE
What I thought or did not think
I know perhaps as well as you. And now
I need not surely twice congratulate
My sister and my brother—soon to be.

MABEL
Let us go in.
ANNE
You seem so happy too
That we must all congratulate you, Frank.
[Exit.]

ACT III

SCENE I.—In the Garden.

ANNE and MABEL

ANNE
This heartsease bed is richer than it was
Last year—and so it should be; should it
not?

For your sake and for his, I mean. See
 here;
 Here's one all black—a burning cloud of
 black,
 With golden sunrise at its heart; and
 here's
 One all pure gold from shapely leaf to leaf,
 And just its core or centre black as night.

MABEL

They call them pansies too, you know.

ANNE

But you
 Must call them heartsease now. Tell me—
 what thoughts
 Have lovers that the lovely plain old name
 Would not suit better than all others?

MABEL

None,
 None that I know of—nor does Redgie.
 Anne,
 How can we two thank God enough?

ANNE

I'm sure
 I cannot tell you, Mabel. All your thoughts
 Are flowers, you say, and flowers as sweet as
 these
 Whose perfume makes the rose's coarse and
 dull;
 And how then could I tell you how to thank
 God? He has given you something—
 thought or truth,
 If truth and thought are not the same—which
 I
 Cannot, you know, imagine.

MABEL

Ah, you will
 Some day, and soon—you must and will.

ANNE

I doubt
 That. Can the world supply me, do you
 think,
 With such another Redgie?

MABEL

That's not fair.

ANNE

I must put up with something second-rate
 Frank, for example—if he'd have me?
 Dear Mabel: be content with happiness
 And do not dream it gives you power
 to play
 Providence, or a prophet. Is he not
 Waiting for you—there, by the hawthorn
 there—
 And, certainly, not wanting me?

MABEL

He is
 I told him not to come and wait for me

ANNE

I cannot bear it: and I cannot die.

Enter SIR ARTHUR

SIR ARTHUR

Our lovers are not here? Ah, no;
 want
 Seclusion—shade and space between
 trees
 To chirp and twitter. Well, no wonder

ANNE

SIR ARTHUR

The handsomest and happiest pair that
 That England or Northumberland
 show,
 Are they not?

ANNE

Yes; Mabel is beautiful

SIR ARTHUR

You don't think much of Redgie, then?

ANNE

With all that light soft shining curly
 Too boyish for his years and tra
 men
 Don't live or die by their good looks

SIR ARTHUR

You don't call soldiership a trade
 then,

His years are not so many—not half mine,
And I'm not quite a greybeard.

ANNE

Let him be

Apollo—Apollino if you like,
Your all but girl-faced godling in the hall.
He did not win her with his face or curls.

SIR ARTHUR

I am proud to know he did not. Are you
you?

ANNE

Proud of him? Why should I be?

SIR ARTHUR

No; of her.

ANNE

O! Yes, of course—very. Not every girl,
Of course, would condescend—to look so
high.

SIR ARTHUR

A fine young loyal fellow, kind and brave,
Wants no more gilding, does he?

ANNE

Luckily,

We see, he does not. Here she comes alone.
She has sent him in to rest—or speak to
Frank.

Re-enter MABEL

You have not kept him hanging round you
long.

You are not exacting, Mabel.

MABEL

Need I be?

ANNE

We see you need not.

SIR ARTHUR

Mabel, may I say

How very and truly glad I am?

MABEL

You may

Indeed, and let me thank you. That you
must.

SIR ARTHUR

It makes one laugh, or smile at least, to think
That Master Redgie always was till now.

The unlucky boy—the type of luckless
youth,
Poor fellow—and now it seems you are going
to give
Or rather have given him more than his
deserts
Or most men's, if not any man's. I am
Glad.

MABEL

Please don't compliment. You know I have
known
Reginald all my life—and can't but know
How much more he deserves than I can give.

ANNE

She has the courage of her faith, you see.

MABEL

Don't play at satire, Annie, when you
know
How true it is.

ANNE

Of course I know it, Mab.
He always was incomparable. At school
His masters always said so, and at home—
Ah, well, perhaps the grooms did.

MABEL

One would think
You did not know him, and hated him. I
wish
Almost he did not—as he does—deserve
Far more than I shall bring.

SIR ARTHUR

Impossible:
Even if he were—no subaltern, but even
The Duke himself.

Enter FRANK and REGINALD

FRANK

Who's talking of the Duke?
Ask Redgie what he thinks of him.

REGINALD

No, don't.
My name's not Homer.

ANNE

Frenchmen say—

REGINALD

Dear Anne,
Don't you say 'Frenchmen say'—say 'French-
men lie.'
They call the man who thrashes them a cur;
Then what must they be?

SIR ARTHUR

Try to tell us, though,
Something—if only to confute the frogs
And shame their craven croaking.

REGINALD

What on earth
Can I or any man—could Wordsworth,
even—
Say that all England has not said of him
A thousand times, and will not say again
Ten thousand?

SIR ARTHUR

Come, my boy, you're privileged,
You know: you have served, and seen him.

REGINALD

Seen him? Yes.
You see the sun each morning; but the sun
Takes no particular notice and displays
No special aspect just for your behoof,
Does it?

MABEL

He never spoke to you?

REGINALD

To me?

MABEL

Why not?

REGINALD

He might of course to any one;
But I'm not lucky—never was, you know.

ANNE

They say that none of you who have followed
him
Love him as Frenchmen love Napoleon.

REGINALD

No,
How should they? No one loves the sun as
much
As drunken fools love wildfires when they go

Plunging through marsh and mire and quag
and haugh
To find a filthy grave.

SIR ARTHUR

Come, come, my boy!
Remember—'love your enemies.'

REGINALD

When I have
Any, I'll try; but not my country's; not
Traitors and liars and thieves and murderers
—not

Heroes of French or Irish fashion. Think
How fast the Duke stands always—how
there's not

A fellow—can't be—drudging in the rear
Who does not know as well as that the sun
Shines, that the man ahead of all of us
Is fit to lead or send us anywhere
And sure to keep quick time with us, if we
Want or if duty wants him—bids the chief
Keep pace with you or me. And then just
think,

Could he, suppose he had been—impossibly—
Beaten and burnt out of the country, lashed,
Lashed like a hound and hunted like a hare
Back to his form or kennel through the snow,
Have left his men dropping like flies, de-
voured

By winter as if by fire, starved, frozen, blind,
Maimed, mad with torment, dying in hell,
while he
Scurried and scuttled off in comfort?

MABEL

No.

He could not. Arthur quite agrees. And
now
Be quiet.

SIR ARTHUR

Redgie takes away one's breath.
But that's the trick to catch young ladies'
hearts—
Enthusiasm on the now successful side.

MABEL

Successful! If we could have failed, you
know,
He would have been—he, I, and you and all,
All of us, all, more passionate and keen
And hotter in our faith and loyalty

And blitherer in our love and hate than now
When thoughts of England and her work are
not
Tempered with tears that are not born of
pride
And joy that pride makes perfect.

FRANK

Let's be cool.
I have not seen you quite so hot and red
Since you were flogged for bathing at the
Weir,
Redgie.

REGINALD

Which time? the twentieth?

FRANK

That at least.

MABEL

Poor fellow!

REGINALD

Ah, you always pitied me—
And spoilt me.

MABEL

No one else did, Reginald.

REGINALD

And right and wise they were—a worthless
whelp!

MABEL

Very. Not worth a thought—were you?

REGINALD

I'm sure
Not worth a tear of yours—and yet you cried
Sometimes, you know, for my mischances.

SIR ARTHUR

Ay?
So, boy and girl were born for bride and
groom,
Were they? There's nothing now to cry for,
then.

ANNE

Arthur forgets: are love and happiness
Nothing to cry for? Tears, we are told, are
signs
Infallible—indispensable—of joy.

FRANK

Mabel and Redgie, then, must be just now

Unhappy—very unhappy. Can they fill
With us their parts to-morrow in his play?

MABEL

Yes: I know mine; and Anne knows hers.

ANNE

And Frank
His. Does he stab you, Redgie, on the stage?

REGINALD

Yes, as I save him from the shipwreck.

SIR ARTHUR

Good!
That's something like a villain.

ANNE

I'm as bad.
I poison Mabel—out of love for Frank.

SIR ARTHUR

Heaven help us, what a tragic day or night!
It's well the drawing-room and the libraries
Are all rigged up ship-shape, with stage and
box
Ready, and no such audience to be feared
As might—I don't say would, though,
Reginald—
Hiss you from pit and gallery.

REGINALD

That they would!
It's all a theft from Dodsley's great old plays,
I know you'll say—thirdrate and secondhand.
The book, you know, you lent me when a
boy—
Or else I borrowed and you did end.

SIR ARTHUR

That's possible, you bad young scamp. I
wish
We could have seen it played in the open air,
Boccaccio—but that would scarcely suit
With April in Northumberland.

ANNE

Not quite.

REGINALD

Come, don't abuse our climate and revile
The crowning county of England—yes, the
best
It must be.

FRANK
Now he's off again.

REGINALD
I'm not.
But I just ask you where you'll find its like?
Have you and I, then, raced across its moors
Till horse and boy were wellnigh mad with
glee
So often, summer and winter, home from
school,
And not found that out? Take the streams
away,
The country would be sweeter than the south
Anywhere: give the south our streams, would
it
Be fit to match our borders? Flower and
crag,
Burnside and boulder, heather and whin—
you don't
Dream you can match them south of this?
And then,
If all the unwatered country were as flat
As the Eton playing-fields, give it back our
burns,
And set them singing through a sad south
world,
And try to make them dismal as its fens—
They won't be! Bright and tawny, full of
fun
And storm and sunlight, taking change and
chance
With laugh on laugh of triumph—why, you
know
How they plunge, pause, chafe, chide across
the rocks
And chuckle along the rapids, till they breathe
And rest and pant and build some bright deep
bath
For happy boys to dive in, and swim up,
And match the water's laughter.

SIR ARTHUR
You at least
Know it, we doubt not. Woodlands too we
have,
Have we not, Mabel? beech, oak, aspen,
pine,
And Redgie's old familiar friend, the birch,
With all its blithe lithe bounty of buds and
sprays
For hapless boys to wince at, and grow red,
And feel a tingling memory prick their skins—

Sting till their burning blood seems all or
blush—
Eh?

REGINALD
I beg pardon if I bored you. But—
You know there's nothing like this country,
Frank,
Is there?

FRANK
I never will dispute with you
Anything, Redgie. This is what you call
Being peaceable, is it? firing up like tow
And rattling off like small-shot?

REGINALD
I can't help—
Can I?

FRANK
When you said that at school, my lad,
It didn't help you much.

MABEL
Don't bully him so.
Don't let them, Redgie.

SIR ARTHUR
Redgie must be proo
Now against jokes that used to make the boy
Frown, blush, and wince: and well he may
be.

ANNE
Why
Is Reginald much wiser than he was?
He seems to me the same boy still.

SIR ARTHUR
He is,
I think; but now the luckiest living.

REGINALD
Yes.
I'm half afraid one ought not anyhow
To be so happy. None of you, I know,
Our brothers and our sister, think it right.
You cannot. Nor do I.

SIR ARTHUR
A willow-wreath
For Mabel! Redgie turns her off.

MABEL

He might,
If she would let him: but he'll find her grasp
Tenacious as a viper's. Be resigned,
Redgie: I shall not let you go.

REGINALD

I am
Resigned. But if God bade one rise to
heaven
At once, and sit above the happiest there,
Resigned one might be—possibly: but still
Would not one shrink for shame's sake?
Look at her
And me!

SIR ARTHUR

I never saw a better match.

MABEL

I never had so sweet a compliment
Paid me. I shan't forget it, Arthur.

REGINALD

What
Possesses all of you to try and turn
The poor amount of head I have, I can't
Imagine. One might think you had laid a
bet
To make a man shed tears by way of thanks
And laugh at him for crying. Frank,—
Arthur,—Anne,
You know I know how good it is of you
To wish me joy—and how I thank you: that
You must know.

ANNE

Surely, Reginald, we do.
Goodwill like ours could hardly miss, I trust,
Of gratitude like yours.

MABEL

What is it, Anne?
What makes you smile so?

ANNE

Would you have me frown?

MABEL

Rather than smile like that: you would not
look
So enigmatic.

ANNE

Let it pass, my dear:
We shall not smile to-morrow, when we
play
Tragedy—shall we? Are the properties
Ready—stiletto and poison-flask?

REGINALD

Ah, there
We are lucky. There's the old laboratory,
made
It seems for our stage purpose, where you
know
Sir Edward kept his chemicals and things—
Collections of the uncanniest odds and
ends,
Poisons and weapons from all parts of the
earth,
Which Arthur lets us choose from.

ANNE

Are they safe
To play with?

MABEL

Are we children, Annie? Still
Perhaps you are right: we had better let
them be.

SIR ARTHUR

The daggers are not dangerous—blunt as
lead—
That I shall let you youngsters play with.

REGINALD

Good:
But how about the poison? let us have
A genuine old Venetian flask to fill
With wine and water.

ANNE

Let me choose it.

MABEL

You?

Why?

ANNE

I know more about such things.

MABEL

Poison?

About

ANNE

About the loveliest oldworld ware
Fonthill or Strawberry Hill could furnish:
I'm
Miss Beckford, or Horatia Walpole.

SIR ARTHUR

Come
And take your choice of the empty flasks.
Don't choose
A full one by mistake.

ANNE

I promise not.

[*Exeunt* SIR ARTHUR and ANNE.]

FRANK

I leave you to consult together, then—
The playwright and his heroine: that's but
fair. [Exit.]

MABEL

I don't quite like it, Redgie: I'm afraid
Anne is not happy: I'm afraid.

REGINALD

My love,
Is any one unhappy in the world?
I can't just now believe in wretchedness.

MABEL

But I can. Redgie, do be good—and grave.
I talk to you as if you were grown-up,
You see.

REGINALD

You do me too much honour.

MABEL

That
I do, you stupidest of tiresome boys.
Still, you were never ill-natured, were you?
Well,
Have you not—boys see nothing—don't you
think
You might have seen, had you but eyes, that
Anne
Is not—I don't say (that would be absurd)
As happy as we are—no one could be that—
But not—not happy at all?

REGINALD

My darling, no.
What dream is this—what lunacy of love?

MABEL

Well—I must tell you everything, I see—
I wish I did not and I could not think
Her heart or fancy—call it either—were
More fixed on Frank than ever his on me.

REGINALD

Eh! Well, why not? If he can come to
Any one, after thinking once he loved
You—and you would not have it break
heart
Quite, would you?—what could well befall
all
Happier than this? You don't suppose
can?
To me it seems—you know how hard
strange
It seems to hope or fancy: but God grant
It may be! If old Frank were happy once
I should not feel I ought not—now and then
To be so happy always.

MABEL

But you ought
How good you are, Redgie!

REGINALD

O, very good
I'd like—I want—to see my dearest friend
Happy—without a touch of trouble or pain
For me to take or suffer. Wonderful,
Is it not? saintly—great—heroic?

MABEL

Well,
I think you may—I think we shall.
don't
Be boyish—don't be prompting Frank:
know,
Reginald, what I mean.

REGINALD

Yes: that he may—
Will, very likely—want a hand like yours
Rather than mine to help him—bring him
through—
Give him a lift or shove.

MABEL

Leave well alone.
That's all I mean.

REGINALD

You always did know best,
And always will: I shall be always right
Now that my going or doing or saying de-
pends
On you. It's well you are what you are:
you might,
If you were evil-minded, make a man
Run from his post—betray or yield his flag—
Duck down his head and scuttle.

MABEL

Like you. Not a man

REGINALD

Let no man boast himself; does not
The Bible say—something like that?

MABEL

Perhaps.
But then you don't, and never did, you
know—
Not even about this play of yours. Come in:
The windy darkness creeps and leaps by fits
Up westward: clouds, and neither stars nor
sun,
And just the ghost of a lost moon gone blind
And helpless. If we are to play at all,
I must rehearse my part again to-night.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV

SCENE I.—*A stage representing a garden by
the sea.*

SONG (*from within*)

Love and Sorrow met in May
Crowned with rue and hawthorn-spray,
And Sorrow smiled.
Scarce a bird of all the spring
Durst between them pass and sing,
And scarce a child.

Love put forth his hand to take
Sorrow's wreath for sorrow's sake,
Her crown of rue.
Sorrow cast before her down
Even for love's sake Love's own crown
Crowned with dew.

Winter breathed again, and spring
Cowered and shrank with wounded wing
Down out of sight.
May, with all her loves laid low,
Saw no flowers but flowers of snow
That mocked her flight.

Love rose up with crownless head
Smiling down on springtime dead,
On wintry May.
Sorrow, like a cloud that flies,
Like a cloud in clearing skies,
Passed away.

Enter ALVISE

ALVISE

This way she went: the nightingales that
heard
Fell silent, and the loud-mouthed salt sea-
wind
Took honey on his lips from hers, and
breathed
The new-born breath of roses. Not a weed
That shivers on the storm-shaped lines of
shore
But felt a fragrance in it, and put on
The likeness of a lily.

Enter GALASSO

GALASSO

Thou art here.
God will not let thee hide thyself too close
For hate and him to find thee. Draw: the
light
Is good enough to die by.

ALVISE

Thou hast found him
That would have first found thee. Set thou
thy sword
To mine, its edge is not so fain to bite
As is my soul to slay thee. [*They draw.*]

Enter BEATRICE and FRANCESCA

BEATRICE

What is this?
What serpent have ye trod on?

ALVISE

Didst thou bid me
Draw, seeing far off the surety for thy life
That women's tongues should bring thee?

BEATRICE

Speak not to him.
Speak to me—me, Alvise.

ALVISE

Sweet, be still.
Galasso, shall I smite thee on the lips
That dare not answer wit^h a lie to mine
And know they cannot, if they speak, but lie?

GALASSO

Thou knowest I dare not in Beatrice's sight
Strike thee to hell—nor threaten thee.

ALVISE

I know
Thou liest. She stands between thy grave
and thee,
As thou between the sun and hell.

FRANCESCA

My lord,
Forbear him.

GALASSO

I am not thy lord; who made me
Master or lord of thine? Not God should
say,
Save with his tongue of thunder, and be heard
(If bearing die not in a dead man's ear),
'Forbear him.'

ALVISE

Nay, Beatrice, bid not me
Forbear: he will not let me bid him live.

GALASSO

Thou shalt not find a tongue some half-hour
hence
To pray with to my sword for time to pray
And die not damned.

FRANCESCA

Sir, speak not blasphemy.
Death's wings beat round about us day and
night:
Their wind is in our faces now. I pray you,
Take heed.

GALASSO

Of what? of God, or thee? Not I.
But let Beatrice bend to me—

ALVISE

To thee?
Bend? Nay, Beatrice, bind me not in chains,
Who would not play thy traitor: give my
sword

What God gives all the waves and birds of the
air,
Freedom.

BEATRICE

He gives it not to slay.

ALVISE

He shall.
Are the waves bloodless or the vultures bland?
Loose me, love: leave me: let me go.

BEATRICE

Thou shalt not
Put off for me before my face thy nature,
Thy natural name of man, to mock with
murder
The murderous waves and beasts of ravin.
Slay me,
And God may give thee leave to slay him: I
Shall know not of it ever.

GALASSO

Vivarini,
These women's hands that here strike peace
between us
To-morrow shall not stead thee. Live a little.
My sword is not more thirsty than the sea,
Nor less secure in patience. Thou shalt find
A sea-rock for thy shipwreck on dry land here.
When thou shalt steer again upon the steel of
it
And find its fang's edge mortal. [Exit.]

ALVISE

Have ye shamed me?
Mine enemy goes down seaward with no sign
Set of my sword upon him.

BEATRICE

Let him pass.
To-morrow brings him back from sea—if
ever
He come again.

FRANCESCA

How should not he come back, then?

BEATRICE

The sea hath shoals and storms.

ALVISE

God guard him—till
He stand within my sword's reach!

FRANCESCA

Pray thou rather
God keep thee from the reach of his.

ALVISE

He cannot,
Except he smite to death or deadly sickness
One of us ere we join. My saint Beatrice,
Thou hast no commission, angel though thou
be, sweet,
Given thee of God to guard mine enemy's
head
Or cross me as his guardian.

BEATRICE

Would I cross thee,
The spirit I live by should stand up to chide
The soul-sick will that moved me. Yet I
would not
Had I God's leave in hand to give thee, give
Thy sword and his such leave to cross as
might
Pierce through my heart in answer.

ALVISE

Wouldst thou bid me,
When he comes back to-morrow from the sea
Whereon to-day his ship rides royal, yield
Thee and my sword up to him?

FRANCESCA

Nay, not her:
Thy sword she might.

ALVISE

She would not.

BEATRICE

Fain I would,
And keep thine honour perfect.

ALVISE

That may be,
When heaven and hell kiss, and the noon puts
on
The starry shadow of midnight. Sweet, come
in:

The wind grows keener than a flower should
face
And fear no touch of trouble. Doubt me not
That I will take all heed for thee and me,
Who am now no less than one least part of
thee. [Exeunt.]

SCENE II.—*The same*

Enter BEATRICE and FRANCESCA

BEATRICE

The wind is sharp as steel, and all the sky
That is not red as molten iron black
As iron long since molten. How the flowers
Cringe down and shudder from the scourgel
I would
Galasso's ship were home in harbour.

FRANCESCA

Here?
What comfort wouldst thou give him?

BEATRICE

What should I give?
Hadst thou some gentler maiden's mercy in
thee,
Thou might'st, though death hung shudder-
ing on his lips
And mixed its froth of anguish with the sea's,
Revive him

FRANCESCA

I, Beatrice?

BEATRICE

Who but thou,
Francesca?

FRANCESCA

Mock not, lest thy scoff turn back
Like some scared snake to sting thee.

BEATRICE

Nay, not I:
Dost thou not mock me rather, knowing I
know
Thou lov'st him as I love not? as I love
Aivise?

FRANCESCA

There is none I love but God.
Thou knowest he doth not love me.

BEATRICE

Dost thou dream
His love for me is even as thine for him,
Born of a braver father than is hate,
A fairer mother than is envy? Me
He loves not as he hates my lover: thou
Mayst haply set—as in this garden-ground
Half barren and all bitter from the sea
Some light of lilies shoots the sun's laugh
back—
Even in the darkness of his heart and hate
Some happier flower to spring against thy
smile
And comfort thee with blossom.

FRANCESCA

Thou shouldst be not
So fast a friend of mine: we were not born
I a Mariani, a Signorelli thou,
To play, with love and hate at odds with life,
Sisters.

BEATRICE

I know not in what coign of the heart
The root of hate strikes hellward, nor what
rains
Make fat so foul a spiritual soil with life,
Nor what plague-scattering planets feed with
fire
Such earth as brings forth poison. What is
hate
That thou and I should know it?

FRANCESCA

I cannot tell.
Flowers are there deadlier than all blights of
the air
Or hell's own reek to heavenward: springs,
whose water
Puts out the pure and very fire of life
As clouds may kill the sunset: sins and
sorrows,
Hate winged as love, and love walled round
as hate is,
With fear and weaponed wrath and a m-girt
anguish,
There have been and there may be. Wouldst
thou dream now
This flower were mortal poison, or this flasket
Filled full with juice of colder-blooded flowers
And herbs the faint moon feeds with dew, that
warily
I bear about me against the noonday's needs,

When the sun ravins and the waters reek
With lustrous fume and feverous light like
fire,
Preservative against it?

BEATRICE

Sure, the flower
Could hurt no babe as bright and soft as it
More than it hurts us now to smell to: nor
Could any draught that heals or harms be
found
Preservative against it.

FRANCESCA

Yet perchance
Preservative this draught of mine might
prove
Against the bitterness of life—of noon,
I would say—heat, and heavy thirst, and
faintness
That binds with lead the lids of the eyes, and
hangs
About the heart like hunger.

BEATRICE

I am athirst;
Thy very words have made me: and the
noon
Indeed is hot. Let me drink of it.

FRANCESCA

Drink.

BEATRICE

The wells are not so heavenly cold. What
comfort
Thou hast given me! I shall never thirst
again,
I think.

FRANCESCA

I am sure thou shalt not—till thou wake
Out of the next kind sleep that shall fall on
thee
And hold thee fast as love, an hour or twain
hence.

BEATRICE

I thank thee for thy gentle words and promise
More than for this thy draught of healing
Sleep
Is half the seed of life—the seed and stay of
it—
And love is all the rest.

FRANCESCA

Thou art sure of that?

Be sure then.

BEATRICE

How should I be less than sure of it?

Alvise's love and thine confirm and comfort
 Mine own with like assurance. All the
 wind's wrath

That darkens now the whitening sea to south-
 ward

Shall never blow the flame that feeds the sun
 out

Nor bind the stars from rising: how should
 grief, then,

Evil, or envy, change or chance of ruin,
 Lay hand on love to mar him? Death, whose
 tread

Is white as winter's ever on the sea

Whose waters build his charnel, hath no
 kingdom

Beyond the apparent verge and bourn of life
 Whereon to reign or threaten. Love, not he,
 Is lord of chance and change: the moons and
 suns

That measure time and lighten serve him not,
 Nor know they if a shadow at all there be
 That fear and fools call death, not seeing
 each year

How thick men's dusty days and crumbling
 hours

Fall but to rise like stars and bloom like
 flowers. [Exeunt.]

SCENE III.—*The same**Enter ALVISE and BEATRICE*

ALVISE

Thou art not well at ease: come in again
 And rest: the day grows dark as nightfall,
 ere
 Night fall indeed upon it.

BEATRICE

No, not yet.

I do not fear the thunder, nor the sea
 That mocks and mates the thunder. What I
 fear

I know not: but I will not go from hence
 Till that sea-thwarted ship's crew thwart the
 sea

Or perish for its pasture. See, she veers,

And sets again straight hither. All good
 saints,

Whose eyes unseen of ours that here lack
 light

Hallow the darkness, guard and guide her!
 Lo,

She reels again, and plunges shoreward:
 God,

Whose hand with curb immeasurable as they
 Jridles and binds the waters, bid the wind

Fall down before thee silent ere it slay,
 And death, whose clarion rends the heart of

the air,

Be dumb as now thy mercyl O, that cry
 Had more than tempest in it: life borne down

And hope struck dead with horror there put
 forth

Toward heaven that heard not for the clam-
 ouring sea

Their last of lamentation.

ALVISE

Some there are—

Nay, one there is comes shoreward. If mine
 eyes

Lie not, being baffled of the wind and sea,

The face that flashed upon us out of hell
 Between the reflux and the swallowing

wave

Was none if not Galassi's. Nay, go in:

Look not upon us.

BEATRICE

Wherefore?

ALVISE

Must I not

Save him to slay to-morrow? If I let

The sea's or God's hand slay mine enemy
 first,

That hand strikes dead mine honour. [Exit.]

BEATRICE

Save him, Christ!

God, save him! Death is at my heart: I feel
 His breath makes darkness round me.

Enter FRANCESCA

FRANCESCA

Dost thou live?

Dost thou live yet?

BEATRICE

I know not. What art thou,
To question me of life and death?

FRANCESCA

I am not
The thing I was.

BEATRICE

The friend I loved and knew thee
Thou art not. This fierce night that leaps up
eastward,
Laughing with hate and hunger, loud and
blind,
Is not less like the sunrise. What strange
poison
Has changed thy blood, that face and voice
and spirit
(If spirit or sense bid voice or face interpret)
Should change to this that meets me?

FRANCESCA

Did I drink
The poison that I gave thee? Thou art dead
now:
Not the oldest of the world's forgotten dead
Hast less to do than thou with life. Thou
halt not
Set eyes again on one that loved thee: here
No face but death's and mine, who hate thee
deadlier
Than life hates death, shalt thou set eyes on.
Die,
And dream that God may save thee: from
my hands
Alive thou seest he could not.

Re-enter ALVISE with GALASSO

ALVISE

Stand, I say.
Stand up. Thou hast no hurt upon thee.
Stand,
And gather breath to praise God's grace with.

GALASSO

Thee
First must I thank, who hast plucked me
hardly back
Forth of the ravening lips of death. What
art thou?
This light is made of darkness.

ALVISE

Yet the dark
May serve to see thine enemy by: to-mor-
The sun shall serve us better when
meet
And sword to sword gives thanks for sw
strokes.

GALASSO

The sun shall never see mine enemy mo
Now that his hand has humbled me.

ALVISE

Forego n
Thy natural right of manhood. Chan
was,
Not I, that chose thee for my hand to sa
As haply thine had saved me, had
wind
Flung me as thee to deathward.

GALASSO

Dost thou t
To live, and say it, and smile at me?
saint
Had heavenlier work to do than guard
when
God gave thine evil star such power as
thee
Power on thine enemy's life to save it. T
Thou shalt not save or spare me: if
morrow
Thy sword had borne down mine, thou h
let me live
And shamed me out of living: now, I am
Thou shalt not twice rebuke me.

[Stabs

BEATRICE

Death is goo
He gives me back Alvise.

ALVISE

Was it thou
Or God, Beatrice, speaking out of heave
Who turned my death to life?

BEATRICE

I am dying, Alvis
I thought to have left—perchance to have
thee: now
We shall not part for ever.

[Dies. ALVISE

FRANCESCA

Wilt thou stand
Star-struck to death, Galasso? Let our dead
Lie dead, while we fly fleet as birds or winds
Forth of the shadow of death, and laugh, and
live
As happy as these were hapless.

GALASSO

She—is she
Dead? Hath she kissed the death upon his
lips
And fed it full from hers?

FRANCESCA

Why, dost thou dream
I did not kill her?

GALASSO

Not a devil in hell
But one cast forth on earth could do it: and
she
Shall shame the light of heaven no longer.
[Stabs her.

FRANCESCA

Fool,
Thou hast set me free from fate and fear: I
knew
Thou wouldst not love me. [Dies.

GALASSO

What am I, to live
And see this death about me? Death and
life
Cast out so vile a thing from sight of heaven.
Save where the darkness of the grave is deep,
I cannot think to wake on earth or sleep.

ACT V

SCENE I.—*An ante-chamber to the drawing-room*

Enter ANNE

ANNE

To bear my death about me till I die
And always put the time off, tremblingly,
As if I loved to live thus, would be worse

Than death and meaner than the sin to die.
The sin to kill myself—or think of it—
I have sinned that sin already. Not a day
That brings the day I cannot live to see
Nearer, but burns my heart like flame and
makes
My thoughts within me serpents fanged with
fire.

He would not weep if I were dead, and she
Would. If I make no better haste to die,
I shall go mad and tell him—pray to him,
If not for love, for mercy on me—cry
'Look at me once—not as you look at her,
But not as every day you look at me—
And see who loves you, Reginald.' Ah God
That one should yearn at heart to do or say
What if it ever could be said or done
Would strike one dead with shame!

MABEL. (*singing in the next room*)

There's nae lark loves the lift, my dear,
There's nae ship loves the sea,
There's nae bee loves the heather-bells,
That loves as I love thee, my love,
That loves as I love thee.

The whin shines fair upon the fell,
The blithe broom on the lea:
The muirside wind is merry at heart:
It's a' for love of thee, my love,
It's a' for love of thee.

ANNE

For love of death,
For love of death it is that all things live
And all joys bring forth sorrows. Sorrow
and death

Have need of life and love to prey upon
Lest they too die as these do. What am I
That I should live? A thousand times it
seems

I have drawn this flasket out to look on it
And dream of dying, since first I seized it—
stole,

And Arthur never missed it. Yet again
The thought strikes back and stabs me, what
are they,

What are they all, that they should live, and I
Die? Arthur told me, surely, that this death
Was pangless—swift and soft as when be-
times

We sink away to sleep. If sin it is,
I will die praying for pardon: God must see
I am no more fit to live than is a bird
Wounded to death.

Enter SIR FRANCIS, SIR ARTHUR, and FRANK

SIR FRANCIS

Well, Anne, and could you rest
Well after murdering Mabel? Here is
Frank
Declares his crimes would hardly let him
sleep:
While he who made you criminals appears
Shamelessly happy.

FRANK

Redgie always was
Hardened: the plays he used to improvise
At school were deep in bloodshed.

SIR ARTHUR

Let us trust
That happiness and age may make his Muse
Milder.

ANNE

I am sure I hope so. It was hard
To find yourself so wicked.

SIR FRANCIS

Hard on you,
Certainly. Were you tired?

ANNE

Why? Do I look
Tired?

SIR FRANCIS

Well, not tired exactly; still, your eyes
Look hot and dull.

ANNE

All eyes cannot be bright
Always, like Reginald's and Mabel's.

SIR ARTHUR

Ah,
It does one good to see them. Since the
world
Began, or love began it, never was
A brighter pair of lovers. Wha. a life
Will theirs be, if the morning of it mean
Really the thing it seems to say, and noon
Keep half the promise of it!

FRANK

That it should
If they get only their deserts: they are
He the best fellow, she the best girl but

SIR FRANCIS

You're not a bad friend, Frank, I will

ANNE

He is not.

SIR FRANCIS

What your father would have said
To my approval of the match, perhaps
It's best not guessing: but the harshness
That ever made his broken-hearted wife
The subject or the heroine of a tale
Must, I think, have relented here.

SIR ARTHUR

But
We are none the less your debtors—
and I.

It lays on me an obligation too,
Your generous goodness to him.

SIR FRANCIS

No, none
I would not let the youngster tell me

Enter REGINALD and MABEL

So, you can look us in the face, my brother
And not be, as you should, ashamed to
How much less happy are other folk
you?

Your face is like the morning.

REGINALD

Does it bl
You'd see I was ashamed then.

MABEL

What, o
Redgie? It's rather soon to say so.
It's not too late—happily.

SIR FRANCIS

Nothing c
Happen that does not fall out happily
It seems, for you—and nothing sh
think,
Ever. Come with me, Frank: I wa

FRANK

Why?

SIR FRANCIS

I never thought you quite so dull till now.
Come. *[Exeunt SIR FRANCIS and FRANK.]*

SIR ARTHUR

Take me with you: I'm superfluous too.
[Exit.]

MABEL

Don't you go, Anne.

ANNE

I will not if you wish.

MABEL

I do, and so does Redgie. We have seen
These last few days as little of you, you know,
As if you had been—well, anywhere.

ANNE

Remember, at rehearsals; and last night
We came against each other on the stage.

MABEL

Indeed we did. Is that a property
You have kept about you?

ANNE

What? where? this—ah no,
A—something for a touch of cold I caught
Last night—I think at least it was last night.
Arthur prescribed it for me.

MABEL

Let me taste.
I am hoarse—I am sure I must be hoarse to-
day
With rattling out all Redgie's rant—much
more
Than you did.

ANNE

No: you do not want it.

MABEL

Anne!

ANNE

You cannot want it, Mabel.

MABEL

How can you
Know? Don't be positive—and selfish.

ANNE

There—
Take it. No—do not taste it, Mabel.

MABEL

Look,
Redgie, how strange a pretty colour! Why,
One wants a name to praise it—and it smells
Like miles on miles of almond-blossom, all
Condensed in one full flower. If this had
been
The poison Anne and you prepared for me,
I really would have taken it last night
And not pretended, as I did, to sip,
And kept my lips dry. *[Drinks.]*

REGINALD

Does the flavour match
The colour?

MABEL

It's a sweet strange taste. Don't you
Try: you won't like it.

REGINALD

Let me know, at least.
[Drinks.]

ANNE

You do not yet: or do you now know?

MABEL

Anne!
What have we done—and you? What is it?

ANNE

Death,
Mabel. You see, you would not let me die
And leave you living.

MABEL

Death? She is mad—she is mad!
Reginald, help us—her and me—but her
First.

REGINALD

I can hardly help myself to stand.
Sit you down by me.

ANNE

Can the sun still shine?
I did not mean to murder you.

MABEL

And yet
We are dying, are we not—dying?

ANNE

I meant
To die, and never sin again or see
How happy past all dreams of happiness
You, whom he loved, and he, who loved you,
were.

Re-enter SIR FRANCIS, SIR ARTHUR, and
FRANK

SIR FRANCIS

We are here again, you see, already. Why,
What strange new tragic play is this you are
all
Rehearsing?

ANNE

Mabel, if you can forgive,
Say so. I may remember that in hell.

MABEL

I do. And so does Redgie. But you might
Have spared or saved him.

ANNE

How, and let you die?

REGINALD

Ah, how? She did not mean it.

ANNE

And do you
Forgive me?

REGINALD

Surely. I am one with her,
And she forgives.

SIR ARTHUR

They are dying indeed. And she
Has killed them.

REGINALD

No. She did not mean.

MABEL

She did not.

SIR FRANCIS

God in heaven! What dream is th

ANNE

God help me! But God will not. I m
die
Alone, if they forgive me. I must die.
[E

REGINALD

It was a terrible accident, you see—
Was it not, Mabel? That is all we know

MABEL

All.

FRANK

Redgie, will you speak to me?

REGINALD

Good night,
Frank—dear old Frank—my brother a
hers. And you,
Good night, dear Arthur. Think we
going to see
Our mother, Mabel—Frank's and ours.

MABEL

I will.
But, Reginald, how hard it is to go!

REGINALD

We have been so happy, darling, let us die
Thinking of that, and thanking God.

MABEL

I will.
Kiss me. Ah, Redgie! [D

REGINALD

Mabel! I am here. [D

SIR ARTHUR

They could have lived no happier than th
die.

MARINO FALIERO

A TRAGEDY

DEDICATION TO AURELIO SAFFI

I

YEAR after year has fallen on sleep, till change
Hath seen the fourth part of a century fade,
Since you, a guest to whom the vales were
strange

Where Isis whispers to the murmuring
shade

Above her face by winds and willows made,
And I, elate at heart with reverence, met.
Change must give place to death ere I forget
The pride that change of years has quenched
not yet.

II

Pride from profoundest humbleness of heart
Born, self-uplift at once and self-subdued,
Glowed, seeing his face whose hand had
borne such part

In so sublime and strange vicissitude
As then filled all faint hearts with hope re-
newed

To think upon, and triumph; though the time
Were dense and foul with darkness cast from
crime

Across the heights that hope was fain to
climb.

III

Hope that had risen, a sun to match the sun
That fills and feeds all Italy with light,
Had set, and left the crowning work undone
That raised up Rome out of the shadow of
night:

Yet so to have won the worst, to have fought
the fight,

Seemed, as above the grave of hope cast down
Stood faith, and smiled against the whole
world's frown.

A conquest lordlier than the conqueror's
crown.

IV

To have won the worst that chance could
give, and worn

The wreath of adverse fortune as a sign
More bright than binds the brows of victory,
borne

Higher than all trophies borne of tyrants
shine—

What lordlier gift than this, what more
divine,

Can earth or heaven make manifest, and bid
Men's hearts bow down and honour? Fate
lies hid,

But not the work that true men dared and did.

V

The years have given and taken away since
then

More than was then foreseen of hope or
fear.

Fallen are the towers of empire: all the men
Whose names made faint the heart of the
earth to hear

Are broken as the trust they held so dear
Who put their trust in princes: and the sun
Sees Italy, as he in heaven is, one;
But sees not him who spake, and this was
done.

VI

Not by the wise man's wit, the strong man's
hand,

By swordsman's or by statesman's craft or
might,

Sprang life again where life had left the land,
And light where hope nor memory now saw
light:

Not first nor most by grace of these was
night

Cast out, and darkness driven before the
day
Far as a battle-broken host's array
Flies, and no force that fain would stay it can
stay.

VII

One spirit alone, one soul more strong than
fate,
One heart whose heat was as the sundawn's
fire,
Fed first with flame as heaven's immaculate
Faith, worn and wan and desperate of
desire:
And men that felt that sacred breath sus-
pire
Felt by mere speech and presence fugitive
The holy spirit of man made perfect give
Breath to the lips of death, that death might
live.

VIII

Not all as yet is yours, nor all is ours,
That shall, if righteousness and reason
be,

Fulfil the trust of time with happier hour
And set their sons who fought for freed-
free;
Even theirs whose faith sees, as they
not see,
Your land and ours wax lovelier in the lip
Republican, whereby the thrones most bri-
Look hoar and wan as eve or black as night

IX

Our words and works, our thoughts and so-
turn thither,
Toward one great end, as waves that p-
and roll.
Though waves be spent and ebb like he-
that wither,
These shall subside not ere they find
goal.
We know it, who yet with forgetful-
See shine and smile, where none may str-
or strive,
Above us, higher than clouds and winds
drive,
The soul beloved beyond all souls alive.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MARINO FALIERO, *Doge of Venice.*
THE DUCHESS, *his wife.*
BERTUCCIO FALIERO, *nephew to the Doge.*
BENINTENDE, *Grand Chancellor.*
SER MICHELE STENO.

SER NICCOLÒ LIONI.
The Admiral of the Arsenal.
FILIPPO CALENDARO.
BERTUCCIO ISRAELLO.
BELTRAMO, *a follower of Lioni's.*

Lords, Ladies, Senators, Officers, Guards, and Attendants.

Scene, VENICE.

Time, 1355.

ACT I

SCENE I.—*The balcony of the ducal palace
overlooking the Piazza San Marco*

MARINO FALIERO and the DUCHESS, seated:
*Lords, Ladies, and Attendants behind:
among them SER MICHELE STENO and
SER NICCOLÒ LIONI.*

FALIERO

The sun fights hard against us ere he die.
Canst thou see westward?

DUCHESS

Not the huntsmen ye

FALIERO

Nay, nor the bull, belike: but ere they c-
There should be stirring in the crowd far
Some wind should wake these waters,
some wave
Swell toward us from the sunset: but
square
Seems breathless as the very sea to left
That sleeps and thinks it summer. T
shalt know

Full soon if love and liking toward mine own
Have made mine old eyes blind or wrecked
the wits
That once were mine for judgment.

DUCHESS

Nay, my lord,
I doubt not—nor did ever—

FALIERO

Nay, my love,
But thou didst never trust: I say, my son,
My brother's born, made mine by verier love
Than every father bears his own, shall find
For manfulness and speed and noble skill
No master and no match of all his mates
In all the goodliest flower of lordliest youth
That lightens all this city. Dost thou think
The day's chase shall not leave him spirit and
strength
To dance thy merriest maidens down to-night
Even till the first bell ring the banquet in?
Nay, we shall find him as thy sire and I
Were fifty years or sixty since, when life
As glad and gallant spurred our light strong
limbs
As quickens now these young men's toward
the chase
That knits their thews for battle.

DUCHESS

How the sun
Burns, now so near the mountains! even at
noon
It smote not sorer.

FALIERO

Old men set not so.
A goodly grace it were to close up life
And seal the record fast of perfect days
If we might save one hour of strength and
youth
To reap and be requickened ere we die
With royal repossession of the past
For sixty sovereign heartbeats pulsed of time,
And with one last full purple throb let life
Pass, and leave death's face glowing: yet
perchance
It should but seem the harder so to die.
This is no festal fancy: but thy brow
Is graver than the time is. Art thou not
Weary?

DUCHESS

Not yet: nay, surely, no.

FALIERO

Thy smile
Is brighter than thy voice.

DUCHESS

My heart may be
More light than rings my tongue, since neither
knows
A cause to teach it sadness.

STENO

Did you mark
That? [*Aside to the lady next him.*]

LADY

What? no, nothing, I.

STENO

She knows no cause:
What cause of sadness may so fair a face
Know, mated with so blithe a bridegroom's?
Nay,
If fourscore years can pleasure not a wife,
There is no cheer nor comfort in white hairs,
No solace in man's dotage.

LADY

Hush!

STENO

And Fiel
Should not those words run still in couple?
Ha!
The woman that cries Hush bids kiss: I
learnt
So much of her that taught me kissing.

LADY

Then

A foolish tutoress taught a graceless knave
Folly.

STENO

That cries on vengeance: should my lip
Retaliate, would you cry not louder?

LADY

Peace!

STENO

What if I choose not peace but war?

LADY

My lord,
You wrong this presence and yourself, and
me
Most, and with least respect, of all.

STENO

Respect!
Nay, I revere you more than mine own heart,
Which rests your servile chattel: for myself,
I know not aught worth reverence in me, save
Love,—love of one too sweet and hard, that
wears

A flower in face, at heart a stone, and turns
My face to tears, my heart to fire, and laughs
As loud for scorn as men for mirth who look
To see the duke's brave nephew bring him
back

For gift and trophied treasure of the chase
A broad bull's pair of—tributes.

LIONI

Hark you, sir:
Speak lower: and speak not here at all.

STENO

St. Mark!
Art thou my tutor?

LIONI

Ay—to whip thee dumb,
Or strike thy folly dead at once. Be still,
For shame's sake—not for honour's would I
bid
Thee.

STENO

While this lady's eyes regard us, dumb
I will be: but hereafter—

LIONI

Be but now
Silent: I bid thee now no more: but this
Thou shalt be.

STENO

See now, sweet, what friends he hath,
Our good grey head of Venice! if one speak
At hunting-time of horns or tusks or spoil
That hot young hunters laugh at, straight they
cry,
Peace, and respect, and spare our master.
Christ!

What friends! were I fourscore, and thou—
thyself,

Wouldst thou be half so good a friend
mine?

Ila? Nay, but answer—nay, thou shalt

LADY

Once, and no more. Keep silence:
forget
If ever word of such a tongue as thine
Found audience of me.

STENO

Am I then indeed
Fourscore, that I should not remember
Ila!
Nor woman am I, to forget—but some
Love dotards more than men.

LADY

Who loves not
May love such things as grovel of thy
And deem such love not monstrous.

STENO

Nay, but
Asks answer of man's lips—not of
tongue—
Nay!

FALIERO

Who is there that knows not where I
And dreams the place a brothel? Gen-
men,
If here be any, need is none to bid
You spurn him out of sight.

LIONI

Go; if thou
Or shame or sense, abide not here till me
Hurl thee with fists and feet away.

STENO

By God
I will be—God forsake me else—revenged
Sirs, lay not hand upon me. [E]

FALIERO

Dear my child,
Thine eyes are still set sunwards: hast thou
heard
Nought of this brawl?

DUCHESS

I would not.

FALIERO

Thou dost well
 God knows, no base or violent thing should
 come,
 Had I God's power, in hearing or in sight
 Of such as thou art.

DUCHESS

Then were earth too soft
 For souls to look on heaven; but what I may
 I would eschew of meaner knowledge.

FALIERO

God
 Guard thee from all unworthy thee, or fit
 For earthlier sense than feeds thy spirit and
 keeps
 Heaven still within thine eyeshot. Dost thou
 see
 There, in that fiery field of heaven that fades
 Beyond the extremest Euganean, aught
 Worth quite the rapture of those eyes that
 yearn
 Too high to look on Venice?

DUCHESS

Sir, methought
 We were not worthy—nor was ever man
 Made in God's loftiest likeness—even to see
 Such wonder and such glory live and die.

FALIERO

And yet we live that look on it. This sight
 Is verily other far than we beheld
 When first October brought thy husband
 back
 From Romeward, here to take on him the
 state
 Wherein we now sit none the lower or less
 For the ominous entrance to it. I never saw
 A noon so like a nightfall: that we breathe
 Unwithered yet of wicked signs, and see
 The world still shine about us, might rebuke
 All fearful faith in evil.

DUCHESS

Yet was that
 A woful welcome: all about the prow
 Darkness, and all ahead and all astern
 And all beside no sign but cloud adrift,
 All blind as death and bitter: and at last—
 I would not bring it on your memory back
 Who fain would cast it out of mine.

FALIERO

At last
 To land between the columns where they die
 Whom justice damns by judgment. Nay, are
 we
 Traitors or thieves or manslayers, that the
 sign
 Should make us wan with forethought?
 This foretold,
 If aught foretell men aught, that he who came
 Should bring men equal justice; do them
 right,
 Or die—as gladlier would I die than stand
 In equal eyes of equitable men
 A judge approved unrighteous. Be not thou
 Moved, when the world is gracious and the
 sun
 Speaks comfort, by remembrance of a sign
 That lied, and was not presage. We came in
 Darkling: and lo now if this earth and sea
 Be not as heaven about us, and the time
 Not more elate with fair festivity
 Than should our hearts be—yea, though
 nought were here
 Save this bare beauty shown of wave and
 sky
 To lift them up for love's sake. Has the
 world,
 Think'st thou, so good a gift as this to give
 Men's eyes that know not Venice?

DUCHESS

Nay: but you,
 Lord of two wives, love least the first espoused
 Albeit the younger of them: more than me
 You love that old hoar bride who caught your
 ring
 Last autumn, and to-day laughs large and
 loud
 On all that sail or swim: you dare not say
 You have not loved her longest.

FALIERO

But I dare
 Swear, though no little thing this be to swear
 For one whose heart and hand, whose praise
 and pride,
 Were still mine old Adriatic's, mother and
 wife
 And wellspring of mine honour, that I love
 Not her nor heaven nor Venice more than
 thee
 Whose laughter mocks us and whose lip
 maligns;

Nay, not so much, thou knowest, were I not old

Or thou not young, I would not fear to say,
As now, lest youth reprove mine age of love
And shame chastise it for infirmity,
And thou—but in thine heart, I think, there lurks

No thought that should reprove it or chastise
With less than tender laughter; though, being old,

The sea be meeter for my bride, and show
A wrinkled face with hoary fell that seems
More like mine own than thou canst show me.

DUCHESS

How
Man's courtesy keeps time with falsehood,
though

Truth ring rebuke unheeded! Look, my lord,

How the sea bids the sun and us good night,

With what sweet sighs and laughter, light and wind

Contending as they kiss her, till the sigh
Laugh on her lip, and all her sunward smile
Subside in sighing to shoreward: will you say

God hath not given you there a goodlier bride
Than his who mates with woman?

FALIERO

She is fair—
Heaven, in our dreams of heaven, not fairer;
nay,

The heaven that lends her colour not so fair,

Being less in men's eyes living: but in thee,
Were even thy face no fairer found than hers,
There sleeps no chance of shipwreck. See,
they come,

The hunters with their trophies, and in front,
If the sun play not with an old man's eyes,
My boy it is that leads them.

DUCHESS

And unhurt.

[*Voices below:* Long live Faliero! live Bertuccio long!

DUCHESS

God and St. Mark be praised for all!

FALIERO

Nay, child,
Wouldst thou make him a child or girl,
thank
God that he bears him like a man and takes
No hurt for lack of skill or manfulness
In young men's craft or pastime? Welcome
sirs;
Well done, and welcome. Hither, son, to me

Enter BERTUCCIO and Hunters

Give this good lady thanks, who hath heart
Such care of thee she might not choose but
doubt
If manhood were enough in heart of thine
Or strength in hand for sportful service.

DUCHESS

I said so never.

BERTUCCIO

Sir, my thanks to both.
We have seen good sport; but these r
friends, who lay
The hunt's main honour on my single hand
Malign themselves to praise me.

FALIERO

Yet for that
Thy cheek need put not on the dye when
with
The sunset's flag now hoisted strikes twi
red
These westward palace-columns. Com
the dance
Will try thy mettle till the first bell sound
And bid the banquet in. A fairer night
Spring could not send us. Come beside m
so. [Exeun

SCENE II.—*The Piazzetta*

Enter STENO and LIONI

STENO

I will not and I shall not be revenged?
It cannot be? Thou sayest it?

LIONI

Thou shalt do well to get thee home and sleep.

STENO

Sleep? and forgive? and pray, before I sleep,
God love and bless and comfort and sustain
With all the grace that consecrates old age
Faliero? Is my badge a hare—a dove—
A weasel—anything whose heart or gall
Is water, or is nothing? God shall first
Give up his place to Satan—heaven fall down
Below the lowest and loathliest gulf in hell—
Ere I take on me such dishonour.

LIONI

Thou hast laid upon thyself already, nor
Canst hurl it off with howling: words can
wash
No part of ignominy away that clings
As yet about thee: time and sufferance may,
And penitence, if manifold. I would fain
Think thee, being noble, not ignoble; as
Must all men think the man born prince or
churl
Whom wrath or lust or rancorous self-regard
Drives past regard of honour.

STENO

Look you, friend:
What, think you, shall these all men think,
who read
Writ up to-morrow on the ducal seat,
The throne of office, this for epigraph—
'Marin Faliero of the fair-faced wife:
He keeps and others kiss her'—eh? or thus—
'Others enjoy her and he maintains her'—ha?

LIONI

Thou art not such a hound at heart: thy
tongue
Is viler than thy purpose.

STENO

Wilt thou swear
This? Vile—why, vile were he that should
endure
Insult; not he that being offended dares
Take insolence by the beard—be it white or
black—
And shake and spit upon it. Ay? by God!

Back turned and shoulder shrugged confute
not me:
Abide awhile: be dawn my witness: wait,
And men shall find what heart is mine to strike,
What wit to wound mine enemy: meet me
then,
And say which fool to-night spake wisely
here. [Exeunt severally.]

ACT II

SCENE I.—*An apartment in the ducal palace*

MARINO FALIERO and the DUCHESS

FALIERO

It does not please thee, then, if silence have
Speech, and if thine speak true, to hear me
praise
Bertuccio? Has my boy deserved of thee
Ill? or what ails thee when I praise him?

DUCHESS

Sir,
How should it hurt me that you praise—

FALIERO

My son,
Mine, more than once my brother's: how,
indeed?

DUCHESS

Have I the keeping of your loves in charge
To unseal or seal their utterance up, my
lord?

FALIERO

Again, thy lord! I am lord of all save thee.

DUCHESS

You are sire of all this people.

FALIERO

Nay, by Christ,
A bitter brood were mine then, and thyself
Mismatched worse than April were with snow
Or January with harvest, being his bride
Who bore so dire a charge of fatherhood.
Thou, stepmother of Venice? and this hand,
That could not curb or guide against its will
A foot that fell but heavier than a dove's,

What power were in it to hold obedience fast,
Laid on the necks of lions?

DUCHESS

Why, men say
The lion will stoop not save to ladies' hands,
But such as mine may lead him.

FALIERO

Thine? I think
The very wolf would kiss and rend it not.

DUCHESS

The very sea-wolf?

FALIERO

Verily, so meseems.

DUCHESS

For so the strong sea-lion of Venice doth.

FALIERO

This is a perilous beast whereof thou sayest
So sweet a thing so far from like to be—
A horrible and a fiend-faced shape, men call
The lion of the waters.

DUCHESS

But St. Mark
Holds his in leash of love more fast, my lord,
Than ever violence may.

FALIERO

By heaven and him,
Thy sweet wit's flight is even too fleet for me:
No marvel though thy gentle scorn smite sore
On weaker wits of younglings: yet I would,
Being more my child than even my wife to
me,
Thine heart were more a sister's toward my
son.

DUCHESS

So is it indeed—and shall be so—and more,
The more we love our father and our lord,
Shall our two loves grow full, grow fire that
springs

To Godward from the sacrifice it leaves
Consumed for man's burnt-offering.

FALIERO

What! thine eyes
Are very jewels of even such fire indeed.
I thought not so to kindle them: but yet

My heart grows great in gladness give
thine
Whose truth in such bright silence as is
Speaks love aloud and lies not.

DUCHESS

No, my lord

FALIERO

It is not truth nor love then, sweet: my
That lightens from thine eyeshot?

DUCHESS

Yea, my lord

FALIERO

I grow less fond than foolish, troubling
Who yet am held or yet would hold myself
Nor yet unmanned with dotage. Soot
this,

I am lighter than my daily mood to-day
And heedless haply lest I wrong mine age
And weary thine with words unworthy
Or him that would be honoured of the world
Less than beloved—with love not all
meet—

Of one or twain he loves as old men may
Bertuccio loves me; thou dost hate me not
That like a frost I touch thy flower, I
breathe

As March breathes back the spirit of winter
dead

On May that dwells where thou dost: but
son

Finds no more grace of thee to comfort him
Than April wins of the east wind. Wot thou
well,

The long loose tongues of Tuscan wit would
cast

Ill comment on this care of mine to bring
More close my wife's heart and my son
being young,

And I a waif of winter, left astrand
Above the soft sea's tide mark whose warm
Is love's, that loves not age's: but I think
We are none of those whose folly, set in shame
Makes mirth for John of Florence.

DUCHESS

By God's grace

No.

FALIERO

And by the grace of pure Venetian pride
And blood of blameless mothers. By St.
Mark,

laddness given of
 lence as is God's
 not.

No, my lord.
 sweet: my child,
 reshot?

Yea, my lord.
 troubling thee,
 d hold myself
 tage. Sooth is

ood to-day
 ong mine age
 unworthy thee
 ed of the world
 ve not all un-

ld men may.
 hate me not
 ny flower, and

spirit of winter

u dost: but my

o comfort him
 nd. Wot thou

can wit would

ine to bring
 and my son's,

rand
 whose warm lip
 but I think
 , set in shame,
 ence.

God's grace,

netian pride
 ers. By St.

Shame, that stings sharpest of the worms in
 hell,
 Seems, if those light-souled folks sing true, to
 them

No more a burning poison than the fly's
 We brush from us, and know not: but for
 men

The eternal fire hath no such fang to smite
 As this their jests make nought of. Life is
 brief—

Albeit thou knowest not, nor canst well be-
 lieve,

But life is long and lovesome as thine age
 In vision sees it, and in heart uplift
 Plays prelude clear of presage—brief and void
 Where laughing lusts fulfil its length of days
 And nought save pleasure born seems worth
 desire;

But long and full of fruit in all men's sight
 Whereon the wild worm feeds not, nor the
 sun

Strikes, nor the wind makes war, nor frost
 lays hold,

Is the ageless life of honour, won and worn
 With heart and hand most equal, and to time
 Given as a pledge that something born of
 time

Is mightier found than death, and wears of
 right

God's name of everlasting.

DUCHESS

Child I am,
 Or child my lord will call me, yet himself
 Knows this not better, holds no truer this
 truth,
 Nor keeps more fast his faith in it than I.

FALIERO

No need thy tongue should witness with thine
 eyes

How thine heart beats toward honour. Blind
 were he,

And mad with base brainsickness even to
 death,

Who seeing thee should not see it. Those
 Florentines

With names more gracious than their customs
 crown

Glad heads of graceless women; jewelled
 names

That mock the bright stone's fire of constant
 heart,

Diamante, Gemma; thine, were thine as
 these,
 Might dare the vaunt unchallenged: such a
 name

Is in those eyes writ clear with fire more keen
 Than ever shame bade shine or sin made
 burn

Where grace lay dead ere death. How now,
 my son?

Enter BERTUCCIO

BERTUCCIO

Most noble uncle—

FALIERO

Nay, but art thou mazed?
 No reverence toward our lady, nor a look
 Save as of one distraught with fear, whose
 dreams

Are still as fire before his eyes by night
 That leave them dark by daytime? Yester-
 eve,

Hadst thou so looked upon the bull, by
 Christ,

Thou hadst come not home his conqueror.

DUCHESS

Sir, perchance
 Your nephew with your grace would speak
 alone.

BERTUCCIO

Ay, madam.

FALIERO

Nay, sir. Why, what coil is this?
 Thine eyes look scarce half drunken, but thy
 speech
 Is thicker than with wine.

DUCHESS

Good day, my lords.

FALIERO

Pass out of earshot if thou list, but pass
 —I pray thee, sweet!—no further.
[Duchess withdraws.]

Now, my son,
 If nought bemuse thy brain or bind thy
 tongue,
 Speak.

BERTUCCIO

Sire, I may not.

FALIERO

God consume thee! nay,
But bring thy wits back healed—what dost
thou then
Here?

BERTUCCIO

What must needs, in my despite and thine,
Be done, and yet should be not. None but I
Dare tell my sire that Venice rings and roars
Aloud with monstrous mockery whence our
name

Is rent as carrion by the vulturous beaks
That feed on fame and soil it. Sir, it were
A shame beyond all treason for my lips
To take this taint upon them: read, and see
What all have seen that in thine hall of state
Since dawn have entered, on thy sovereign
seat

Nailed up in God's defiance and ours, a lie
That hell would hear not unrebuked, nor
heaven

Endure and find no thunder.

[Gives a paper to Faliero.]

FALIERO

God us aid!
Why, if the pageant match thy prologue, man,
The stage should shake to bear it.—Body of
God!
What?

DUCHESS

Sir! my lord!

BERTUCCIO

Forbear him.

FALIERO

Does the sun
Shine?—Did he smite me on the face?

DUCHESS

Who?

FALIERO

He.

[Pointing to Bertuccio.]

DUCHESS

What have you given him?

BERTUCCIO

Ask not.

FALIERO

Let me thi
Art not thou too Faliero, and my son?

BERTUCCIO

Ay.

FALIERO

By the glory of God in heaven, I sw
I think not as I thought it.

BERTUCCIO

Then your thoug
Errs, and the mind whose passion bring
forth
Strays far, and shakes toward ruin.

FALIERO

It may be
Sir; it may be so.

DUCHESS

Heaven have pity on all!

FALIERO

Madam, what man is this that speaks to

DUCHESS

My lord your nephew.

FALIERO

Thine? thy lord is th
Thy man? thy master?

BERTUCCIO

Sir, bethink you—

FALIERO

A
I will bethink me surely. Fair my wife,
I pray you pardon mine unreverend age,
Shamed as it stands before you—spurn
and made

A thing for boys to spit at. In my sight
I pray you, do not smile too broad at it.
White hair, if he that bears them bear
place,

Are held, I know, unvenerable of all.
Fair sir, you are young, and men may hono
you:

Tell me, who am blind, how I should bear
myself
In the eyes of men who see me that I see
Nothing.

DUCHESS
O God, be pitifull

BERTUCCIO My lord,
Refrain yourself; you stagger toward the pit
Whose gulf is madness; gather up your heart;
Give not all rein to rage.

FALIERO
I will not, sir.
There was a noise of hissing in mine ears;
I could not hear you for it; and in mine eyes
Blank night, and fire, and blindness. Now I
see
The leprous beggar whom the town spits out
Hath more than I of honour. Many a year
I have dreamed of many a deed that brought
not shame,
Not shame at all, but praise: these were not
mine,
I know them now, they were not: mine have
earned
For the utmost crown and close of all my life
Shame. I would know, were God not
stricken dumb,
What deed I have done that this should fall
on me.

BERTUCCIO
My lord—

FALIERO
Thy servant's servant, and a dog,
Yet art thou, too, vile; nay, not vile as I,
But baser than a beaten bondman.

BERTUCCIO
Sir,
If madness makes you not a thrall indeed,
But reverence yet claim reverence, take some
thought
Not for yourself, nor me.

FALIERO
Dost thou desire
So much for her sake of me? Son of mine,
Look well upon thy father: let mine eyes
Take all the witness of the spirit in thine,
That I may know what heart thou hast in-
deed.

Bertuccio, if thine eyes lie, then is God
Dead, and the world hell's refuse.

BERTUCCIO
Sire and lord,
If ever I have lied to you, I lie
Now.

FALIERO
I believe thou liest not. Mark me, son,
This is no little trust I put in thee,
Believing yet, in face of this I read,
That man or God may lie not.

BERTUCCIO
Speak to her.

FALIERO
Take comfort, child: this world is foul, God
wot,
That gives thee need of comfort.

DUCHESS
I have none—
No need, I mean—if nought fare ill with you.

FALIERO
Much, much there is fares ill with all men:
yet,
With thee, if righteousness were loved in
heaven,
Should nought at all fare ill for ever. Sweet,
As thou wouldst fain, if thou couldst ever sin,
Find for that sin forgiveness, pardon me.
I am great in years, and what I had borne in
youth,
Not well perchance, yet better, now, being
old,
I cannot bear, thou seest, at all. For this
Forgive me: not with will of mine it was
That thus I scared so sore thy harmless heart.
Speak to me not now: ere this hour be full,
It may be we may speak awhile again
Together: now must none abide with me.
[Exit.]

DUCHESS
What have they said?

BERTUCCIO
Ask never that of man.

DUCHESS

What have they said of me?

BERTUCCIO

I cannot say.

DUCHESS

Thou wilt not—being mine enemy. Why,
for shame
You should not, sir, keep silence.

BERTUCCIO

Yet I will.

DUCHESS

I never dreamt so dark a dream as this.

BERTUCCIO

God send it no worse waking.

DUCHESS

Now I know
You are even indeed her enemy, who believed
She had never so deserved of you. I have
No friend where friends I thought were mine,
and find,
Where never I thought to find them, ene- mies.
Whence
Have I deserved by chance of any man
That he should be mine enemy?

BERTUCCIO

If I be,
I would not strike you shamefully at heart,
But rather bear a bitterer blame than this
Than right myself with doing you wrong.
Would God
Your enemies and mine uncle's all were I!

DUCHESS

Do you know them—these—what manner of men they are?

BERTUCCIO

Save as I know that hell breeds worms and
fire,
No.

DUCHESS

Have I merited these? Have we that loved,
Have we that love, in God's clear sight or
man's,
Sinners.

BERTUCCIO

Nay, not thou, if heaven by love for
Sins not: if thou, then God in loving n
Sins.

DUCHESS

Nay: for yet you never kissed my li
That day the truth sprang forth of thi
swore
It should not bring my soul and thi
shame.
And thou too, didst not thou, for very
Swear it?

BERTUCCIO

And stands mine oath not whole

DUCHESS

Give
Honour, who hath kept in us our honour
Whatever come between our death and
For that I thank him.

BERTUCCIO

Ah, my love, my light,
Soul of my soul, and holier heart of min
Thee, thee I thank, that yet I live, and y
Love, and yet stand not in all true men's
Shamed. Am I pure as thou, that
through thee
I should be found no viler than I am?
Hadst thou been other, I perchance,
knows,
Had been a baser thing than galls us now

DUCHESS

Ay! but I knew it or ever I wrung it for
Me then they smite at, and my lord in m
Who have smitten him so sorely?

BERTUCCIO

Dear, how e
When seemed our sire a furious weak
made
For any wind to work upon and wrest
Awry with passion that had struck no roo
Deep even as love or honour?

DUCHESS

Woe is mel
Would God I were not!

Re-enter FALIERO

FALIERO

Pray thou no such prayer:
I heard that cry to Godward: call it back.
My faultless child, if prayer seem good to thee,
Pray: but for nought like death. And doubt thou not
But yet thou hast given me daily more good things
Than God can give of evil; nor may man,
Albeit his fang be deadlier than the snake's
And strike too deep to God or thee to heal,
Undo the good thou didst, or make a curse
Grow where thou sowedst a blessing. Go in peace;
And take with thee love's full thanksgiving.
Go.

DUCHESS

My father, and my lord!

FALIERO

My child and wife,
Go. [Exit DUCHESS.
Now to thee, son. When thou gavest me this,
I do not ask thee if thou knewest the man.
It were impossible, out of reach of thought,
That mine own brother's and mine own heart's child
Should give it me, and say—I know the man;
He lives: I did not take him by the throat
And make the lying soul leap through his lips
Before I told thee such a thing could live.

BERTUCCIO

You do me right: I know not.

FALIERO

This remains,
That we should know: being known, to thee
nor me
Belongs the doomsman's labour of the lash
That is to scourge him out of life. My son,
I charge thee by thine honour and my love
Thou lay no hand upon him.

BERTUCCIO

Nay, my lord,
Nay—

FALIERO

Swear me this.

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BERTUCCIO

I will not.

FALIERO

Swear, I say.

BERTUCCIO

I cannot swear it, father.

FALIERO

By Christ's blood,
But swear thou shalt, and keep it. Do not make
Thy sire indeed mad with more monstrous wrong
Than yet bows down his head dishonoured.
Swear.

BERTUCCIO

What?

FALIERO

That albeit his life lay in thine hand
Thou wouldst not bruise it with a finger.

BERTUCCIO

Sir,

How can I?

FALIERO

Sir, by God, thou shalt not choose.
Art thou the hangman?

BERTUCCIO

If the knave perchance
Be noble?

FALIERO

Dost thou mock thyself and me?
Noble?

BERTUCCIO

My lord, I would not wrong the worst
Of all that wrong the names they wear: but yet
I cannot see in Venice one save one
Who might, being born base, and of no base name,
Conceive himself so far your enemy.

FALIERO

Boy,

What knowest thou of their numbers that
have cause,
Being vile to hate me? Hath my rule not
been
Righteous?

BERTUCCIO

That stands not questionable of man.

FALIERO

How then should more not hate than love me?
Child,
Child!

BERTUCCIO

But a man's wrath strikes more straight,
my lord,
How vile soe'er, than toward a woman.
This—
This is a dog's tooth that has poisoned you:
And yereve a dog it was you bade
Spurn out of sight of honour.

FALIERO

Steno?

BERTUCCIO

He.

Else am not I Faliero.

FALIERO

Then—I say,
Then,—be it so,—what wouldst thou do?
Being my son,
What wouldst thou dream or do, this being
so?

BERTUCCIO

Why,
With God's good will and yours, and good
men's leave,
Hew out his heart for dogs to gnaw. Might
this
Displease you?

FALIERO

Why then yet is this to do?

BERTUCCIO

Forgive me, father, and God forgive me:
this
I am all on fire with shame to have spoken of
And think the man lives while I prate. But
you
Know, and our Lord God knows, it is but
now,
Now, even this instant breath of imminent
time,
That I have guessed this.

FALIERO

Ay; we know it well
We, God and I.

BERTUCCIO

And both of you give leave—
Or leave I crave of neither—pardon me,
But leave I crave not to set heel on him.

FALIERO

God gives not leave; and I forbid thee.

BERTUCCIO

Then
In God's teeth and in yours, I will or God
Shall smite me helpless by your hand.
lord,
You do but justice on me, so to set me—
I would not say, to dwell in doubt of me—
I should have passed ere this out of
sight,
Silent.

FALIERO

Thou shouldst not. Is this burden
That as thou sayest God lays on thee, or I
To be as I am patient?

BERTUCCIO

Fain would I
Be, would God help me, even as you—w
you
As I now stand, though shamefaced in yo
sight.

FALIERO

Ay—you are young and shamefaced—I
old,
And in my heart the shame is. But your fa
Hath honour in it—and what have I to
What should I do with honour? Thou d
make
Of mine more havoc and less count of me
Than yet mine enemies have, to take t
charge
Upon the personal quarrel of thine hand,
Unchartered by commission.

BERTUCCIO

And of me,
My lord, of me what make you? How sh
men
Not spit when I pass by, at one that had
Nor heart nor hand, eye to behold nor ear

To hear the several scoffs, by glance or speech,
That base men cast on us? Nay, then what right
Had I to call any man base that lives
Or any worm that stings in secret? Sir,
Put not this shame upon me: when have I
Deserved it? Why, a beaten dog, a slave
Branded and whipped by justice, durst not bear
For very shame's sake, though he know not shame,
So great dishonour.

FALIERO

Thou shalt bear it, son.

BERTUCCIO

I will not.

FALIERO

Son, what will is this of thine
To lift its head up when I bid it lie
And listen while mine own, thy father's will,
Speaks? How shalt thou that wilt not honour me
Take in thine hand mine honour? Mine, not thine,
Not yet, I tell thee, thine it is to say
Thou shalt or shalt not strike or spare the stroke
That is to make my fame, if hurt it be,
Whole. I, not thou, it is that heads the house
And bears the burden: I, not thou, meseems,
It was that fought at Zara. Nay, thine eyes
Answer, an old man then was young, and I
That now am young then was not: nor in sooth
Would I misdoubt or so misprize thee, boy,
As not to think thou hadst done as gladly well
As I that service, had it lain in thee,
Or any toward our country. But myself
Am not so bowed and bruised of ruinous time,
Not yet so beaten down of trampling years,
That I should make my staff or sword of thee,
And strike by delegation. On the state
Is laid the charge of right and might to deal
Justice for all men and myself and thee
By sovereignty of duty; not on us
Lies of that load whereto the law puts hand

One feather's or one grain's weight. More:
did we

Take so much on us of the general charge,
We were not loyal: and the dog we strike
Were yet, though viler than a leper's hound,
No viler then than we, who by God's gift
Being born of this the crown of common-
weals,

Venetian, so should cast our crown away
That men born subject, unashamed to be
Called of their king subjects, might scoff at us

As children of no loftier state than theirs.
For where a man's will hangs above men's
heads

Sheer as a sword or scourge might, and not
one

Save by his grace hath grace to call himself
Man—there, if haply one be born a man,
Needs must he break the dogleash of the
law

To do himself, being wronged: where no
right is,

Right: but as base as he that should not
break,

To show himself no dog, but man, their
law,

Were he, that civic thief, the trustless knave
Who should not, being as we born masterless,
Put faith in freedom and the free man's law,
Justice, but like a king's man born, com-
pelled

To cower with hounds or strike with rebels,
rise

And right himself by wrong of all men else,
Shaming his country; saying, 'I trust thee
not;

I dare not leave my cause upon thine hand,
Mine honour in thy keeping lies not sure;

I must not set the chance of my good name
On such a dicer's cast as this, that thou

Wilt haply, should it like thee, do me right.'
No citizen were this man, nor unmeet

By right of birth and civic honour he
To call a man sovereign and lord: nor here

Lives one, I think, so vile a fool as this.
For me, my faith is in the state I serve

And those my fellow-servants, in whose hands
Rests now mine honour safe as theirs in
mine.

Which trust should they redeem not, but
give up

In mine thine own fame forfeit, this were not
Venice.

BERTUCCIO

But if perchance the thing fall out?
 If some be peradventure less than thou
 Venetian, equal-souled and just of eye,
 Must our own hands not take our own right
 up?
 If these abuse their honour, and forbear,
 For love's or fear's sake, justice?

FALIERO

If the sun
 Leap out of heaven down on the Lido there
 And quench him in Giudecca. *[Rises.]*

BERTUCCIO

Sir, but then—

FALIERO

I charge thee, speak thereof to me no more.
[Exeunt.]

SCENE II.—*The Piazzetta**Enter STENO, meeting LIONI and BELTRAMO*

STENO

What says our Lioni now? hath he not heard
 Nor seen if we lack heart or wit to strike?
 Eh! what saith wisdom?

LIONI

What indeed to thee
 That art a knave and liar, a coward and
 fool?
 Nothing.

STENO

God's blood, sir!

LIONI

For thy veins have none:
 A beggar's trull breeds nobler brats than thee.
 I bid thee, ser Michele, know me not.

STENO

Well—but I bear such jests not every day;
 Thou knowest me that I do not.

LIONI

Hound, be hence;
 And let a man draw breath unplagued of
 thine.

STENO

Art thou my nobler?

LIONI

Fool, the beasts are thine
 Wilt thou not leave this air taintless of
 Wouldst thou be whipped—save of the
 man?

STENO

LIONI

Strike him, Beltramo.

BELTRAMO

Sir, by Christ, not I:
 I am not of that office.

STENO

No, thou knave.
 Thine hand against a noble!

BELTRAMO

Not mine hand
 Surely; but say my foot should strike a
 The blow should do his dogship honour:
 Were all high titles gilt about his head
 Scarce were he worthy to be spurned of

STENO

Dost thou not hear then, Lioni, how thy
 Dishonours thee, doing me dishonour?

LIONI

—All true men pardon one that calls
 so!—
 Leave us, or I will do my face the shame
 And thine the great and yet unmerited
 To spit upon thee.

STENO

Christ! the men are mad
 Well, yet, God save and keep you!

LIONI

Ay, from the
[Exit STENO]

BELTRAMO

I would the Doge bore such mind as y

LIONI

Thou knowest he be a nobler.

BELTRAMO

This I know,
His blood is more intemperate than the sea
When red Libeccio takes it: half a sting
Will ravage all the channels of its course
With fever's furious poison: and this we
Hath shot the sting into his heart.

LIONI

Can?

Help him? or thou, friend, heal it?

BELTRAMO

No, my lord.

Would God—

LIONI

And what wouldst thou with God?

BELTRAMO

Alack,
What no man born, I doubt, may get of God
Whom he hath bidden in all this age of ours
Be born as I am.

LIONI

And how wouldst thou be born?

BELTRAMO

Even thine and all men's equal.

LIONI

Ay, good friend?

Why, now you thou me; being a noble too,
What could my malcontent do more?

BELTRAMO

My lord,

I trust and think, being noble as you, I were
not

Less malcontent than now, being but by
blood

Your footboy's fellow-citizen and yours.

LIONI

Ay? Well, a brave man, were he seven times
king,

Is but a brave man's peer: so be it: but God
Unmake me that I am and make me vile

If I conceive, were I and thou, man, mates,
What then should discontent thee.

BELTRAMO

Why, to you

The slight thing then still fretting half my
heart,

The secret small snake-headed thing, should
seem

Nothing; yet me not all alone it frets,
Calls no more mine than many a man's heart
else,

That any man should bear of any man
Wrong, or that right should hold not equal
rule

On one as on another.

LIONI

Doth it not

Here?

BELTRAMO

No, my lord: nor elsewhere on earth.

LIONI

Why, then, God help thee, why should this
forsooth

Vex thee, or them whose thought keeps tune
with thine,

More than it preys on others?

BELTRAMO

Ask of God

That; some he bids not bear what others
may—

Or haply may not all their patient lives
With pulseless hearts endure it.

LIONI

God us aid!

Thy riddles ring no merrier, man, to me
Than that foul fool's uncleaner japes than
thine.

What gadfly thought hath stung thee?

BELTRAMO

Truth, my lord;

Or call it pity—or call it love of right—
Malice, or covetousness, or envy—nay,
But I, how'er men turn it, call my thought
Truth.

LIONI

Be thou ne'er so strong to dive, thou shalt
not

Pluck up from out the shadow where she
sleeps

Truth: and for justice, if she keep not here
Her sovereign state and perfect kingdom,
where
May man take thought and find her? Pity—
nay,
But if our hearts should bleed but one thin
tear
For each wrong known and each we know not
of,
A day would drain them dry of blood. But
what
Hath all our will and all our impotence,
Though this be strong as that is all too sure,
To do with him we spake of—be it for hurt
Or healing? Didst thou call on God to
change
For him the face and fashion of the law
Whereby the world steers toward some end,
and holds
Some heart up yet of comfort?

BELTRAMO

Surely, no.
I did but think what good might come of ill
If this great wrong should smite a heart as
grent
With ~~some~~ of other and older wrongs than
this
Done toward no viler nor more abject hearts
Nor heaped on heads more worthy shame and
scorn
Than age or place, fame of high deeds, desert,
Or pride, hath made Faliero's.

LIONI

By this light,
I think the heat it sheds hath even as wine
Dazzled thy brain to darkness. How should
this
Do thee or any man good, that thy lord,
My lord and thine, an old man full of days
And full of honours, being than all of these
Himself more honourable, should take by
chance
A buffet from a fool's hand on his cheek,
Or spittle from a fool's mouth on his beard,
And hardly bear to bear it? Who shall reap
What harvest hence?

BELTRAMO

Nor you, sir, know, nor I;
But haply—so priests lie not—God.

LIONI

May he
Bind up thy brain with comfort ere it sweat
Forth of thy scalp with fever! Mark me,
friend,
Thou dost thyself, being honest, no small
wrong
To let such worms for sloth's sake feed on it.
I love thee, knowing thee valiant,—yea, by
Christ,
I lie not, saying I love thee—and therein
If haply I deserve again of thee
Love, let me rather bid thee than beseech
Pluck all such thoughts up by the root, and
take
Good counsel rather than intemperate care
Of what be seems not nor besteads thee. So
God give thee comfort and good day. Fare-
well.

[Exeunt severally.]

ACT III

SCENE I.—*An apartment in the ducal palace*

FALIERO and BERTUCCIO

FALIERO

Did not I charge thee think no more such
thoughts
Or seal them up in silence? Wouldst thou
make
Honour, that here hath station if on earth,
Dishonourable? for so to deem or doubt
Of men set highest in Venice or the world
Were no less insolent madness than to make
Thy mother's couch a harlot's. Hast thou
seen
More days than I, that what I think to see
Thou, thou shouldst hold for questionable?
I know
That God put nought of traitor nor of fool
In the essence of thy spirit: else—pardon me,
My brother! I might hold this child of thine
Less than should be thy children.

BERTUCCIO

That, my lord,
I would not be—God spare me that; I think

That unrebuked your brother's son may say
Nor foe nor friend hath yet so found him.

FALIERO

No;

I have known thee honourable all thy brief
life through

's they that founded us our house, and sure
as mine own sword here to my hand is: hence
It is that harshlier I rebuke thee not,

Misprizing thus thy lordliest elders. Well—
Meseems the message carries that should
bring

Their sovereign sentence to us: the cause, I
thought

Should need nor bear a long debate: but just
It is that justice should not mix with rage

Her purity of patience: let them weigh
My worth against my wrong ere judgment

speak,
And both against the wrongdoer: I were
found

Even all too much a soldier, and my state
For me no fitter than for thee, should wrath
Distract my trust and reverence toward the
law

And toward their hands that wield it: as
indeed

It doth not—nay, it could not though I would
And though it could I would not give it leave.

Enter an Officer

OFFICER

Health from the senate to the Doge I bring,
And this their sentence.

FALIERO

Give me this in brief.

Ay—thou, Bertuccio.

BERTUCCIO

Bid this man begone.

FALIERO

Why? Hast thou read already?

BERTUCCIO

Sir, by heaven

I pray you bid him go.

FALIERO

Ay?—Leave us, friend.

[Exit Officer.]

Now, man, what is it?—I would not call thee
boy,
Fluttering and faltering with so changed a
cheek
Above thy task—but read.

BERTUCCIO

I dare not.

FALIERO

Ay?

BERTUCCIO

I dare not, and I will not.

FALIERO

Dost thou dare

Be called a coward?

BERTUCCIO

Ay. No. I cannot tell.

Mine eyes were troubled, or my brain is
touched.

FALIERO

By Christ, I think so. Give it me.

BERTUCCIO

My lord,

I cannot.

FALIERO

Cannot—will not—dare not? Hark,
Boy; though thou find me patient, be not
thou
Frontless, and light as riotous insolence.
Read.

BERTUCCIO

Sir, you bade me give it in brief.

FALIERO

By God,

I think the boy makes mirth of it. Read, or
speak.

BERTUCCIO

Michele Steno stands condemned—

FALIERO

To death?

Exile? God smite thee!

BERTUCCIO

Had he struck me dumb,
It scarce were harder for my tongue to say
No.

FALIERO

Ah! perpetual prison?

BERTUCCIO

If two months,
With one year's after exile from the state,
Be held so much in Venice.

FALIERO

Or two days—
Why not two hours? Thou liest?

BERTUCCIO

I did not think
To hear that question ever, and reply,
Would God I did.

FALIERO

Thou didst not think? Who heeds
What thoughts were thine? I think this is
not night
Wherein I walk through such a monstrous
dream.

BERTUCCIO

Day be it or night or twilight, sire of mine,
Two months it is that by these grave men's
doom
On whose high-hearted honour hangs our
own
The dog must lie in durance.

FALIERO

Son, I think
Thou liest not, but for shame's most piteous
sake
Wilt lay but half the truth upon thy tongue.
On: when the date is out, the man released
Shall take my seat, and I the foulest knave's
That bleeds and swelters in the galleys. Nay,
Spare me not this: read.

BERTUCCIO

Father, not for heaven,
God knows, though heaven stood open,
would I dare
Let one reproachful shadow of casual thought
Fall toward you—but would God you had
given my hand

Freedom, or I not asked it! Mine, my father,
It is that shame besets us—cursed was I
To leave brute chance and men's malign
Occasion so to smite our honour. Now
Two months must drain themselves away
death
Before the tongue be plucked out of
throat.

FALIERO

Nor now nor then nor ever now need thou
Be. My good son, I give thee kindly thanks
—And noble thankfulness thou art worthy
of—
That thy forbearance more than my desert
Withholds thy tongue from revel in rebul
Thy lip from smiles, thine eye from triumph
this
Would no man else, I doubt, forbear sa
thee,
Being wise and young, seeing one so grey
years
So witless and so vain of spirit and weak,
So confident and very a fool as now
The man men called Faliero. Thou alone
Thou, only thou in Venice, wouldst, I think
So spare and so forbear me. God requite
Thy reverence and thy gentleness of heart
Not as he now requites my pride and faith,
My faith and trust in others.

BERTUCCIO

Father! O,
Would God I had wronged them as thou
wrong thee now
And stood before them shamed and abject

FALIERO

Peace
Here is no matter more for words or tears
Bring me my wife—thy sister—hither.

[Exit BERTUCCIO]

Ay,

Fourscore full years—and this the crown of
them?

And this the seal set on mine honours? Why
Had I deserved this,—were it possible
That man could ever have merited of this
state

This, and that such a man, being born, could
be

I,—this were yet unpardonable and vile
In them to deal such justice.

Re-enter BERTUCCIO with the DUCHESS

Now, my child,
How fares it with thee?

DUCHESS

Peace be with my lord!

FALIERO

Heaven be with hell, say: for so far apart
Peace and thy lord stand each from other.
Thou—
With thee how fares it?

DUCHESS

Ill because of thee;
Well for mine own part.

FALIERO

Verily so I think;
Ill fares it with thee for an old man's sake,
By the old man's fault, who by thyself
shouldst fare
Well.

DUCHESS

Sir, you know me, whether such a thought
Touched ever with unnatural thanklessness
And tainted so my spirit.

FALIERO

Unnatural? No:
For thanklessness was never unnatural yet.
But thou, what thanks, my daughter, owest
thou me
Who have made thee not my daughter? Had
I given
Thine hand for love's sake, ay, for love's,
away,
Then thankless wouldst thou be to thank me
not.
Now—

DUCHESS

Dear and gracious ever have you been
Toward all found worthy grace and goodness:
me
You have crowned and clothed with honour,
being your wife:
And toward your country—

FALIERO

Good: forget not her.

DUCHESS

Toward this most glorious country given of
God
For man's elect, his chosen of men, to serve,
No son more glorious hath done service.

FALIERO

—Found
More acceptable or worthier this reward.
Nay, stint not so thy speech: make on: thou
sayest
None hath deserved—what guerdon?—more
than I.

DUCHESS

My lord, was this then wrought for recom-
pense?
For guerdon is it we serve our country? This
Meseemed her highest reward of service done,
The grace to serve her.

FALIERO

God's best grace and hers
For fourscore years I have held it: now I hold
A harlot's kiss, a hangman's wage, more high,
More precious gains and worthier good men's
care,
Than grace to serve my country.

DUCHESS

Dear my lord,
And wherefore? not through wrath and hate
of me,
Which might so much distemper and disease
The raging blood and brain of violent men
Fast bound with iron bands of honour and
law
To women less than woman, that the world
Might seem to them for shame's sake black-
ness, day
Night, and faith dust, and love's face mon-
strous: yet
Should this not leave them dead in trust of
heart
Toward motherhood and manhood, as are
they
Whose hearts cast off their country: were I
vile,
My shame could shame not Venice: but your
heart,
Being clear of doubt as mine of shame, can
hold

No thought more worthy than a poisonous dream

That so should feed its fever. If I be not Vile, but in God's and man's eyes and in yours

Clean as my mother bare me clean of sin Such as makes women shameful—then, though earth

Were full of tongues that cried on me, what hurt

Were this to you or God in heaven or me If we no more than God permit the snake To hurt the heel he hisses at, but shoots No sting through flesh untainted? Were the world

Full of base eyes and tongues, ears quick to catch

Evil, and lips more swift to speed it, how Should this make vile what were not? You it is,

My lord it is who wrongs me, to require Revenge for that which if it need revenge None ever can wash out: but if it need None, being an emptier thing than air, the wrong

Were done of him that held it worth revenge.

FALIERO

Thou art high of heart, my child—as children may

Be, and men may not.

DUCHESS

Sir, but may not men Learn if they list of children? Not of me Would I desire you, but of Christ, to learn Forbearance.

FALIERO

Christ was no man's lord on earth, No woman's husband.

DUCHESS

God in flesh was he.

FALIERO

Yea; and not I.

DUCHESS

Nay, but his servant.

FALIERO

Yea.
Venetian born, Christian baptized, and duke

Crowned: and a man grown grey in toil arms;

And profitable in service; and a slave Whom all he served may spit on. That was nought.

On thee for my sake may they.

DUCHESS

No, my lord:
On some base thing they call me, which is not I.

FALIERO

Girl, who put so great a heart in thee?

DUCHESS

The man who hath shown me honour all my life.

Faliero.

FALIERO

None of him shall learn it more.

DUCHESS

Sir, all men shall that ever hear of him So noble, and nobler therefore than were I Who had held it needful on so vile a wrong To set some seal of honour by revenge.

FALIERO

Of me thou sayest not this. I am not that man.

DUCHESS

If God give ear to prayer, thou shalt be.

FALIERO

Ay—
If that which is not be, and that which is Be not, I shall be: this I doubt not of.

DUCHESS

My lord, am I then other, or yourself, Because of tongues that if they smote a serpent Would seem not worth our heeding?

FALIERO

No, and ay—
The serf should heed not, nor for his sake we But—Child, it may be this has made me mad All day remembrance rides me, and by night Bestrides and jades my brain, as though some bell Rang right above my head violently struck

With pealing pulse of hammers: and in sleep
Some shame I know not seems to close me
round

Cloudlike, and fasten on me like a fire,
And clothe me like a garment; and it seems
Though God were good as thou, righteous
and kind,

He could not help me, heal my hurt, undo
This evil men have done me, till myself
Know and take heart and kill it and be healed.
I am old, thou seest, I am old. God comfort
thee

Who art not as I am, passionate and infirm:
Me shall he never.

DUCHESS

Sir, not God nor man

But only passion bred and fed of pain
Turns your fair strength to faint infirmity
By night nor day, with dream nor reason. Is
it

Less praise, less honour, less desirable,
To be reviled of hissing things whose souls
Are wingless worms and eyeless, than to have
Love, thanks, and reverence, of all souls
alive

Worth reverence, thankfulness, or love?
Doth hell

Give God less praise than heaven, blasphem-
ing him

With tongues whose praise would hail him fit
for hell?

Did vile men praise us, we might loathe our-
selves

More than repentance yet bade ever man,
More than though good men blamed.

FALIERO

Ay, like enough.

Thou hast a child's cheek and a wise man's
tongue.

'Tis seventy years since I was called a child—
And wise man was I never. Hark thee, boy:
Thou art even as I was, loyal: now take note,
By me take note, and warning: turn thine
heart,

Turn back thy face from honour; change,
and thrive:

Learn wisdom of a fool: be not abashed,
Forsaking all thy father taught or I,
All counsels and all creeds wherewith, being
fools,

We filled thee full of folly: one that bears

Fourscore years' weight of veriest foolishness
So counsels and so charges thee. Bow down,
Down lower, if aught be lower, than lies the
dust

That soils men's feet save when they tread
on men

As these our masters now on thee and me
And on my brother dead, thy father. Take
All buffets of all heels thou darest not bite
As one that thanks his chastener: let thy lip
Kiss every hand whence with some loathliest
lie

Thy tongue may wrest forth wages: let thy
name

For cowardice ring recorded more of men
Than ours for faith did ever: come there war,
Peril, or chance of evil against the state,
Make thyself wings, take to thee gold, begone,
Fly: strike no stroke, nor seem but fain to
strike;

Haste, let the foe not find thee tarrying, run,
Cover thine head and hide thee: so shalt
thou

Deserve, if man of Venice may deserve,
Honour.

BERTUCCIO

My lord and sire!

FALIERO

Forget those names.

There lives no title or note of fatherhood
More venerable than sound the shivering
bells

That fringe a jester's cap; no lordship now
That shines too sure and high for shame to
soil

On heads less base than Steno's.

BERTUCCIO

Hear me, sir.

FALIERO

Who art thou that I should hear thee? Do
men hear

Me? But whate'er thou be thou art more
than I;

Men call not thee the vilest name they can,
Doge.

BERTUCCIO

The noblest yet of earth's it were,
Would he that bears it but be strong in scorn

Of things less worth his rage than once the
foes
Who found him strong in action.

FALIERO

Had I wist,
Who am now not strong, thou seest, save only
in speech,
And even in speech time-stricken—had I
wist,

When for this Venice I smote Hungary down
And of her fourscore thousand gave a tithe
For crows to rend at Zara—when meseemed
I fought for men that made our common-
weal

A light in God's eye brighter than the sun,
That then I fought for Steno—Speak not
thou;

I know thee, what thou wouldst, with leave,
forsooth.

Say: but for these that fence him round I
fought;

For these that brand me shameful for his sake,
For these that set their seal upon his words,
For these that find them worth so soft rebuke
As might a sire lay on his long-tongued child
Who prattles truth untimely—boy, for these
I fought, and fought for Steno.

Enter an Attendant

ATTENDANT

Noble sir,
The admiral of the arsenal desires
Audience.

FALIERO

A man requires, thou sayest, of me
Audience? The world breeds yet, come rain
or sun,
Fools—how should liars and knaves else live,
or God

Be served and worshipped of the world? My
lord,
Admit him.

ATTENDANT

Sir!

FALIERO

Thou art not Venetian?

ATTENDANT

Yea—
As sure as you chief prince in Venice.

FALIERO

Then,
Wert thou the lowest that welters out of
Down in the Wells till death remember
Thou art master and lord and sovereign
me.

If I may pray thee do me so much grace
As not to smite me therefore on the cheek
I would desire thee give thy fellow lord
Admittance to your servant.

[Exit Attendant]

Thou, my boy,

Go. Whatsoe'er from Venice come to me
From Venice, earth, or heaven, can be
now

Insult; and thou, being loyal, and a fool
Kind, and my brother's issue—fain would
Being foolish too, and kindly, fain I would
Thou didst not see it. Go thou, my lord,
with him.

Peace be with both.

*[Exeunt Duchess and Bertuccio]**Enter the Admiral of the Arsenal*

ADMIRAL

Health to the Doge! Sir,
I pray you look but on my face.

FALIERO

It bleeds.
Thy brows are sorely bruised. Art thou
come here
For surgery?

ADMIRAL

Yea, by furtherance of your grace
To find my fame a surgeon.

FALIERO

Fame? what is it?
The word is not Venetian, sir; it means
Honour.

ADMIRAL

Toward whom then should I turn in trust
Save toward our highest in honour?

FALIERO

Be it enough
Thou art found a brawler: being a soldier
man,
Be not a jester too.

ADMIRAL

By neither name,
Sir, am I known in Venice. As yourself
Are honourable and a righteous man in rule,
I pray you not but charge you do me right.

FALIERO

Or wilt thou have me pluck the sun from
heaven
And put it in thine hand? Nay, that were
nought;
The sun, though save by sight we touch it
not
Nor save in thought come near it, yet in
heaven
By sight and thought we reach and find it
there,
And here by good works done on earth; but
where,
And by what sign, in Venice or on earth,
Honour?

ADMIRAL

I crave no more than right.

FALIERO

No more?
Strange temperance and strange modesty in
man
To crave no more than what, for all we see,
Not God's almightiness hath power to give—
Or else our less than righteous God lacks
grace,
And hath not heart to do it. What wrongs
are thine?
At least I have thus much more grace than
God,
That I will hearken if not help thee.

ADMIRAL

Sir,
There came but now to the arsenal a man—
[Pauses.]

FALIERO

And smote another on the face—is this
Thy wrong? Thou canst not see the shame
on mine
That thou shouldst make thy plaint of this.
Look here—
Seest thou no sign in flesh and blood that
saith
What hands have buffeted me?

ADMIRAL

My lord, my lord,
It is not I who am wronged of these your
jests,
But you much more in honour.

FALIERO

That being nought,
Dead, rotten, if the thing had ever life,
I am nowise touched at all. But heed not
me:
I had no mind to wrong thee. On.

ADMIRAL

This man,
Being noble, of the seed of Barbaro,
Required of service to be done for him
The masters of the galleys; I being by
Made answer for mine officers and thine,
This could not be: whereon we fell to words;
He chid my duteousness in office there
As toward his place undutiful, and I
Rebuked his rank for insolence: he thereat
Spake not again, but smote me with his
hand
Clenched, and the jewel thereon that loaded
it
Hath writ his wrath where each man's eye
may read
That sees mine own yet blind with blood.

FALIERO

What then?

ADMIRAL

Why, this then, if your grace love righteous-
ness
More than reproach of men for mad misrule—
Justice.

FALIERO

Come hither—here, beside me. Look
Northwestward, by St. Mark's, athwart the
light.
Seest thou that beggar there asprawl and
stark
Who seems to soil the sunshine where he lies?

ADMIRAL

Ay, my lord.

FALIERO

Ask of him to help us both.

ADMIRAL

My lord, the temper of your angry wit
Seems wild and harsh to mine.

FALIERO

Seem all things not
To wise men wild as madness, harsh as hell
To men that ever think on heaven? Thou
knowest—
Nay, then, thou knowest not how they deal
with me
Who are lords of ours, who hold us in their
hands,
Who bid us be and be not. This at least
Thou hast heard—no gondolier but sings it,
none
But laughs at large who listens—this ye
know,
What manner of wrong was done me late, of
whom,
And toward what judgment answerable he
stands
Who doth me, being too weak to right myself,
Wrong. Answer not: I did not bid thee say
Thou knowest, for mine own shame's sake,
and for thine
I would not hear thee swear I knowest it
not.
Now, even this hour, the sentence comes to
me
Given on my wrongdoer by our lords of law
Whose number makes up half my fourscore
years.
Man, what had thine been?

ADMIRAL

What but death?

FALIERO

Indeed?
Death? Is it possible or believable
There lives a man that is no kin to me
Who holds mine honour worth the washing?
Friend,
These men, born high, have doomed this
high-born man
To lie secluded two close months in ward
And walk again forth freely.

ADMIRAL

Will your grace

Endure it?

FALIERO

Seest thou not how patiently?
Have all their forty buffets on this face
Raised blood enough to blush with?

ADMIRAL

Good sir do
If you be minded verily for revenge,
These husbands and these sons of harl
called
Nobles—these lineal liars whose tong
thrust out
Lap blood, lick dust, or lisp for lewdnes
these
Whose mirth, whose life, whose honour a
for root
Adultery—these that laugh not save at shan
But turn all shame to laughter—these c
lords
May find a lord who need but lack the wil
To hew them all in pieces.

FALIERO

Ay, my friend?

ADMIRAL

Sir, were you mine and theirs who are frien
indeed
With all that groan and yearn, despair f
shame,
Wax mad in hope—with all whose bloo
sweat
Anoints and sleeks and supples and mak
fat
Our lusty lords in Venice—this might be
Surely.

FALIERO

But now didst thou rebuke me—yea,
For mockery chidd'st thou me: what wor
for this
Shall I find fit to chide thee?

ADMIRAL

Nay, my duk
What words or stripes may please you
shame on me
Can work no further now nor heavier wrong
But, holding me herein a liar or mad,
You give truth's self and your own soul th
lie
If hope or faith or yearning or desire
Be verily in your soul toward vengeance.

FALIERO

If

God's will be strong, man's will be weak, and
good

Be not more vile than evil—if hate or love,
Wrath, shame, or righteousness, be anything,
Or aught at all be more than nothing, then
Much more than vengeance I require; and
yet

Desire beyond all else desirable

Vengeance. If these who have wronged me,
being wiped out,

May leave this Venice with their blood washed
white,

Clean, splendid, sweet for sea and sun to kiss
Till earth adore and heaven applaud her—
then

Shall my desire, till then insatiable,
Feed full, and sleep for ever.

ADMIRAL

Sir, do you

Set but your hand with ours to it, and the
work

Is even half wrought already.

FALIERO

What are they

Who have in hand so high a work, and bid
Mine own take part and lot with theirs
therein?

ADMIRAL

My faith in yours needs not assurance; yet
Must none unpledged have knowledge of it,
or take

Our lives in keeping: therefore, ere I speak,
Swear.

FALIERO

Wiser men should bear thy charge than thou:
Swear? If thou lack assurance of me, friend,
What oath of force may give it thee? If by
God

I swear, being one that might, unsworn to
God,

Betray thee, will my treasonous tongue be
tied,

Think'st thou, by fear of God, not fearing
shame?

Were oath or word worth half a grain of dust
If, save for fear of hell and God, I durst,
Or would, albeit God's tongue should bid me,
lie?

Or if by Venice, shall my faith to her

Not bind me, being unsworn, to faith with
you

If well ye will toward Venice—and if ill,
What oath could pledge me to this breach of
oath,

The more misprision of your treason—me,
Who stand for Venice here, in all time's sight,
To Godward and to manward answerable?
Or by mine honour would you bind me fast
To abstain from that which could I dream to
do

My soul were with Iscariot's fast in hell
Now while my body yet should walk the
world

And make the sun ashamed to cast on earth
The shameful shadow of such a soulless
thing

Spared by sheer scorn of Satan's and of God's,
Rejected of damnation? He that swears
Faith toward his fellow bids him note and
heed

That faith is none within him, seeing his
word

Wants worth and weight which if it want
indeed

No heavier oath than ever shook the soul
With thunder and with terror and with air
Can add or cast upon it.

ADMIRAL

On your soul

Then be it, sir.

FALIERO

Yea, friend: be it on mine and thine.
And now, as I and thou are faithful men,
Speak.

ADMIRAL

Sir, albeit as yet conspiracy
Be shapeless as a shadow, this dark air
Breeds not beneath our iron heaven of rule
Clouds charged with less than lightning;
men there are
Whose hate and love toward freedom and
toward shame
Are full as even your own great heart of fire.
With such if you would commune on this
cause,

Two might I now bid hither; a seaman tried,
Filippo Calendaro, swift of hand
And stout of heart as is his comrade wise
And keen of spirit and craft in wiles of war,
Bertuccio Israello: these, by secret word

Being called to counsel, shall not fail at need
To give us note whom else to take in trust
As in this cause auxiliaries.

FALIERO

Therein
Lord nor lieutenant nor subordinate
Should any be, but equal all in heart
And all in station as in action all
Equal: for if in heart we be not one
How shall not each loose limb of our design
Rot, and relax in sunder? Not allies,
Auxiliaries nor seconds we require,
But single-souled sons of one mother born
And brothers one in spirit: born as Christ
Of this pure virgin's womb, the common-
weal's,
Whom fools and slaves would fain make false
and foul,
Being bastard-hearted, though true-born: but
she
Knows shame no more than them she knows,
whose souls
Were shapen as for service of a king,
Not citizen, but subject. Bid our friends
Hither: but ere you go, I pray you call
My nephew to me.

ADMIRAL

Sir, God give you grace
To take this cause upon you; if he give,
No name that ever grew a star shall burn
Too high for yours to shine by.

FALIERO

This perchance
May and perchance may be not: God's own
hand
Holds fast all issues of our deeds: with him
The end of all our ends is, but with us
Our ends are, just or unjust: though our
works
Find righteous or unrighteous judgment, this
At least is ours, to make them righteous. Go.
[Exit Admiral.
What sentence shall be given on mine? Of
man,
As ill or well God means me, well or ill
Shall judgment pass upon me: but of God,
If God himself be righteous or be God,
Who being unrighteous were but god's ill,
The sentence given shall judge me just. for
these

Who are part and parcel of my shame
theirs
Defile not nor disgrace me, whom they
and smile and spit on, but their cou-
nay,
Nor only this, but freedom, duty, right
Honour, and all things whence the unlik-
lives
Of commonwealths and kingdoms;
whence grows
The difference found of man whose
fronts heaven
And beast whose eye seeks earthwa-
citizen
Whose hand implores a grace from no
hand,
And thrall whose lip craves pardon if it

Re-enter BERTUCCIO

How farest thou now, boy? When I
thee hence,
It was to spare thee sight and share of sh-
I thought should fall upon me: but I k-
Thou wouldst have borne therein thy
part,
And eased, if pain of thine or love m-
ease,
My sufferance of mine own. Behold
now:
What seest thou? rage, or shame, or pr-
or fear,
Or what vile passion else?

BERTUCCIO

Dear father, none
As never yet man saw nor man shall see
A sign on that the noblest face alive
Dishonourable.

FALIERO

Nor aught untimely? nought
Strange? For the world is other with m-
boy,
Than when we parted.

BERTUCCIO

Sir, I dare not say,
Not though the word seem written on you
brow,
Triumph—nor, though this lighten from you
eye,
Joy.

FALIERO

Yet, by Christ's own cross, my brother's
child,
Thou shouldst not lie to say so.

BERTUCCIO

What good hap
Hath brought them back whence late by
men's default
Such looks, long natural there, were
banished?

FALIERO

Son,
A poor man's wrong and mine and all the
world's
Diverse and individual, many and one,
Insufferable of long-suffering less than God's,
Of all endurance unendurable else,
Being come to flood and fullness now, the
tide
Is risen in mine as in the sea's own heart
To tempest and to triumph. Not for nought
Am I that wild wite's bridegroom—old and
hoar,
Not sapless yet nor soulless. Well she
knows,
And well the wind our brother, whence our
sails
Went swollen and strong toward Istria, that
her head
Might bow down bruised with battle, and
yield up
Its crested crown to Venice—well the world
Knows if this grey-grown head and lank right
hand

Were once unserviceable: and she, my wife,
The sea it is that sends me comfort, son,
Strength, and assurance of her sons and mine,
Thy brethren, here to stablish right for wrong,
For treason truth, for thralldom like as ours
Freedom. But thou, so be it the wind and
sun

That reared thy limbs and lit thy veins with
life

Have blown and shone upon thee not for
nought—

If these have fed and fired thy spirit as mine
With love, with faith that casts out fear, with
joy,

With trust in truth and pride in trust—if thou
Be theirs indeed as theirs am I, with me
Shalt thou take part and with my sea-folk—
aye,

Make thine eyes wide and give God wonder-
ing thanks

That grace like ours is given thee—thou shalt
bear

Part of our praise for ever.

BERTUCCIO

Praise or blame,
And ruinous fall or radiant rise, for me
With you shall be as one thing. I am yours.
The man I am you made me, and may shape
The man I shall be.

*Re-enter the Admiral, with CALENDARO and
ISRAELLO*

FALIERO

Welcome, sirs; ye find
A fellow-servant, and your comrade now
In fellowship of wrong, not hopeless yet
To call you, if your will stretch wing with
mine,
Friends, citizens, and brethren. This our
friend
Hath given you by my charge to know of me
Thus much, that if your ends and mine be
one,
As one our wrongs are, and this people's need
One, toward the goal forefelt of our desire
No heart shall beat, no foot shall press, no
hand
Strain, strive, and strike with steadier will
than mine
And faith more strenuous toward the purpose.
This
If ye believe not, here our hope hath end;
If ye believe, here under happier stars
Begins the date of Venice.

CALENDARO

I believe
Not more in God's word than in yours; and
this
Not for your station's sake, nor yet your
fame's,
How high soe'er the wind of war have blown
The splendour of your standard: but, my
lord,
Your face and heart and speech, being one,
require
Of any not base-born and servile-souled
Faith: and my faith I give you.

ISRAELLO

Sir, and I,
Who know as all men know you wise in war,
Put trust in wisdom tried so long, and found
So strong for service ever.

FALIERO

Then, no more
Hath hope so high as ours is need of words
To rear it higher or set more steadfast. This
Remains, that being in purpose strong to
strike
We take but counsel where and how the
stroke
May sharpest fall and surest. Sirs, for me
In all keen ventures tried of strength and
chance
The briefest rede and boldest hath been best.
We, that would purge the state of poisoned
blood,
Need now but mark its hour for blood-letting,
And where to prick the swollen and virulent
vein
That feeds most full this deep distempera-
ture
Whence half the heart of Venice rots. These
men
That steer the state with violent hand awry—
These rather that bind fast the steersman's
hand,
Baffle and blind him, while the veering steni
Reels deathward—they or she must utterly
Perish: the wind blows higher through this
red heaven
Than when a ship may save herself, yet fling
Less by the board of all her lading, now
Found worthless, than may lighten her
indeed.
What think you? may this plague be
thoroughly purged,
And one of these our lords who trample us
Live? Are ye men that take this burden up,
And think with half a hand to bear it through
Or wear it like a feather? If ye will,
Ye may be free, red-handed from revenge,
Or keep white hands, be slaves, and slumber:
I

Will serve no more, nor sleep dishonoured.

CALENDARO

Sir,
For one wrong done you, being but man as we,
If wrath make lightning of your life, in us,
For all wrongs done of all our lords alive

Through all our years of living, doubt
not
But wrath shall cli s high toward heav
and hang
As hot with hope thunder.

ISRAELLO

Not to m
Can justice ever seem too just, or steer
Too straight ahead on vengeance: but
need
The helmsman's eye to run before his ha
The captain's tongue to bid us whither.

FALIERO

You
Sir admiral, spake but late of one to me
Who lacking not the will should lack
power
To carve this monstrous quarry limb fr
limb
And give its flesh for beasts less vile to fe
Spake you not somewise thus?

ADMIRAL

Ay, verily—see
Heart, as I deemed, in you, sir, toward
work;
And, seeing it yet, still say so.

FALIERO

Men have seen
Worse, and have rashlier spoken, yet ha
won
Praise for sharp sight and judgment. Friend
meseems
Yet none of you will say that in this cause
We lack no larger counsel than our own,
No further scope of foresight, though
path
Be ne'er so strait and secret: foot and eye
Must keep, for all this close and narrow w
The vantage yet of outlook far and free
Lest in the darkness where our snares are
Ourselves be trapped as wolves by twilig

ADMIRAL

S
Some six or seven I wot of, being called in
To single counsel severally, shall give
Each man, so please you, judgment on t
mean
That may be found for present action.

FALIERO

This

The rudest march of rough-shod strategy
 Could push not past and miss it, that we need
 Ere noon or night may crown conspiracy
 Not six or seven to post about the squares
 But some sixteen or seventeen chiefs elect,
 With each some forty swordsmen at his back
 Well weaponed and arrayed, but held in
 doubt,

Even till the perfect hour strike, on what end
 Their enterprise is bent and bound: and
 these,

When dawns the night or day determined,
 shall

At signal given fall here and there in fray,
 With stormy semblance made of casual strife
 To right and left enkindling: so shall I
 Find instant cause or plea to bid the bells
 Toll summons from St. Mark's, and they
 thereon

To press from all sides in and every street
 Down toward the church; where, finding
 these our lords

And all chief ministers of the common wrong
 Who stand chief princes of the common weal
 Drawn forth by fear together to demand
 Whence thus leaps forth such riotous noise by
 night,

Full may they fall upon them unaware
 And drive on heaps and slay them.

BERTUCCIO

Sir—

FALIERO

What says

Our nephew—sworn so late upon our side
 Deep as man's faith may pledge him? Does
 the charge

Mislike thee? Didst thou lie, or didst thou
 not
 Swear?

BERTUCCIO

Sir, to no such enterprise I swore
 As treads through blood of blameless men
 towards ends

Whereof I wist not; nor, though these be
 pure,

To me may general slaughter seem absolved
 Or by their grace transfigured and redeemed
 From damnable to righteous. Nay, my lord,
 Reply not as your eyes make answer: I
 Take back no word of all I said, and now

Reiterate, seeing they need reiteration: nought
 That you shall bid me, not though God
 forbid,

Will I not, if I may, do: but what end,
 How high soe'er and single-eyed, can bid
 Spill innocent blood, and stand up spotless?

Think,

As these men should, being pure of purpose—
 think

If truth or trust or freedom, righteousness,
 Faith, reverence, love, or loyalty, be fruits
 That burst or burgeon from so dire a seed
 As were in these rebellion, and in you
 a reason.

FALIERO

Treason?

BERTUCCIO

The word should scare you not,
 If not this enterprise may scare you.

ISRAELLO

Duke,

Strange ears, it seems, have caught our
 counsel.

CALENDARO

Peace:

Howe'er the strife of counsels end, we stand
 Safe: here is yet no traitor.

BERTUCCIO

He that holds

His life in fear of me may hold it safe
 As I will hold mine honour. Sir, what end,
 (To Faliero.)

Though this device should drink not innocent
 blood,

And violence fall not save on wrongdoers'
 heads,

What end shall come of this red enterprise,
 What fruit of such a root as bears for flower
 Carnage that strikes by midnight?

ISRAELLO

First for us

Justice, and next for him who doth us right
 A crown.

BERTUCCIO

A crown, and justice? night and day
 Shall first be yoked together.

CALENDARO

Truth is that:
If right and wrong engender, they bring
forth
No true-begotten offspring.

BERTUCCIO

Sir, can you
Hear and keep silence when a citizen born
Of Venice proffers you for hire of blood,
For price of death dealt and a darkling blow,
Kingship?

FALIERO

It was not well said—no, nor thought—
Of any, born republican,—albeit
The commonweal be cankered now at core—
That healing even for plaguespots might be
found
In such a leper's bed as monarchy
Keeps warm with prostitution, till therein
A people's lifeblood, foul with sloth and
shame,
Rot round its heart and perish.

ISRAELLO

I would have you
Reign but as first of citizens, and see
Crowned in your name the people.

FALIERO

Good my friend,
The foulest reigns whence ever earth smelt
foul
When all her wastes and cities reeked of Rome
Were by that poisonous plea sown, watered,
fed:
The worst called emperors ever, kings whose
names
Serve even for slaves to curse with, lived by
vote
And shone by delegation. We desire
For all men who desire not wrong to man
Freedom: but save for love's sake and the
right's
Freedom to serve hath no man.

ISRAELLO

Love should give
Right to the crowned redeemer of the state
To bid men serve for thankfulness and love
The man who did them service.

FALIERO

And to them
Right to bow down, and serve, and abdica
Manhood? Not God could give man, though
he would,
Power to do this, and right to live: for th
That so should cast off manfulness, and trea
Their birthright out in blood or trample
mire,
Could claim, being men, but right to kill an
die,
Or live, being thralls, as beasts that feed an
groan
Till death release them into dust. No mor
To serve and reign for me were shame alik
And for my masters or my slaves no less,
Inseparable and reverberate, crime fro
crime
And shame on shame for ever.

ADMIRAL

Sir, well said.

CALENDARO

Ay, and well done: such words are deeds, an
wear
Swords girt for service on them.

FALIERO

Yet of these
And all words else enough is ours and mor
If very swords be slower to speak than the
Ye have my mind, I yours: remains but thi
That each betake him toward his office.

ADMIRAL

Sir,
Farewell awhile we bid you, giving God
Thank that he gives us and so great a caus
A chief whose heart is great as it.

FALIERO

Farewell.

[*Exeunt Admiral, Calendaro, and Israello.*]
And how may this now please thee? Have
said
Ill?

BERTUCCIO

No, my lord.

FALIERO

Or shall not we do well
To raise up Venice from the dust wherein

Men trample down her servants, and to bring
All haughtiest heads and highest of tyrants
down
Thither?

BERTUCCIO

My lord, it may be.

FALIERO

Nay, by God,
Thou art older and colder of spirit and blood
than I;
I am hoar of head, but thou, thou art sere at
heart,
And grey in soul as fearful forethought makes
Old men whom time bows lowlier down than
me.
What yet of this mislikes thee? Wouldst thou
make
The rough ways plain for freedom's feet, yet
spare
Tyrants?

BERTUCCIO

Of all this blood that shall be shed,
If none indeed be taintless, I would spare
No drop that knows infection: but, my sire,
Who dares say this?

FALIERO

I.

BERTUCCIO

Nay, not you, but wrath,
Your wrath it is that says so.

FALIERO

No: for proof
With iron tongues innumerable echoing me
Cries out upon the house-tops, fills and thrills
Streets, bridges, and roofs, with shame from
roof to roof
Reverberate as sounding as to toll
The deep death of honour. None there
is,
Not one that in his wrongdoing bears not part,
Not one but we in Venice, we whose hands
Are pledged to quench in blood this funeral
fire
That else will burn up justice, courage, faith,
And leave but shame alive and vileness free
And cowardice crowned as conqueror. Here
she lies,

Our mother, mightiest late of all things
throned
And hailed of earth as heavenly, naked,
soiled,
Mocked, scourged, and spat on: not her first
of sons
And not her last escapes, evades, eschews
Communion in one sacrament of shame,
Partakes not, pledges not the wine of wrong,
The bread of outrage: first and last are
one:
Bound of base hands down on her pyre alive,
Fast bound with iron and with infamy,
Our commonweal groans, knowing herself a
thing
For slaves and kings to scoff at. Shall this
be
With thy goodwill for ever? Not with mine
Shall it; nay, not though scarce a tithe were
left
When justice hath fulfilled her fiery doom
Again to build up Venice.

BERTUCCIO

Who shall build
On graves and ashes, out of fire and blood,
Or citadel or temple? Where on earth,
For man what stronghold, or what shrine for
God,
Rose ever so from ruin?

FALIERO

Rome—if Rome
Lie not—was built on innocent blood: and
here
No fratricidal auspice shall renew
Life, but a sacrificial sign again
Inaugurate Venice for her sons to praise
And all the world to worship. These are
not
Brethren, nor men nor sons of men are these,
But worms that creep and couple, soil and
sting,
Whose blood though foul shall purge pollution
hence
And leave the shore clean as the sea. Would
God
Their hour to-night could ere its natural time
Ring from St. Mark's, albeit the bell that
struck
Rang me to rest for ever! I shall sleep
Thereafter, sound as triumph or as death
That strikes, and seals up triumph.

BERTUCCIO

Sir, I know,
 If by strange hap my sire could err, with him
 For me to err were better, even to death,
 Defeat, dispraise, and all that darkens death,
 Than swerving from his side to shine, and
 live
 Acclaimed of all men's praises. Be your will
 Done: for as God's your will shall be for me
 A stronghold and a safeguard though I die.

[Exeunt.]

ACT IV

SCENE I.—*A cabinet in the palace of Lioni**Enter LIONI and BELTRAMO*

LIONI

Speak now, then: here at least is none but I.
 Speak.

BELTRAMO

Sir, you dream not what you bid me do.

LIONI

By good St. Mark, not I: but this should be
 Some honest thing, or hardly wouldst thou
 dare
 So thrust and press upon me.

BELTRAMO

No, my lord.

I doubt it is not.

LIONI

Get thee hence, then: out:
 Is there no room for all dishonest works
 In all the range of Venice, that a knave
 Must make me closet counsellor with him,
 Here emptying forth his knavery? By this
 light,
 I think thou art here beiated, mad with
 wine
 Or drunk with brawling: yet again I think
 Thou dar'est not thus abuse me.

BELTRAMO

Sir, I dare
 Nor hold my peace nor hardly speak; yet
 this
 I cannot but beseech you to believe,

That if between two doubts I hang di-
 traught
 The stronger cause that plucks me by the
 heart
 Is care and duty toward you, born of love
 The weaker, half disrooted now, constrain
 My conscience yet for shame's sake; which
 hath
 I needs must here cast off me. Sir, you
 know
 How yet no long time since it is that we
 Communed of matters held for me too high
 Of unendurable evil endured, of wrong
 Whence all men's hearts were wasted as with
 fire,
 Of hope that helped not, patience grey with
 pain,
 Long-suffering sick to death, and violence
 roused
 To range among the violent: dangerous
 dreams
 Whereof your wisdom, though with temper-
 ate words,
 Rebuking them, chastised me: whence, my
 lord,
 I come to show you now what seed hath
 sprung
 To what swift height and amplitude of doom
 Far overshadowing Venice. You desired
 A sign, as they that knew not Christ, and lo
 My lord, a sign I bring you. Twelve hours
 more
 Shall see this moon of April half burnt out
 And half the squares and highways of this
 town
 A sea of blood full foaming toward the
 verge
 Where it shall meet our natural sea, and bid
 Her waters, widening over bank and bridge
 Swell strong with storm of murder's making
 This
 May none avert: God wills it: man desires
 And shall by God's grace do it: but you, my
 lord,
 Keep from those ways your foot at dawn
 albeit
 The cry be raised of enemies at our gates,
 Of Genoa round our port in sail; and keep
 Your lifeblood from that torrent which shall
 drown
 All palaces else that shall by dawn send forth
 Their lords at summons sounded from St.
 Mark's:
 And so, as now through me, God save you.

LIONI

Stay.

Thou didst not think to say so and pass forth
With no more question, scathless?

BELTRAMO

Good my lord,

This did I think, that from your noble hand,
In quittance of my deep devotion shown
At risk and rate of honour and of life
To keep your head unscathed, I should not
find
Disgrace for guerdon, or for thanksgiving
Death.

LIONI

Art thou all made up of words, and hast
No thought that runs not loose upon thy
tongue

To tell thee such a warning given as thine
Can die not out within thine ear, and leave
Unwarned of peril, if peril indeed there be,
Venice?

BELTRAMO

I would but do you service.

LIONI

Thanks.

A worthy service were it, my worthy friend,
Of me and thee, that thou shouldst bid me
crawl

Aside from general ruin of all the state,
And I should grovel at thy beck, and creep
Darkling away from danger. What is this
That under a flickering veil of vehement
words

Thou showest and wilt not show me?

BELTRAMO

Death, I say:

Death.

LIONI

If I knew thee not no coward or cur,
To-night I should misknow thee. Night
and day

Is death not still about us, here and there,
Alive around the ways and hours of life,
That what we think or what we are fain
to do

We should not do for death's sake? How
these knaves,

Whose life is service or rebellion, fear
Death! and a child high-born would shame
them.

BELTRAMO

If

Death seem so gracious in a great man's eye,
Die, my lord: I, too mean to live your friend,
Am not your murderer.

LIONI

Nay, nor any man's,

If I can stay thine hand betimes. I would
not

By force withhold thee, nor by violence
wring

What yet thou hast left unspoken forth: but
hence

Thou goest not out, and I left ignorant here
What purpose haled thee hither.

BELTRAMO

Why, to you

Friendship; and haply hate to no man else
Of all now damned alive to darkness.

LIONI

Good:

The slot is hot: I scent the quarry. So,
Some certain of thy kind are bound and
sworn

To do the ignoble and the poor man right
By murderous justice done on us, who
wrong

Our fellow-folk with flaunt of wicked wealth
And vex their baseness with nobility?

And with our Doge's blood and ours ye
would

Make ripe that harvest, fill that winepress
full,

Which now not fifty years from this, ye
know,

Dolcino thought to reap and tread, and
bring

Equal and simple rule of right again
Among us called by Christ's name here on
earth—

And how he died remembering, inch from
inch

Rent living with red iron, and his bride
Burnt limb from limb before his eyes, thou
wouldst

Eschew such end as theirs was?

BELTRAMO

Twice, my lord,

You have erred: I stand not here to save
myself;

Nor stands our lord the Doge in danger yet,
If he that hears me speak love honour.

LIONI

Nay,

But if this be not wine that swells thy speech,
No less it is than murderous madness. How
May death stretch wing above all heads of
ours

And shadow not our master's? Him, of all
High-born in Venice, should conspiracy
First menace, risen from darkness such as
broods

About such hearts as hate us. If thou be
Mad, be not yet thine own self-murderer:
think—

For wine it is not that is wild in thee—
What peril even the least of all thy words,
If here thou pause, hath pulled upon thee.

BELTRAMO

That

Had I cast thought on, here I should not
be—

Nor Lioni, nor the noblest born my lord,
Have power or breath to threaten or im-
plore

Me, nor the least in Venice.

LIONI

Friend, from me

Nor threat nor prayer need any fear or
hope

Who feeds on air and sunshine; least of all
Thou: for of all men bred of baser kind,
Could I perchance fear any, thee at least
I could not, having called thee friend: for
one

Who doubts or fears or dreams ingratitude,
Or holds for possible disloyalty,
Stands proven in sight of his own secret soul
As possibly, should chance or time prevail,
Disloyal and ungrateful. Such was I,
If man may say so, never: yet meseems
That unreprieved of cowardice I may crave
To know, hadst thou been haply less my
friend,

How should mine hand have lost the power
it hath,

My lips lacked breath to question thee? or
how

Should not the Doge, being our lord of lords,
Incarnate and impersonate Venice, bear
Part in our general danger?

BELTRAMO

Nay, my lord.

I said not that; part shall he bear the rest,
God wot, and unendangered. Please you
sir,—

Please it your pride and pure nobility—
To spare your smile and shrug—give
much ease,

This hour, to lip and shoulder—I would say
What, being derided and endured—forborne
Insulted, and forgiven,—it might not please
Your servant for your scornful sake to say.
You will not ask me, what?

LIONI

Assuredly,

No.

BELTRAMO

Speak, then, and be cursed of God and
man,
You bid me, who forbear to bid me.

LIONI

I

But bid thee now no longer hold me here
Awake and vexed with vehement speech
wherein

If aught be honest nought is clear enough
To speak thee sound of wits: and didst thou
so,

Of God and man forgiveness might I win
If I should bid God curse thee, and my
men

Lead forth or thrust thee from my gates.
Were this

For me—the word still twittering on thy
tongue—

Death?

BELTRAMO

Yea, my lord: and death for all your kin.

LIONI

By Christ, but this is fiery wine indeed
That speaks in thee so steadfast. Wouldst
thou not
Sleep?

BELTRAMO

Soon and sound enough will you, my lord,
Sleep, if my speech be slighted, that I
speak
Out of true heart and thankfulness.

LIONI

And where,
When thus by night red riot runs and reels
And murder rides out revelling, where shall
be
The keepers of our state? where, first of all,
The Doge?

BELTRAMO

They that keep our state so well
That only force can purge it—they shall be
Where sheep and oxen, fowl and fish are
found,
When some great feast is toward and guests
come in—
Dead on a heap: and he, their lord and
ours—
Where think you, sir?

LIONI

Nay, man, God knows, not I:
First be it or last of all the sacrifice,
Where the old man falls, there lies a brave
man slain—
Head, hand, and heart of Venice.

BELTRAMO

He shall be
Where when a fight is won the general stands
Red-footed and red-handed and brow-bound
With bays that drip down blood.

LIONI

Your captain?

BELTRAMO

Believe me not, and perish.

LIONI

I am more like
To live, and see thee whipped or hanged, and
Believe thee.

BELTRAMO

Choose: I have given you, sir, the chance
That none but one of all your kind is given:
Cast from your hand your luck and life, you
die,
Self-slaughtered: on your head, not mine,
the charge
Lies of your bloodshed.

LIONI

Man, if this be truth,
The sun may reel from heaven, and dark-
ness rise
For dawn upon the world.

BELTRAMO

I cannot tell.
They say such things have been, sir.

LIONI

Nay, but none
Like this: Faliero captain of thy crew?
Thine?

BELTRAMO

Ay, my lord, we are despicable—and he
A man despised as we are, and most of all,
Being highest in place; more grievous and
more gross
Is thence his wrong, and keener thence the
shame
That gnaws his heart away with fangs of fire.

LIONI

And he, to be revenged of us,—of them
Who spared a hound the halter, not the
scourge—
Hath leagued himself, thou sayest, with
knives by night
To wash the ways with slaughter—set a
knife
To the open throat of sleep—break trust,
slay faith,
Strike through the heart of honour? stab the
law,
Set for his mother a snare to strangle her,
Work miracles of murder? change a name
That now rings out a clarion in men's ears
For one that hisses like a snake, and means
Treason?

BELTRAMO

Sir, were it but for his behoof,
To feed his own lusts fat with gold and
blood,
Gird his own brows with empire, steal, stab,
lie,
And reign, abhorred and abject, over swine
That once were men, but changed their heart
and head
To grovel, snout and groin, in slavery—
then

Shame were it indeed, and shameful change,
 for him,
 Being man, to shed man's innocent blood,
 break faith,
 And spit at God, and triumph, and be
 damned
 More deep than Cain with Judas, and his
 grave
 For guerdon take the spittle and the spurns
 Of all true men for ever: but the lord
 Who leads us forth of bondage, though he
 lead
 Through this red sea, struck no more loyal
 stroke
 With heart more single or hand more honest
 once
 Off Istria, nor at Zara.

LIONI

Once? ay, twice,
 Our lord was found our saviour; now, if
 this
 Be monstrous truth thou tell'st me, he,
 grown hoar
 With glorious years and works, would leave
 his name
 A traitor's, red and foul for ever. Nay,
 But if this be no drunken dream or lie
 No plea can cleanse him of the murderous
 taint
 That reeks from names abominable of man
 As manslaughter of their brethren.

BELTRAMO

Sir, if Cain
 Be smitten again of Abel ere he die,
 Shall Able stand attainted on this charge
 As fratricide or traitor?

LIONI

Why, my friend,
 I lack the lawyer's wit and tongue to prate
 As advocate against thee: this is all
 I can, to assure myself and heaven and thee
 That this destruction thou wouldst bid me
 shun
 Shall ere it fall on us be stayed. Reply
 Not now, nor here: for hence thou goest not
 out
 Till I to-night have communed with the
 lords
 Nasoni and Cornaro, who shall make
 Sharp inquisition of thy news and thee

Here, ere the council meet, and lay stri-
 hand
 On all found part of this conspiracy
 Or like to dip red hands in danger, when
 Strange darkness rides in the air, and strange
 design
 Makes hot men's hearts with hope of ev-
 Thou
 Shalt rest unhurt; but we will know of thee
 All needful for prevention.

BELTRAMO

Christ our Lord

Knows—

LIONI

That nor threat nor rack shall wring from
 thee
 One word beyond thy will: so be it: I think
 All we could win or wish of thee shall need
 Nor force nor menace, promise, price, no
 prayer,
 To press forth easily as a grape gives wine.
 Thou art tender-souled and honest, thankful
 true,
 A gentle knave and worthy: what is said
 Unsay thou canst not, nor undo the deed
 Done when thy footfall smote my threshold
 So,
 Be patient: this alone thou lackest: wait
 And keep close lips till I come back.

BELTRAMO

My lord—

LIONI

My lord and thine is God, who led thee here
 To save the world this ill, that day should be
 And not this city—that the sun should rise
 And see not Venice. How, by whom
 whence,
 Thou knewest of this—what part thou
 shouldst have played
 On this full stage of death, had no remorse
 With timely pity toward me pricked thine
 heart—
 I ask thee not: to them that I bring back,
 Not me, shalt thou make answer. I would
 lay
 No force upon thee more than needs: but
 here
 Fast under guard abiding till they come
 Safe shalt thou rest as Venice now through
 thee.

[Exeunt]

SCENE II.—*The balcony of the ducal palace.*

FALIERO and BERTUCCIO

FALIERO

Dawn—is it yet not dawn? Thine eyes,
being young,
Are dazed with timeless waking; mine, that
looked,
Ere thine saw birth, on battle, yet have
strength
To outwatch the vigil of a boy's, and tell
Sunrise from set of stars or moonfall. Seel
Light—is not light there?

BERTUCCIO

Sir, if time speak true,
It lacks an hour to sunrise: holier lights
Are these that hold procession through the
square
With chants of penitence to churchward,
timed
To match the death of darkness.

FALIERO

Didst thou think
God haply was not with us, that thy smile
Should mock their chant or me? Nay, thee
he sends
This token in his witness: I desired
None: but if God be no unrighteous God,
And hold us fatherlike in keeping, here
Might man believe a comfortable sign
Sent as with sacred and superb acclaim
To match the death indeed of darkness,
left
Too long upon the waters. Dawn shall be,
Thou sayest, an hour from hence: I know not:
if,
By death of mine and thine and all we love,
Dawn verily in an hour might rise, and rest
As once on Rome, an agelong daylight—
boy,
Wouldst thou, having thy fair long life to
give,
Thy fair long life that should be, spare or
shrink
Or grudge or groan to cast it from thine
hand
As might a child a pebble, more than I
To give my thin-spun days and nights of life
Left, which I stake and smile at?

BERTUCCIO

No, my lord:
If God know aught of man or man know
aught,
God knows I know I would not.

FALIERO

Yea, and I
Know it: God love thee as I love, my boy,
For this we know of thee. And this do thou
Know likewise, and hold fast: that if to-day
Dawn rise not, but the darkness drift us
down,
And leave our hopes as wrecks and waifs
despised
Of men that walk by daylight, not with us
Shall faith decline from earth or justice end,
Or freedom, which if dead should bid them
die,
Rot, though the works and very names of us,
And all the fruit we looked for, nipped of
winds
And gnawn of worms, and all the stem that
bore,
And all the root, wax rotten. Here shall be
Freedom, or never in this time-weary world
Justice; nor ever shall the sunrise know
A sight to match the morning, nor the sea
Hear from the sound of living souls on earth,
Free as her foam, and righteous as her tides,
Just, equal, awless, perfect, even as she,
A word to match her music. If we fail,
We are even but we—I, thou, and these our
friends
That rise or fall beside us: if we thrive,
Not I and thou and they triumph—not we
Prosper—but that which if we live or die
Alike and absolute, unhurt and whole,
Endures, being proven of our mortalities
Immortal—yea, being shown by sign of loss
And token of subdued infirmity,
And ruin, and all insistence of defeat,
And laughing lips and trampling heels of men
That smile and stamp above us buried,
shown
Triumphant. Righteousness alone hath
right
For love of all found loveliest, freedom, truth,
Faith, reason, hope, and honour, to require
Life at our hands: and if on sand or stone
Or if on fruitful ground the life we give
Fall, shed with all our heart and full free
will,

[Exeunt]

This not concerns us, this, come storm or sun,
Regards us nowise: time hath all in hand:
And time, I think, shall hurl this world to
hell,

Or give—not now, perchance, nor many a
year,

Nor many a century hence—God knows—
but yet

Some day, some year, some century, give our
sons

Freedom. Nor haply then may we deserve
Remembrance: better many a man than we
May prove himself, and perish: yet, if God
Fail us not so, that, failing, we should die
Cowards, it may be we shall sleep not scorned
Of all that hold our faith for ever. Now
Go thou and watch, but not with me, who
here

Would keep my watch alone till morning.
God

Be with thee. (*Exit Bertuccio.*) God?
may God indeed to-night

Be with us? Yet red-handed men of death,
Scarce breathing now from battle, praise his
name,

Give thanks for happy slaughters, mix with
prayer

The panting passion of their hearts that beat
Like vultures' wings toward bloodshed: and
shall we

Dare not desire of God his comfort, we
That war not save with wrongs abhorred of
him,

That smite not heads of open enemies, men
Found manful in the fielded front of war,
Fair foes, and worth fair fighting, but of
slaves

Who mar the name they mock with reverence,
make

The fair fame foul of freedom, soil and stain
The seamless robe wherein their fathers
clothed

For bridal of one bridegroom with the sea
Venice? When time hath wiped her tyrants
out—

Time that now ripening thrusts into mine
hand

The scythe to reap this harvest—earth has
known

Never, since life sprang first against the sun,
So fair, so splendid, so sublime a life

As this that God shall give her: and to me,
To me and mine who served and saved her,
life

Shall God give surely, such as dateless time
Spares, and its light puts out the shadow of
death.

(*Voices chanting from below*)

Quis tam celer, quis tam fortis,

Pedem qui præcurrat mortis?

Quis e fractis tumbe portis

Præter unum redeat?

Præter unum Te reversus

Nemo, Christe, solem versus,

Mortis fluctu semel mersus,

Surget, sol dum cælo stat.

FALIERO

Yea, but if many waters cannot quench
Love, nor the strong floods drown it, how
shall not

Man's love for man, that saves and smites, to
bring

For every slave deliverance, and for all

The peace of equal righteousness and right,

Though girt with even this iron girdle round

And robed in this red raiment, rise again

And as a swimmer against a sundering wave

Beat back the billow of death, and climb, and
laugh

Loud laughter of thanksgiving? Strong is
death,

But stronger lives man's love who dies for
man

Than all ye fear and trust in, heaven or hell.

(*Chanting again*)

De profundis tenebrarum

Ardor atrox animarum

Quas non legum vis tuarum,

Christe, fecit humiles,

Ex infernis in superna

Fervet: quem cùm lux æterna

Tangit, fit ut herba verna

Quam conculcat vulgi pes.

FALIERO

O tender laws of bland humility
Wherewith priests' hearts are girdled! These
are they

Who drink and eat God, and who kiss and
stroke

Satan; who burn men's living limbs with
fire

And hold themselves God's chosen and blest
of God

And me of God rejected and accursed
Because in wrath long since I smote a priest
Who bore in hand God palpable, whereon
The curse of the eucharist I violated,
And of God's blessing made myself a curse,
Fell or shall one day fall and smite me. Nay,
If humbleness to these must buy men heaven,
Let all high hope stand outcast thence with
me.

(Chanting again)

*Virgo sancta, Christe clemens,
Homo miser, homo demens,
Ubi Sathanas il semens,
Hunc seculus, nescit vos;
Mortis messor, edax vitæ,
Spernit vos: at vos audite
Preces animæ contrita
Flectant: nam quid sumus nos?*

FALIERO

Not men, God knows, are ye nor any of
you,
Priests, and the flocks of priesthood: sheep or
swine
Or wolves at heart man finds you. Christ
our Lord,
Chief light and lord of men, made manifest
Before no bloodier judgment-seat than yours
Mine, and the son of man—no lord of priests,
No God of slaves who hears their tyrants
pray,
And sees them, praying, smite earth and
strengthen hell,
And hallows hell with blessing—he, being
just,
Should think, if he be God indeed, and
hear
Me now and all men away, if this word
Be bearable, that man, being smitten, should
Still turn his cheek and smite not. Nay, but,
Lord,
Hadst thou been mere man, even as I, and
borne
Shame, knowing thyself no God, whom no
man's hand
Could turn indeed to a thing dishonoured—
nay,
But one whom shame might scourge and
scar like me,
Brand on thy brows and ravin round thine
heart—

Thou, that couldst bear for us the body's
death,
Thou couldst not, Christ, have borne it: hadst
thou borne,
Not higher of heart but less thou hadst been
than we.

(Chanting again)

*Fac ut metat mali scior
Mali messem, mundi Stator,
Une, trine, tu Creator,
Pater, Fili, Spiritus:
Tuque, boni nobis bone
Dator, Marce, tu patrone,
Ab inferno nos latrone,
Salva nos ab hostibus.*

FALIERO

And I, for these a hellish thief in wait,
A midnight-mantled slayer—for these am I
Their headsman, I that was their head: but
thou,
St. Mark, our lord, no better friend than I,
Not thou, not thou, to Venice. Have not
these
Been sowers indeed of evil, and shall they
reap
For harvest of a desolated field
Good? Have they not made wide the
wilderness,
Kept fresh with blood the roots of tares and
thorns,
Drawn dry the breasts of pale sterility,
Wasted the ways with fire and sown with
salt,
That they should gather grain? Our foes
are these,
Not Genoa, not the stranger, south nor east,
Turk nor Hungarian, but thy sons alone,
Venice, who mock their mother: thine it is,
Thine hand by mine that smites them, and
redeems
Thine equal name for ever, lest the world
Lack this that none as thou shalt give hath
given,
The light of equal manhood's equity,
Full freedom, sovereign where no sovereign
sits.
But wilt not thou speak yet, Mark? From
thy tongue
Time is it now the word should break, that
sounds
To them that do thee this dishonour death

And loftier life to Venice: yet not yet
 Thy belfry through the sleep of thy
 flings
 The knell that is a clarion, and mine ear
 Takes only through the gleaming April
 gloom
 That rustle of whispering water against the
 dawn
 Which wakes before the world may. Wind
 is none
 To warn our watery streets of storm, which
 here
 Broods windward, hard on breaking if ye
 wist,
 Friends!—Will the prayers of priests not
 wake thee, then?

(Chanting again)

*Te, cū timor barbarorum
 Corda conflictavit, horum
 Turba prima te tuorum
 Conclamabant Veneti:
 Te, sub umbrā Christi crucis,
 Fontem te videmus lucis;
 Tanti stas tutamen ducis,
 Tanti fautor populi.*

FALIERO

Ay, for no poor faint people shalt thou speak,
 For no mean city: lion-like shall they,
 With feet once loosened from the strangling
 toils,
 Go forth to plant thy lion. But the duke,
 The leader, red of hand and hoar of hair,
 An old man clothed in slaughters—but the
 chief,
 Worthy worship and honour once of all,
 I, Marino Faliero, citizen,
 Soldier, servant of Venice—how shall I
 Follow, with feet washed here in civic blood,
 The flag once more by civic hearts and
 hands
 Exalted? Nay, the fugitive feet that here
 Found harbourage first, the feeble knees
 that fell,
 Suppliant, and maimed with fear of foes be-
 hind,
 Imploring first thy comfort, when the Hun
 Raged as a fire against them—nay, the hands
 That first here staked a camp in the eastward
 sea,
 Trembling, and toward thine emblem and
 thy Lord's

Uplift with wail and worship—these that
 first
 Scarce here gat rest and refuge where to die
 Were worthier yet to found than I may be
 To rear again from ruin Venice. O,
 That thou wouldst pray God for me now to-
 night
 To speed the wheels of morning! Will this
 hour
 Stretch not its darkness out to noon, and bid
 The day lie dumb, lest when the morning
 speaks
 Death answer with a cry from clamorous
 hell
 And strike the sun down darkling, that the
 world
 May reel in fearful travail out of life?

(Chanting again)

*Mors immanis, mors immensa,
 Lendit fila semper tensa;
 Illi regum sordet mensa,
 Illi vana ducum vox:
 Mors immensa, mors immanis,
 Instat rebus mundi janus;
 Fugit claris lux e janis,
 Mors cū dixit, Fiat nox.*

FALIERO

Let there be night, and there was night—
 who says
 That? Nay, though heaven and earth were
 they that bade,
 No less were light immortal night no less
 Fugitive, abject, void, vain, outcast, frail,
 In the eye of dawn that seeks and sees not
 night.
 Vain if my voice be, vainer yet are these
 That swell from choral throats the choir of
 death
 With prostrate noise of praises; vain as fear,
 Penitence, passion, ache of afterthought.
 When man hath once had hand on high de-
 sign
 And armed his heart with purpose. Death
 and life
 In God's clear eyes are one thing, wrong and
 right
 Are twain for ever: nor though night kiss
 day
 Shall right kiss wrong and die not. Let the
 world
 End, if the spirit exult not in mine

The will that gave wing to this enterprise
 Shall fade not, nor the thought I had alive
 To serve not wrath but righteousness at last
 With offering shed of sorrow sacrifice.
 Was I not chosen as herdsman of my state,
 As herdsman of my people? Was I not
 mine

If when the dogs turn wolves to feed the
 sheep

I durst not drown or hang them, with their
 jaws

set foul and full of flesh and wet red blood,
 or when the ship reels right and left on high,
 Storm-stunned, and loud with music as
 with fear.

Would ease her not of many rioters, then
 To bind me not and hang me, and bid the wheel
 Swing as the storm will till the tumbling
 prow

Plunge, and dive, and the waves bear down,
 the crew

And them, still drunk with wine of revelry,
 whence

No sunken state save even Leucon lie
 And all this people perishing, not I.

(Chorus singing)

Miserere, Pastor vere

Pastor clemens, miserere,

Sere iudex, ultor vere,

Deus magne Deas mi:

Quantum peccata vanitatis,

Fracta res labilis,

Miserere iudice.

Al sereno domini.

FALIERO

1. pity and mercy need woe of man
 2. of man and find not, and of God
 1. the man apply me to Vani
 2. in need for most full of soul
 1. his, one score years should
 2. am
 1. me him of woe trembling treasonous
 2. unds
 Faliero, so meles jump, steal the

By freedom woven about his head
 To chain his green leaf and wear
 A diadem's weight brow of empire,
 till,

Some three days hence, death, laughing broad
 and blind,

and hand on his bloodred hand, and led
 To hell the hoar head and the murderous
 heart,

For three days' kingdom's sake perpetually
 burned and dishonoured. Never man
 that died,

nor nor tyrant, thief nor murderer
 none,

Did thus, nor would, being less than mad with
 sin—

Said he to, nor Iscariot I nor mine
 that may thrive more than the most

1. apply his Venice. One for all
 2. each man all his brethren

1. speak, strike hereafter. Shall
 2. his

1. he warning song of wail
 2. the new song only heard

1. the town. Now, St.

Speak hour, evening, it is that

1. first of this first day that sees thy sons
 2. Free, as thy soul is free in heaven,
 With no man's shadow cast on them but
 thine.

Why should the sun keep silence here? thou
 seest,

Night seals not up for us the lips of light
 As on the downward verge of hell: and

Why should thy tongue be sealed,
 our hope

Perish, as might some heartless bondman
 worn

With wasting sloth and patience? Night
 and hell,

With all their mortal ministers in man,
 Shame, doubt, and base endurance, force
 and fear,

Cold heart, and abject custom, these are
 they

That fight against us: fain, with all this
 aid,

Fain would night thrust us back and bind us
 fast

Where no man hears the sun's word: nor
 may these

By harmless hands be fought with, nor sub-
 dued

With bloodless or with blameless weapons:
 yet.

If hell be here not yet, ere man make earth

Hell, here to-day the sun should speak, and
thou
Make answer, Mark, and help us. Yea, for
here
Night hath not put the sun to silence:
— dawn
Speaks: and we lack but one loud word from
thee.

Enter an Officer with Guards

OFFICER

My lord, you are prisoner of the state, and
mine.

FALIERO

Thine! Does my nephew live?

OFFICER

He lives as you—

Prisoner.

FALIERO

I think I am overwatched, and thou
Part of the dream I walk in unaware—
A thing made out of slumber. Many a
night
I have slept but ill—never so sound as this.
Why tolls the bell not from St. Mark's?

OFFICER

My lord,
By mandate of the sovereign council met
The warden of the bell-tower had in charge
To see that none should sound the bells to-
day.
The gates are fastened of the palace square:
The Ten, with twenty chosen in aid of them
Forth of the chiefest of the state, are set
To judge the prisoners even this hour attaint
On mortal charge of murderous treason.

FALIERO

If
True men be they that shall arraign me, I
May stand in sooth approved their traitor.

OFFICER

Sir,
For your sole name's sake is it of all the
rest
That this new court of judgment sits, to
speak
On this great cause no common sentence.

FALIERO

No:

Strange court, and stranger trial, and most
of all

Strange will the strange court's judgment
held to-day

Read where it stands on record. Good my
friend,

I will not trouble thee nor vex thy lords
With tarriance nor with wrangling: I desire
Nothing of man, nor aught of God save
peace.

I shall not lack it long: yet would I say
Perchance a word before I die, because
I have loved this city. Lead me where they
sit

That I may stand and speak my soul and go:
The rest is death's and God's: if these be
just,

Judge they between us, and their will be
mine. [Exeunt.]

ACT V

SCENE I.—*The Hall of the Council of Ten*

BENINTENDE and Senators sitting. Enter
FALIERO, guarded

BENINTENDE

Justice has given her doom against the ac-
cused,
Israello and Calendaro: they that fled
To Chioggia lie in ward, and hence await
An equal sentence: this remains, to speak
Judgment on him, the guiltiest head of all
And murderous heart of this conspiracy,
Head once and heart of Venice, present here
To bear the award of retributive law
Laid on her traitor and your enemy. Sirs,
Is it your will to hear him answer?

SENATORS

Yea.

BENINTENDE

Marin Faliero, leave is thine to speak.

FALIERO

And leave is yours to slay me: yet for both,
Lords councillors, I thank you: most for
death,

And somewhat yet for freedom given my
speech

Ye know that being your prince and thrall
elect
I have lived not free, who now shall freely
die;

By doom indeed of yours, but mine own will
Rejoicing confirms it. Fourscore years
I have given mine eyesight and my spirit of life
The sun and sea to feed on, and mine heart
This people and this city chosen of God
To love and serve, and this forlorn right
hand

Some threescore of those years have given
the gift

With furtherance of God's comfort and my
sword's

To smite your foes and scatter, till to-day
I am here arraigned as deadliest of them all.
Nor verily ever stood ye, nor shall stand,
In risk so dire, and die not: yea, when death
Hangs hard above your heads as over mine
Here, and the straitened spirit abhors the
flesh,

Then hardly shall their mutual severance be
Nearer: for chance or God has brought you
forth

From under veriest imminence of death
And shadowing darkness of his hand uplift
And wing made wide above you. No man's
head

Should God have spared, had God been one
with me,

Or chance and I like-minded: that ye live,
Praise God, and not my purpose: never man
Bore mind more bent on one thing most de-
sired,

No sinner's more on sin, no saint's on God,
Than mine with all its might and weight of
will

On trust of your destruction. Hope on earth
Save this, desire of gift save this from heaven,
Had I, since first this fire was lit in me,
None: and now knowing it vain I would not
live

One hour beyond your sentence. Whence
or how

God kindled it against you, for of God,
I say, of God it came, ye marvel, seeing
No cause as great as my great rage of will
To rouse in me such ravin: yet, my lords,
If thirst or ever hunger gnawed man's heart,
Mine did they till your death should satiate
it,

Your general death and single: yea, had God
Held in one hand forth toward me death for
you,

For me perpetual penance, and in one
For you long life and paradise for me,
I had chosen, and given him thanks who gave
me choi

Revenge with hell, not heaven with pardon.
yet

Not my wrong only, not my wrath alone,
Were all that made my spirit a sword and
kept

My thought a fire against you: though the
wrong

Were monstrous past memorial made of
man,

Past memory kept of time alive to mark
Ingratitude most memorable, and the wrath,
How sharp soe'er, not more than proves in
God

By fire and fierce apocalypse of doom
Justice: for shame that smites an old man's
cheek

Is as a whetted sword that cleaves his heart,
His hand, strong once, being weaponless
and mine

The shame that spat on was as fire to burn,
And mine the sword that clove was fire, and
mine

The weapon that forsook had made it once
Famous. But yet I curse not God for you
That ye denied me, being the men ye were,
Redress: for had ye granted, haply then
I had died content, and never cast by
chance

A thought away at hazard on the wrongs
That all men bear who bear your lordship.
Now

By light and fire of mine own shame and
wrong

I have seen the shames, I have read the
wrongs of these

Who, free being born, and free men called
by name,

Endure with me your mastery. This ye call
An equal weal, a general good, a thing

Divine and common, mutual and august,
Hailed by the holiest name that hallows right,

One chosen of many kingdoms, kingless—
one

Not ranged among but reared above them,
one

Found wot: h a word that whoso hears takes
heart

As triump^hs in his motherland, of men
 Not as theirs whose heads bow down
 to man,
 Nor kingdom called nor empire, but ac-
 claimed
 Republic—this that all men praise as ye,
 Ye only, ye dishonour. Naught is this,
 To call no man of all that tread on men
 King, if men call a man that walks on earth
 Master, and bind about a new-born brow
 Inheritance of lordship. Hand from hand
 Takes, and resigns in vain, the wrongful
 right,
 By reasonless transmission: man by man,
 The imperious races, lessening toward their
 last,
 Perish: yet power with even their last is born,
 Because his mother bare him. Sirs, this law
 Would wake on lips that wist not what were
 smiles
 Laughter: but if the unreason brought not
 forth
 Shame, haply men, the fools of patience,
 might
 Endure it, and eschew, by luck's good leave,
 Scorn: which they shall not surely who for-
 bear
 And bear what honour may not. Sir: take
 note
 That with men's wrongs and sufferings age
 on age
 This blindworm custom have ye fed and
 made
 A serpent fanged and flying, with eyes and
 wings,
 To ravin on men's hearts. Pride, shame,
 sloth, lust,
 Are dragon's teeth: right royally ye err
 To deem that these will sting not, or that
 men,
 No bondslaves born but citizens as ye,
 Being stung, will smile and thank you. Now
 perchance
 Would one make answer, saying I too was
 born
 Not least of all nor less than any of you
 Noble, but heir of place as proud as yours,
 Of name as high in history, by my sires
 None otherwise than yours from yours be-
 queathed
 With attributes and accidents to boot
 Of chance hereditary: which truth being
 truth,
 Fierce madness is it in me for sheer despite

To league myself against my kind, and give
 My brethren's throats up to the popular
 knife
 And rage of hands plebian, all for this,
 This recompense of all, to stand myself
 Amid the clamorous rout of thralls released
 Dumb, disarrayed, disseated, dispossessed,
 Degraded and disfigured of the grace
 My birth had cast about me: but, my lords,
 Not all men alway, though ye know not this,
 Yearn toward their own ends only, live and
 die
 Desiring only for themselves and theirs
 Honour, with sure-eyed justice; righteous-
 ness
 That holds the rights up of a noble's house,
 Walks firm and straight on service in his
 hall,
 But halts beyond his threshold; equity
 Which is not equal, justice less than just,
 And freedom based on bondage: else indeed,
 Were all souls nobly born so base by birth,
 No tongue most violent or most furious hand
 Uplift or loud against nobility
 Spake ever yet nor struck unjustly. Men
 May bear the blazon wrought of centuries,
 hold
 Their armouries higher than arms imperial,
 yet
 Know that the least their countryman, whose
 hand
 Hath done his country service, lives their
 peer
 And peer of all their fathers. Ye, that know
 Nor this nor aught that men call manful—
 ye
 That feed upon your father's fame as worms
 Fed on their flesh, and leave it rotten—ye
 That prate and plume and prank yourselves
 in pride
 Because your grandsires, men that were,
 begat
 Sons yet not all un-manned, and these again,
 Begat on wombs less loyal than of yore
 You—how should ye know this? But I,
 fair lords,
 Born even as you, was nurtured even as they
 Whom your fair lordships hold, being
 humbler born,
 Foul: hand in hand with these I fought your
 fights,
 I bore your banner: nor was mine in strife
 Reared higher than hands which there kept
 rank with mine,

And were not noble: whence, from touch of these

And fellowship in fighting, I, whom ye
Call peer of yours, found poor men peers of mine

And you by proof of act and test of truth
Vassals. But some perchance of yours, ye say,

Fought far and fain of fight as we, and bore
As high the lion: still, we know it: but this
We know not, that ye bore it higher, or stood

More steadfast in the shock of charging death,
Than poor men born your followers: and on these,

On sons of these ye have laid such laws, and made

Life so by manlike men unbearable,
That by what end soever he that ends
This reign of chance, this heritage of reign,
Must live or die approved of all save you,
Of justice justified, of earth and heaven
In life or death applauded. Nought would I
Nor ought would any say to shame you more:
And now, as ye must live, it seems, let me
Die: God be with you, and content with me.

BENINTENDE

Lords councillors, declare your sentence.

ALL

Death.

BENINTENDE

Then, Marino Faliero, Doge, thus
By me this court speaks judgment on thee,
now

Convicted by confession. As to-day
Thy chief twain-fellow traitors, gagged and gyved,

From the red pillars of the balcony
Swing stark before the sunset, so shalt thou
At noon to-morrow suffer privily
Decapitation; and thy place of death
The landing-place that crowns the Giants'
Stairs

Where first thine oath was taken. For thy
corpse,

We grant it burial with thy sires by night
In Zanipolo: but thy place
Among our painted priors in the hall
Of our great council bare shall stand

In sign of shame for ever, veiled in black,

Where men shall read, writ broad below,
This place

*Is Marino Faliero's, for his crimes
Beheaded.*

FALIERO

Ay? that all men seeing may crave
To know what crime of crimes was his, and hear

The word in answer given that crowns the deed

Wherewith confronted all fair virtues, all
Good works of all good men remembered, seem

Pale as the moon by morning—even the word

That was to Greece as godhead, and to Rome

The sign and seal of sovereign manfulness—
Tyrannicide: thanks be with tyranny

That so by me records it. I shall sleep
To-night, I think, the gladlier that I know
Where I shall lay my head to-morrow. Sirs,
Farewell, and peace be with you if it may.
I have lost, ye have won this hazard: yet perchance

My loss may shine yet goodlier than your gain
When time and God give judgment. If there be

Truth, true is this, that I desired the right
And ye with hands as red sustain the wrong
As mine had been in triumph. Have your will:

And God send each no bitterer end than mine. *[Exeunt.]*

SCENE II.—*An apartment in the ducal palace*

Enter FALIERO, the DUCHESS, and BERTUCCIO

FALIERO

Nay, children, be not over childlike, ye
That see what men who love not truth will call

The natural doom ensuing which marks as mad

And damns to death inevitable as just
An old man's furious childishness: be you
Wiser let me not need bid you be wise,
Who am found of all men foolishest, and yet
Were this last chance before me laid again
Would do not other than I did. Take heart:
What mean ye so to mourn upon me?

BERTUCCIO

Am I not found unworthy?

FALIERO

No, my boy:

They do not ill, being lords of ours, to slay
Me; nay, they could not spare: but thee to
slay,

To spill thy strong young life for truth to
me,

In all men's eyes would mark them monstrous:
thou

Must live, and serve my slayers, and serving
them

Sustain my memory by the proof—if God
Shall give thee grace to prove it—that thy
name,

Thy father's name and mine, in true men's
ears

Rings truth, and means not treason. Though
they be

Ill rulers of this household, be not thou
Too swift to strike ere time be ripe to strike,
Nor then by darkling stroke, against them: I
Have erred, who thought by wrong to van-
quish wrong,

To smite by violence violence, and by night
Put out the power of darkness: time shall
bring

A better way than mine, if God's will be—
As how should God's will be not?—to re-
deem

Venice. I was not worthy—nor may man
Till one as Christ shall come again, be found
Worthy to think, speak, strike, foresee, fore-
tell,

The thought, the word, the stroke, the dawn,
the day,

That verily and indeed shall bid the dead
Live, and this old dear land of all men's
love

Arise and shine forever: but if Christ
Came, haply such an one may come, and do
With hands and heart as pure as his a work
That priests themselves may mar not. God
forbid

That: if not they, then death shall touch it
not,

Nor time lay hand thereon, nor wrath to
come

Of God or man prevail against it, though
Men's tongues be mad against him till he
die.

Sir,

(Voices chanting from below)

*Quis es tantus, quis es talis,
Cui non ira triumphalis,
Ira fulvis ardens alis,
Metu mentem comprimit?
Ira Dei, nobis dira,
Manet immortalis ira,
Sensu serua, visu mira,
Mitis quæ non fletu fit.*

FALIERO

Again my psalmists answer me? who bade
These voices hither outside the sanctuary
To sound below there now? Nay, this can
be

But chance of sacred service, or goodwill
To usward in our darkening hour, or scorn
Wherewith being moved we should but stand
abased

Too low for base men's mockery. What,
my child,

Does their fierce music hurt thee?

DUCHESS

Nay, not more,

My lord, than all things heard or seen that
say

I shall not see nor hear much longer you
Whom, though I loved you ever, now me-
seems

I have never loved as now; God knows how
well,

None knows but I how bitterly: but this
I should not say, to vex your kind last thoughts
With more than even your natural care of
me.

FALIERO

Sweet, wouldst thou think to vex me? nay,
then, weep:

Else canst thou not. This very wrath of
God

Wherewith the threats of priestly throats
would shake

Mountains, and scourge the sea to madness,
what

Can this do, being by tears intractable,
Implacable to moan of men, if men,
Being threatened, moan or weep not? Fear
and shame,

The right and left hand of a base man's
faith,

Can lay not hold on hearts found higher: and
how,

Were God no higher of heart than men most
base,

But wayward, fierce, unrighteous, merciless,
As these who praise proclaim him, how
should he

Have power on any save a base man's heart?
His wings of wrath were narrower than the
soul's

That soar and seek toward justice, though
the wind

Break them, and lightning burn the blind
bright eyes

That even for love would look on God and
live.

But find for light fire, and for comfort fear.

(Chanting again)

*Nigris involutum pennis
Te circumdat nox perennis;
Non quinquennis, non decennis
Implicabit umbra te;
Sed antiqua, sed aeterna,
Dum sit lux in caelo verna,
Nox profunda, nox hiberna,
Christus unde salvet me.*

FALIERO

And Christ keep all who love him clean of
you

Who turn their love to loathing. Why, these
priests

Would make the sunshine hellfire, thence to
light

The piles whereon they burn with live men's
limbs

The heart and hope of manhood. Light
save this

They know not, nor desire it: light and night
To them are other than to men that see

Light laugh in heaven and hurt not, night
come down

To comfort men from heaven: sweet spring
to them

Is winter, and their souls of the iron ice
That Alighieri found at hell's hard heart

Take winter's core for springtide. Woe
were thine,

Venice, and woe were Italy's if these
Held ever in their hand all hearts of men

Born fain to serve their country: priests would
turn

With prayers and promises and blessings half
The blood therein to death-cold poison.

BERTUCCIO

Sir,

Did not the imperial Gregory glorify
Rome, when his heel set on the German's
neck

Trampled her sovereign foeman as a snake
Starved in the snows? and might not such a
priest

Bless freedom, and the blessing of his breath
Not blas but bid it blossom?

FALIERO

Son, by Christ,

I doubt a curse were found less like to hurt
And frost less like to wither.

DUCHESS

Dear my lord,

Have patience, and take heed of words; they
fall

Not echoless on silence; these of yours
Affright me; nay be patient, and give ear,
And pardon me that pray you hearken.

FALIERO

Ay—

To what word next shall fill our ears with
prayer

That fain would sound like thunder? Let
them pray.

(Chanting again)

*Nos, ut servi facti servis,
Fracti corde, fracti nervis,
Congregamur in caleris,
Vagabundi, tremuli;
Sed, o fautor tu sincere,
Judex mitis ac severe,
Miserere, miserere,
Miserere populi!*

FALIERO

Yea, for they need and find not mercy, they
Whose count makes up the people. God,
if God

Be pitiful, on these have pity: man

Hath more for beasts he slays in sport, for
hounds

That help him, than for women, children,
men,

He treads to death and passes; would that I,
Though ruin had earlier fallen on me, and
left

Less than I leave of record now, betimes
Had taken thought to comfort these, or
make

At least their life more even with equity,
Their days more clear of cloud, their sleep
more sure,

Their waking sweeter. Lord and chief was I,
And left them miserable; not vile indeed
As those whom kings may spit on, but abased
Below the royal right of manhood.

DUCHESS

Nay—

Have you not always shown them kindness
more

Than poor men crave of noble?

FALIERO

Child, the right

That man of man craves, and requires not,
being

Too weak to claim and conquer, what is this
But sign and symbol of so vile a wrong,
So foul a fraud, so fierce a violence, borne
So long and found so shameful, that the
prayer

Sounds insolence? I do not pray thee—
Sweet,

Play me not false; thou dost not pray me
spare

To smite, revile, misuse thee: man of man
Desiring mercy, justice, leave to live,
Were all as base a suppliant. No, not me
But one more pure of passion, one more
strong,

Being gentler and more just, if God be good
And time approve him righteous, God shall
give

The grace I merited not, to do men right
And bring men comfort: wrath and fear and
hope,

Save such as angels watching earth from
heaven,

And filled with fiery pity pure as God's,
Feel, and are kindled into love, to him
Shall rest unknown for ever: men that hear
His name far off shall yearn at heart, and
thank

God that they hear, and live: but they that
see,

They that touch hands with heaven and him,
that feed

With light from his their eyes, and fill their
ears

With godlike speech of lips whereon the smile
Is promise of more perfect manhood, born
Of happier days than his that knew not him,
And equal-hearted with the sun in heaven
From rising even to setting, they shall know
By type and present likeness of a man

What, if truth be, truth is, and what, if God,
God: for by love that casts itself away
And is not moved with passion, but more
strong

For sacrifice deliberate and serene
Than passion sevenfold heated for revenge,
Shall all not beastlike born, not serpent-
souled,

Not abject from the womb, discern the man
Supreme of spirit, and perfect, and unlike
Me: for the tongue that bids dark death arise,
The hand that takes dead freedom by the
hand

And lifts up living, others these must be
Than mine, and other than the world, I think,
Shall bear till men wax worthier.

BERTUCCIO

Such a man

Shall come not even till God come back on
earth.

FALIERO

Who knows if God shall come not? or if God
Be other—yea, be anything, my son,
If not the spirit incarnate and renewed
In each man born most godlike, and beheld
Most manifold and most merciful of all?

(Chanting again)

*Parce, Deus, urbi parce,
Tuque summâ constans arce
Sis adjutor urbi, Marce:
Cor peccatis conditum
Nescit quanta, nescit qualis,
Lex aeterna, lex æqualis:
Mors per Christum fit mortalis,
Vita fit per Spiritum.*

FALIERO

Ay, with the breath of God between her lips
From Christlike lips breathed through them,
she that lay
Dead in the dark may stand alive again,

And strike death dead: yea, death may turn
to life

By grace of that live spirit invulnerable
We call the breath or ghost of God most hush,
The very God that comes to comfort men,
That falls and flies abroad in tongues of fire
From soul to soul enkindled. Mark nor
Christ

Wrought miracle ever more than this divine
Nor so by slaves and fools incredible
As this should be, to raise not one man up,
Not one man four days dead, as Lazarus
once,

But all a people many a century dead,
And damned, men deemed, to death eternal.

This
The heart of man, buried as dead in sins,
May feel not nor conceive, and having felt
Continue in corruption: this alone
Shall stand a sign on earth from heaven,
whose light

Makes manifest the righteousness of God
In mortal godhead proven immortal, shown
Firm by full test of mere infirmity
And very God by manhood. Otherwhere
Might no man hold this possible, but here
May no man hold this doubtful. Are we not
Italians, made of our diviner earth
And fostered of her far more sovereign sun,
That we should doubt, and not be counted
mad,

What no man born to less inheritance
And reared on records less august than
ours

Would not be mad to dream that he believed
And would not sin to seek it? Have not we
Borne men to witness for the world, and
made

Grey time our servant and our secretary
To register what none may read and say
That ours is not the lordship, ours the law,
And ours the love that lightens and that leads
High manhood by the heart as mothers lead
Children, and history leads us by the hand
From glory forth to glory through the gloom
That bids not hope die, nor bring forth des-
pair,

Though faith alone keep heart to comfort us?
What though five hundred years pass—what
were these

A thousand, if the sepulchres at last
Be rent, and let forth Venice—and let rise
Rome? Yea, my city, what though time and
shame,

Though change and chance defiled thee?
Servitude

Shall fall from off thee as the shadow of
night

Falls from the front of morning: thou shalt
see

By life re-risen above the tombs revived
Death stricken dead, and time transfigured.

We
Fight, fall, and sleep, and shadows shown in
song

And phantoms painted of us overlive
Our substance and our memory: men that
hear

A name that was a clarion once will cry,
What means it? eyes that see on storied walls
Our likeness carven or coloured may per-
chance

Wax wide with wonder why to dead men's
eyes

Our fame seemed worth memorial: but to
none

Shall not our country seem divine, and heaven
The likeness of our country. Die we may
From record of remembrance: but, being
sons

Whose death or life, whose presence or whose
dust,

Whose flesh or spirit is part of Italy,
What mean these fools to threaten us with
death?

DUCHESS

My lord, your heart is nobly bent on earth,
But earthward ever: soon by doom of man
Must your strong spirit of life and pride pass
forth

And dwell where all of earth it loved is found
Nothing; for you—if love may speak, that
speaks

For faith's and fear's sake now presumptu-
ously—

Meseems for you this hour should keep in
sight

Not Italy, but paradise: alas,
I cannot tell what I should say to please
God, and to do you service: yet I would
Say somewhat, might it serve.

FALIERO

Thou sayest enough

With so sweet eyes. Content thee: death is
not

Fearful, nor aught in death or life but fear.

(Chanting again)

*Pestis quâ dolore cincta
Gemit vita fletu tincta,
Suis ipsa vinculis vincta,
Cecidit rector rerum fors:
Portentosa, maledicta,
Suo dente serpens icta,
Jacet mundi victrix victa,
Jacet mortem passa mors.*

FALIERO

Lo now, the folk who live and thrive by death,
Who feed on all men's fear of it, deride
The fear they foster: be not priestlier thou
Than very priests are. Child, if God be

just,
Let God do justice; if he be not, then
Man's righteousness rebukes him: and the
man
That loves not more himself than other
men

Is held not all unrighteous. Death, I think,
Of all my sins shall shrive me: say this
were

Sin, which had yet shed less of innocent blood
Than any blameless battle spills, and earns
For all who fought men's praises, yet I give
My life for lives I took not, and I give
Less grudgingly than gladly. Not for me
Need any—nay, not ye—weep, as myself,
Were tears to me less hard and strange,
might weep

For some that die with me and some that live.
I am sorry for my seaman: *Calendaro*
Was no faint heart in fight, but swift of hand
As fire that strikes: if one that bears his name
Crave ever help at need or grace of thee,
Forget not me nor him, but what thou canst,
If any grace be left thee, son, to show,
Do gladly for my sake: he served me well:
And now the wind swings and the ravens
rend

What was a soldier. Not to mine or me
Has this the fairest palace built with hands
Been fortunate or favourable: the day
Last year that led me hither led me not
With prosperous presage toward the natural
shore

That should have given me welcome.

DUCHESS

No, my lord.
The sign was fearful to us.

FALIERO

Ay—there to alight

Where men that die by law, thou knowest,
are slain

Was no such token as uplifts men's hearts
And swells their hopes with promise. Dost
thou mind

How deadly lowered that moon whose haze
beguiled

Our blindfold bark of state to the evil goal
Whereon my life now shatters? Thou didst
think

A sign it was from Godward. Let it be.
No sign can help or hurt us that foreshows
What must be: God might spare his dim
display

Of half portended purpose, and appear
No less august, less wise or terrible,
Than threats that scare or scare not hearts
like ours

With doom incognizable of doubtful death
Proclaim him and proclaim not. Now from
mine

The shadow of doubt has passed away, and
left

The shadow of death behind it, which to me
Seems less uncomfortable and dark: for this
I ever held worse than all certitude,
To know not what the worst ahead might be
As now, being near the rocks, I see it, and die.

(Chanting again)

*Contemplamini, quot estis,
Ex infernâ quàm celestis
Illa nobis olim pestis*

*Salus exit hominum:
Mors in vitam transformata
Mutat mundos, mutat fata,
Fulget per stellarum prata
Lumen ipsa luminum.*

FALIERO

If by man's hope or very grace of God
Dark death be so transfigured, I, that yet
Know not, desire not knowledge, being con-
tent

To prove the transformation: thou, if this
Please thee, believe and hold for actual truth
That which gives heart at least to heartless
fear

And fire to faith and power to confidence
More strong than steel to strike with. Sure
it is

That only dread of death is veriest death
And fear of hell blows hellfire seven times hot
For souls whose thought foretastes it: and
for all

That fear not fate or aught inevitable,
Seeing naught wherein change breeds not
may be changed

By force of fear or vehemence even of hope,
Intolerable is there nothing. Seven years
since

Mine old good friend Petrarca should have
died,

He thought, for utter heartbreak, and he lives,
And fills men's ears and souls with sweeter
song

Than sprang of sweeter seasons: yet is grief
Surely less bearable than death, which comes
As sure as sleep on all. We deem that
man

Of men most miserably tormented, who,
Being fain to sleep, can sleep not: tyrants find
No torture in their torturous armoury
So merciless in masterdom as this,
To hold men's lids aye waking: and on mine
What now shall fall but slumber? Yet once
more,

If God or man would grant me this, which
yet,

Perchance, is but a boy's wish, fain I would
Set sail, and die at sea; for half an hour,
If so much length of life be left me, breathe
The wind that breathes the wave's breath,
and rejoice

Less even in blithe remembrance of the blast
That blew my sail to battle, and that sang
Triumph when conquest lit me home like
fire—

Yea, less in very victory, could it slaine
Again about me—less than in the pride,
The freedom, and the sovereign sense of joy,
Given of the sea's pure presence. Mine she
was

By threescore years and ten of strenuous
love

Or ever man's will wedded us: and hers
Am I now dying not so divine a death
As Istria might have given me, had the stars
Shone less oblique that marred and made my
doom

Most adverse in prosperity. That day
Rang trumpet-like in presage and in praise
Of proud work done and prouder yet to do
By hands and hearts Venetian: then to die
With so great sound and splendour on the sea

Shed broad from battle rolling round us—
there

To put life off triumphantly, like one
That lies down lordlier than he rose, and
wears

Rest like a robe of triumph, woven more
bright

Than gold that clothed him waking—this had
been

High fortune for the highest of happier men
Than fate had made Faliero. But for him
Reserved was this, to reap for harvest thence
Praise, acclamation, thanksgiving, and sway,
Which all were worth not any mean man's
wage

Who serves and is not scoffed at: and from
these,

Reaped once, to grind the bitter bread of
shame,

And taste it salt as tears are. This white
head,

Which swords had spared that should not,
being set high,

Hath borne a buffet for a crown, and felt
The strokes of base men bruise it: eyes and
tongues

More vile than earth have mocked at me, and
live,

And hiss and glare me to my grave, cast
out

From high funereal fellowship of fame
And daylight honour shown the dead that
pass

Unshamed among their fathers. Let it be.
Albeit no place among them all were mine,
Time haply might bring back my dust, and
chance

Mix all our tombs together: but such hope
Should move not much the lightest soul
alive

That death draws near to enfranchise, and
to bring

Far out of reach of death and chance and
time.

(Chanting again)

*Spes incertas facit certas,
Mentes implet inexperatas,
Lux in animo libertas,
Fides in superna dux:
Ut æternam per æstatem,
Per supernam civitatem,
Fiat lux per libertatem,
Sic libertas ipsa lux.*

FALIERO

Yea? then, God send it be so: for he knows,
 Though priests and lay-folk, lords and vas-
 sals born,
 Know not, that God's omnipotence can make
 No light whose fire outshines a marshlight
 shine
 On eyes that see not freedom. Faith, whose
 trust
 Forsakes for thirst of heaven our natural
 earth,
 And hope that hovers out of sight, and love
 Whose eyes being set against the sun are
 blind
 And see not men that suffer, nor look back
 To lift and light them up with comfort
 given
 From brethren's hearts to brethren, these can
 heal
 Of all the mortal plaguesores of the world
 None, and for all their wild weak will can
 give
 Nothing; they wail and cry, they rage and
 rend.
 Shed blood with prayer for sacrifice, and
 make
 Day foul with fume of fires unnatural,
 whence
 Hell risen on earth reeks heavenward: nor
 may man
 From faith that hangs on lips whose doom
 feeds hell.
 From hope through fear kept living, or from
 love
 Whose breath burns up the life of pity, dream
 To gather fruit, and die not. Liberty
 Is no mere flower that feeds on light and
 air
 And sweetens life and soothes it, but herself
 Air, light, and life, which being withdrawn or
 quenched
 Or choked with rank infection till it rot
 Gives only place to death and darkness I
 Would fain have hewn a way for her to pass
 As fire that cleaves a forest: and the flame
 Takes hold on me that kindled it My child,
 Weep not for that; weep, if thou wilt, that
 man.
 So kind and brave as good men are, so true,
 So loving yet should be so slow to love
 More than the life of days and nights, fulfilled
 With love and hate that flower and bear not
 fruit,

Pain, pleasure, fear, and hope more vain than
 these,
 Freedom. Thou wast not wont to weep:
 thine eyes
 Were flower-soft emeralds ever: now they
 turn
 To cloudier change than flaws the sapphire
 found
 Not worth a bright brow's wearing. What
 is here
 Allowed of God or wrought of men, that thou
 Shouldst weep to see it? I have sinned, and
 die: if sin
 It be to strike too swift and wide a stroke
 At men doomed of justice, though by truth
 Long since, and witness borne of wrongdoing
 here,
 Doomed; and if death it be for one content,
 For one most tired with sight and sense of ill,
 To pass, and know no more of it, but sleep
 Where sleep takes heed of nothing. Ye that
 wake,
 Forget not nor remember overmuch
 Or me that loved you and was loved, or aught
 Of time's past coil or comfort: what ye will
 Of what gives comfort yet, if aught there be,
 Keep still in heart, and nought that gives not:
 life
 Hath borne for me not bitter fruit alone,
 But sweet as love's own honey: nor for you,
 What several ways ye walk soever, till
 Night fall about them, shall not life bring
 forth
 Comfort. And now, before the loud noon
 strike
 Whose stroke for me sounds midnight, ere I
 die,
 Kiss me. Live thou, and love my Venice,
 boy,
 Not more than I, but wiselier: serve her not
 For thanksgiving of men, nor fear nor heed,
 Nor let it gnaw thine heart to win for wage,
 Ingratitude: let them take heed and fear
 Who pay thee with unthankfulness, but thou,
 Seeing not for these thou fightest, but for them
 That have been and that shall be, sons and
 sires,
 Dead and unborn, men truer of heart than
 these,
 Be constant, and be satisfied to serve,
 And crave no more of any. Fare thee well.
 And thou, my wife and child, all loves in one,
 Sweet life, sweet heart, fare ever well, and be
 Blest of God's holier hand with happier love

Than here bids blessing on thee. Hark, the
 guard
 Draws hither: noon is full. and where I go
 Ye may not follow. Be not faint of heart:
 I go not as a base man goes to death,
 But great of hope: God cannot will that here
 Some day shall spring not freedom: nor per-
 chance

May we, long dead, not know it, who died of
 love
 For dreams that were and truths that were
 not. Come:
 Bring me but toward the landing whence my
 soul
 Sets sail, and bid God speed her forth to
 sea. [Exeunt.]

