

Development of Theatre 1: Classical - Neoclassical Forms

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PART I
POETICS

1. The Poetics of Aristotle - Section 1

THE POETICS OF ARISTOTLE

By Aristotle

A Translation By S. H. Butcher

[Transcriber's Annotations and Conventions: the translator left intact some Greek words to illustrate a specific point of the original discourse. In this transcription, in order to retain the accuracy of this text, those words are rendered by spelling out each Greek letter individually, such as {alpha beta gamma delta...}. The reader can distinguish these words by the enclosing braces {}. Where multiple words occur together, they are separated by the "/" symbol for clarity. Readers who do not speak or read the Greek language will usually neither gain nor lose understanding by skipping over these passages. Those who understand Greek, however, may gain a deeper insight to the original meaning and distinctions expressed by Aristotle.]

I

I propose to treat of Poetry in itself and of its various kinds, noting the essential quality of each; to inquire into the structure of the plot as requisite to a good poem; into the number and nature of the parts of which a poem is composed; and similarly into whatever else falls within the same inquiry. Following, then, the order of nature, let us begin with the principles which come first.

Epic poetry and Tragedy, Comedy also and Dithyrambic: poetry, and the music of the flute and of the lyre in most of their forms, are all in their general conception modes of imitation. They differ, however, from one: another in three respects,—the medium, the objects, the manner or mode of imitation, being in each case distinct.

For as there are persons who, by conscious art or mere habit, imitate and represent various objects through the medium of colour and form, or again by the voice; so in the arts above mentioned, taken as a whole, the imitation is produced by rhythm, language, or 'harmony,' either singly or combined.

Thus in the music of the flute and of the lyre, 'harmony' and rhythm alone are employed; also in other arts, such as that of the shepherd's pipe, which are essentially similar to these. In dancing, rhythm alone is used without 'harmony'; for even dancing imitates character, emotion, and action, by rhythmical movement.

There is another art which imitates by means of language alone, and that either in prose or verse—which, verse, again, may either combine different metres or consist of but one kind—but this has hitherto been without a name. For there is no common term we could apply to the mimes of Sophron and Xenarchus and the Socratic dialogues on the one hand; and, on the other, to poetic imitations in iambic, elegiac, or any similar metre. People do, indeed, add the word 'maker' or 'poet' to the name of the metre, and speak of elegiac poets, or epic (that is, hexameter) poets, as if it were not the imitation that makes the poet, but the verse that entitles them all indiscriminately to the name. Even when a treatise on medicine or natural science is brought out in verse, the name of poet is by custom given to the author; and yet Homer and Empedocles have nothing in common but the metre, so that it would be right to call the one poet, the other physicist rather than poet. On the same principle, even if a writer in his poetic imitation were to combine all metres, as Chaeremon did in his *Centaur*, which

is a medley composed of metres of all kinds, we should bring him too under the general term poet. So much then for these distinctions.

There are, again, some arts which employ all the means above mentioned, namely, rhythm, tune, and metre. Such are Dithyrambic and Nomic poetry, and also Tragedy and Comedy; but between them the difference is, that in the first two cases these means are all employed in combination, in the latter, now one means is employed, now another.

Such, then, are the differences of the arts with respect to the medium of imitation.

II

Since the objects of imitation are men in action, and these men must be either of a higher or a lower type (for moral character mainly answers to these divisions, goodness and badness being the distinguishing marks of moral differences), it follows that we must represent men either as better than in real life, or as worse, or as they are. It is the same in painting. Polygnotus depicted men as nobler than they are, Pauson as less noble, Dionysius drew them true to life.

Now it is evident that each of the modes of imitation above mentioned will exhibit these differences, and become a distinct kind in imitating objects that are thus distinct. Such diversities may be found even in dancing, flute-playing, and lyre-playing. So again in language, whether prose or verse unaccompanied by music. Homer, for example, makes men better than they are; Cleophon as they are; Hegemon the Thasian, the inventor of parodies, and Nicochares, the author of the Deiliad, worse than they are. The same thing holds good of Dithyrambs and Nomes; here too one may portray different types, as Timotheus and Philoxenus differed in representing their Cyclopes. The same distinction marks off Tragedy from

Comedy; for Comedy aims at representing men as worse, Tragedy as better than in actual life.

III

There is still a third difference—the manner in which each of these objects may be imitated. For the medium being the same, and the objects the same, the poet may imitate by narration—in which case he can either take another personality as Homer does, or speak in his own person, unchanged—or he may present all his characters as living and moving before us.

These, then, as we said at the beginning, are the three differences which distinguish artistic imitation,—the medium, the objects, and the manner. So that from one point of view, Sophocles is an imitator of the same kind as Homer—for both imitate higher types of character; from another point of view, of the same kind as Aristophanes—for both imitate persons acting and doing. Hence, some say, the name of ‘drama’ is given to such poems, as representing action. For the same reason the Dorians claim the invention both of Tragedy and Comedy. The claim to Comedy is put forward by the Megarians,—not only by those of Greece proper, who allege that it originated under their democracy, but also by the Megarians of Sicily, for the poet Epicharmus, who is much earlier than Chionides and Magnes, belonged to that country. Tragedy too is claimed by certain Dorians of the Peloponnese. In each case they appeal to the evidence of language. The outlying villages, they say, are by them called {kappa omega mu alpha iota}, by the Athenians {delta eta mu iota}: and they assume that Comedians were so named not from {kappa omega mu ‘alpha zeta epsilon iota nu}, ‘to revel,’ but because they wandered from village to village (kappa alpha tau alpha / kappa omega mu alpha sigma), being excluded contemptuously from the city. They add also that the Dorian

word for 'doing' is $\{\delta\epsilon\lambda\tau\alpha\ \rho\ho\alpha\ \nu\}$, and the Athenian, $\{\pi\iota\ \rho\ho\ \alpha\ \tau\alpha\ \tau\epsilon\upsilon\ \iota\circ\tau\alpha\ \nu\}$.

This may suffice as to the number and nature of the various modes of imitation.

IV

Poetry in general seems to have sprung from two causes, each of them lying deep in our nature. First, the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood, one difference between him and other animals being that he is the most imitative of living creatures, and through imitation learns his earliest lessons; and no less universal is the pleasure felt in things imitated. We have evidence of this in the facts of experience. Objects which in themselves we view with pain, we delight to contemplate when reproduced with minute fidelity: such as the forms of the most ignoble animals and of dead bodies. The cause of this again is, that to learn gives the liveliest pleasure, not only to philosophers but to men in general; whose capacity, however, of learning is more limited. Thus the reason why men enjoy seeing a likeness is, that in contemplating it they find themselves learning or inferring, and saying perhaps, 'Ah, that is he.' For if you happen not to have seen the original, the pleasure will be due not to the imitation as such, but to the execution, the colouring, or some such other cause.

Imitation, then, is one instinct of our nature. Next, there is the instinct for 'harmony' and rhythm, metres being manifestly sections of rhythm. Persons, therefore, starting with this natural gift developed by degrees their special aptitudes, till their rude improvisations gave birth to Poetry.

Poetry now diverged in two directions, according to the individual character of the writers. The graver spirits imitated noble actions, and the actions of good men. The more trivial sort imitated the actions of meaner persons, at first composing

satires, as the former did hymns to the gods and the praises of famous men. A poem of the satirical kind cannot indeed be put down to any author earlier than Homer; though many such writers probably there were. But from Homer onward, instances can be cited,—his own *Margites*, for example, and other similar compositions. The appropriate metre was also here introduced; hence the measure is still called the iambic or lampooning measure, being that in which people lampooned one another. Thus the older poets were distinguished as writers of heroic or of lampooning verse.

As, in the serious style, Homer is pre-eminent among poets, for he alone combined dramatic form with excellence of imitation, so he too first laid down the main lines of Comedy, by dramatising the ludicrous instead of writing personal satire. His *Margites* bears the same relation to Comedy that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* do to Tragedy. But when Tragedy and Comedy came to light, the two classes of poets still followed their natural bent: the lampooners became writers of Comedy, and the Epic poets were succeeded by Tragedians, since the drama was a larger and higher form of art.

Whether Tragedy has as yet perfected its proper types or not; and whether it is to be judged in itself, or in relation also to the audience,—this raises another question. Be that as it may, Tragedy—as also Comedy—was at first mere improvisation. The one originated with the authors of the *Dithyramb*, the other with those of the phallic songs, which are still in use in many of our cities. Tragedy advanced by slow degrees; each new element that showed itself was in turn developed. Having passed through many changes, it found its natural form, and there it stopped.

Aeschylus first introduced a second actor; he diminished the importance of the Chorus, and assigned the leading part to the dialogue. Sophocles raised the number of actors to three, and added scene-painting. Moreover, it was not till late that the short plot was discarded for one of greater compass, and

the grotesque diction of the earlier satyric form for the stately manner of Tragedy. The iambic measure then replaced the trochaic tetrameter, which was originally employed when the poetry was of the Satyric order, and had greater affinities with dancing. Once dialogue had come in, Nature herself discovered the appropriate measure. For the iambic is, of all measures, the most colloquial: we see it in the fact that conversational speech runs into iambic lines more frequently than into any other kind of verse; rarely into hexameters, and only when we drop the colloquial intonation. The additions to the number of 'episodes' or acts, and the other accessories of which tradition tells, must be taken as already described; for to discuss them in detail would, doubtless, be a large undertaking.

V

Comedy is, as we have said, an imitation of characters of a lower type, not, however, in the full sense of the word bad, the Ludicrous being merely a subdivision of the ugly. It consists in some defect or ugliness which is not painful or destructive. To take an obvious example, the comic mask is ugly and distorted, but does not imply pain.

The successive changes through which Tragedy passed, and the authors of these changes, are well known, whereas Comedy has had no history, because it was not at first treated seriously. It was late before the Archon granted a comic chorus to a poet; the performers were till then voluntary. Comedy had already taken definite shape when comic poets, distinctively so called, are heard of. Who furnished it with masks, or prologues, or increased the number of actors,—these and other similar details remain unknown. As for the plot, it came originally from Sicily; but of Athenian writers Crates was the first who, abandoning the 'iambic' or lampooning form, generalised his themes and plots.

Epic poetry agrees with Tragedy in so far as it is an imitation in verse of characters of a higher type. They differ, in that Epic poetry admits but one kind of metre, and is narrative in form. They differ, again, in their length: for Tragedy endeavours, as far as possible, to confine itself to a single revolution of the sun, or but slightly to exceed this limit; whereas the Epic action has no limits of time. This, then, is a second point of difference; though at first the same freedom was admitted in Tragedy as in Epic poetry.

Of their constituent parts some are common to both, some peculiar to Tragedy, whoever, therefore, knows what is good or bad Tragedy, knows also about Epic poetry. All the elements of an Epic poem are found in Tragedy, but the elements of a Tragedy are not all found in the Epic poem.

VI

Of the poetry which imitates in hexameter verse, and of Comedy, we will speak hereafter. Let us now discuss Tragedy, resuming its formal definition, as resulting from what has been already said.

Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions. By 'language embellished,' I mean language into which rhythm, 'harmony,' and song enter. By 'the several kinds in separate parts,' I mean, that some parts are rendered through the medium of verse alone, others again with the aid of song.

Now as tragic imitation implies persons acting, it necessarily follows, in the first place, that Spectacular equipment will be a part of Tragedy. Next, Song and Diction, for these are the

medium of imitation. By 'Diction' I mean the mere metrical arrangement of the words: as for 'Song,' it is a term whose sense every one understands.

Again, Tragedy is the imitation of an action; and an action implies personal agents, who necessarily possess certain distinctive qualities both of character and thought; for it is by these that we qualify actions themselves, and these—thought and character—are the two natural causes from which actions spring, and on actions again all success or failure depends. Hence, the Plot is the imitation of the action: for by plot I here mean the arrangement of the incidents. By Character I mean that in virtue of which we ascribe certain qualities to the agents. Thought is required wherever a statement is proved, or, it may be, a general truth enunciated. Every Tragedy, therefore, must have six parts, which parts determine its quality—namely, Plot, Character, Diction, Thought, Spectacle, Song. Two of the parts constitute the medium of imitation, one the manner, and three the objects of imitation. And these complete the list. These elements have been employed, we may say, by the poets to a man; in fact, every play contains Spectacular elements as well as Character, Plot, Diction, Song, and Thought.

But most important of all is the structure of the incidents. For Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality. Now character determines men's qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse. Dramatic action, therefore, is not with a view to the representation of character: character comes in as subsidiary to the actions. Hence the incidents and the plot are the end of a tragedy; and the end is the chief thing of all. Again, without action there cannot be a tragedy; there may be without character. The tragedies of most of our modern poets fail in the rendering of character; and of poets in general this is often true. It is the same in painting; and here lies the difference between Zeuxis and Polygnotus. Polygnotus delineates character well:

the style of Zeuxis is devoid of ethical quality. Again, if you string together a set of speeches expressive of character, and well finished in point of diction and thought, you will not produce the essential tragic effect nearly so well as with a play which, however deficient in these respects, yet has a plot and artistically constructed incidents. Besides which, the most powerful elements of emotional interest in Tragedy Peripeteia or Reversal of the Situation, and Recognition scenes—are parts of the plot. A further proof is, that novices in the art attain to finish: of diction and precision of portraiture before they can construct the plot. It is the same with almost all the early poets.

The Plot, then, is the first principle, and, as it were, the soul of a tragedy: Character holds the second place. A similar fact is seen in painting. The most beautiful colours, laid on confusedly, will not give as much pleasure as the chalk outline of a portrait. Thus Tragedy is the imitation of an action, and of the agents mainly with a view to the action.

Third in order is Thought,—that is, the faculty of saying what is possible and pertinent in given circumstances. In the case of oratory, this is the function of the Political art and of the art of rhetoric: and so indeed the older poets make their characters speak the language of civic life; the poets of our time, the language of the rhetoricians. Character is that which reveals moral purpose, showing what kind of things a man chooses or avoids. Speeches, therefore, which do not make this manifest, or in which the speaker does not choose or avoid anything whatever, are not expressive of character. Thought, on the other hand, is found where something is proved to be, or not to be, or a general maxim is enunciated.

Fourth among the elements enumerated comes Diction; by which I mean, as has been already said, the expression of the meaning in words; and its essence is the same both in verse and prose.

Of the remaining elements Song holds the chief place among the embellishments.

The Spectacle has, indeed, an emotional attraction of its own, but, of all the parts, it is the least artistic, and connected least with the art of poetry. For the power of Tragedy, we may be sure, is felt even apart from representation and actors. Besides, the production of spectacular effects depends more on the art of the stage machinist than on that of the poet.

VII

These principles being established, let us now discuss the proper structure of the Plot, since this is the first and most important thing in Tragedy.

Now, according to our definition, Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is complete, and whole, and of a certain magnitude; for there may be a whole that is wanting in magnitude. A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end. A beginning is that which does not itself follow anything by causal necessity, but after which something naturally is or comes to be. An end, on the contrary, is that which itself naturally follows some other thing, either by necessity, or as a rule, but has nothing following it. A middle is that which follows something as some other thing follows it. A well constructed plot, therefore, must neither begin nor end at haphazard, but conform to these principles.

Again, a beautiful object, whether it be a living organism or any whole composed of parts, must not only have an orderly arrangement of parts, but must also be of a certain magnitude; for beauty depends on magnitude and order. Hence a very small animal organism cannot be beautiful; for the view of it is confused, the object being seen in an almost imperceptible moment of time. Nor, again, can one of vast size be beautiful; for as the eye cannot take it all in at once, the unity and sense of the whole is lost for the spectator; as for instance if there were one a thousand miles long. As, therefore, in the case of animate

bodies and organisms a certain magnitude is necessary, and a magnitude which may be easily embraced in one view; so in the plot, a certain length is necessary, and a length which can be easily embraced by the memory. The limit of length in relation to dramatic competition and sensuous presentment, is no part of artistic theory. For had it been the rule for a hundred tragedies to compete together, the performance would have been regulated by the water-clock,—as indeed we are told was formerly done. But the limit as fixed by the nature of the drama itself is this: the greater the length, the more beautiful will the piece be by reason of its size, provided that the whole be perspicuous. And to define the matter roughly, we may say that the proper magnitude is comprised within such limits, that the sequence of events, according to the law of probability or necessity, will admit of a change from bad fortune to good, or from good fortune to bad.

VIII

Unity of plot does not, as some persons think, consist in the Unity of the hero. For infinitely various are the incidents in one man's life which cannot be reduced to unity; and so, too, there are many actions of one man out of which we cannot make one action. Hence, the error, as it appears, of all poets who have composed a *Heracleid*, a *Theseid*, or other poems of the kind. They imagine that as *Heracles* was one man, the story of *Heracles* must also be a unity. But *Homer*, as in all else he is of surpassing merit, here too—whether from art or natural genius—seems to have happily discerned the truth. In composing the *Odyssey* he did not include all the adventures of *Odysseus*—such as his wound on *Parnassus*, or his feigned madness at the mustering of the host—incidents between which there was no necessary or probable connection: but he made the *Odyssey*, and likewise the *Iliad*, to centre round an

action that in our sense of the word is one. As therefore, in the other imitative arts, the imitation is one when the object imitated is one, so the plot, being an imitation of an action, must imitate one action and that a whole, the structural union of the parts being such that, if any one of them is displaced or removed, the whole will be disjointed and disturbed. For a thing whose presence or absence makes no visible difference, is not an organic part of the whole.

IX

It is, moreover, evident from what has been said, that it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen,—what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity. The poet and the historian differ not by writing in verse or in prose. The work of Herodotus might be put into verse, and it would still be a species of history, with metre no less than without it. The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular. By the universal, I mean how a person of a certain type will on occasion speak or act, according to the law of probability or necessity; and it is this universality at which poetry aims in the names she attaches to the personages. The particular is—for example—what Alcibiades did or suffered. In Comedy this is already apparent: for here the poet first constructs the plot on the lines of probability, and then inserts characteristic names;—unlike the lampooners who write about particular individuals. But tragedians still keep to real names, the reason being that what is possible is credible: what has not happened we do not at once feel sure to be possible: but what has happened is manifestly possible: otherwise it would not have happened. Still there are even some tragedies in which

there are only one or two well known names, the rest being fictitious. In others, none are well known, as in Agathon's *Antheus*, where incidents and names alike are fictitious, and yet they give none the less pleasure. We must not, therefore, at all costs keep to the received legends, which are the usual subjects of Tragedy. Indeed, it would be absurd to attempt it; for even subjects that are known are known only to a few, and yet give pleasure to all. It clearly follows that the poet or 'maker' should be the maker of plots rather than of verses; since he is a poet because he imitates, and what he imitates are actions. And even if he chances to take an historical subject, he is none the less a poet; for there is no reason why some events that have actually happened should not conform to the law of the probable and possible, and in virtue of that quality in them he is their poet or maker.

Of all plots and actions the epeisodic are the worst. I call a plot 'epeisodic' in which the episodes or acts succeed one another without probable or necessary sequence. Bad poets compose such pieces by their own fault, good poets, to please the players; for, as they write show pieces for competition, they stretch the plot beyond its capacity, and are often forced to break the natural continuity.

But again, Tragedy is an imitation not only of a complete action, but of events inspiring fear or pity. Such an effect is best produced when the events come on us by surprise; and the effect is heightened when, at the same time, they follow as cause and effect. The tragic wonder will then be greater than if they happened of themselves or by accident; for even coincidences are most striking when they have an air of design. We may instance the statue of Mityls at Argos, which fell upon his murderer while he was a spectator at a festival, and killed him. Such events seem not to be due to mere chance. Plots, therefore, constructed on these principles are necessarily the best.

X

Plots are either Simple or Complex, for the actions in real life, of which the plots are an imitation, obviously show a similar distinction. An action which is one and continuous in the sense above defined, I call Simple, when the change of fortune takes place without Reversal of the Situation and without Recognition.

A Complex action is one in which the change is accompanied by such Reversal, or by Recognition, or by both. These last should arise from the internal structure of the plot, so that what follows should be the necessary or probable result of the preceding action. It makes all the difference whether any given event is a case of *propter hoc* or *post hoc*.

XI

Reversal of the Situation is a change by which the action veers round to its opposite, subject always to our rule of probability or necessity. Thus in the *Oedipus*, the messenger comes to cheer *Oedipus* and free him from his alarms about his mother, but by revealing who he is, he produces the opposite effect. Again in the *Lynceus*, *Lynceus* is being led away to his death, and *Danaus* goes with him, meaning, to slay him; but the outcome of the preceding incidents is that *Danaus* is killed and *Lynceus* saved. Recognition, as the name indicates, is a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing love or hate between the persons destined by the poet for good or bad fortune. The best form of recognition is coincident with a Reversal of the Situation, as in the *Oedipus*. There are indeed other forms. Even inanimate things of the most trivial kind may in a sense be objects of recognition. Again, we may recognise or discover whether a person has done a thing or not. But the recognition

which is most intimately connected with the plot and action is, as we have said, the recognition of persons. This recognition, combined, with Reversal, will produce either pity or fear; and actions producing these effects are those which, by our definition, Tragedy represents. Moreover, it is upon such situations that the issues of good or bad fortune will depend. Recognition, then, being between persons, it may happen that one person only is recognised by the other—when the latter is already known—or it may be necessary that the recognition should be on both sides. Thus Iphigenia is revealed to Orestes by the sending of the letter; but another act of recognition is required to make Orestes known to Iphigenia.

Two parts, then, of the Plot—Reversal of the Situation and Recognition—turn upon surprises. A third part is the Scene of Suffering. The Scene of Suffering is a destructive or painful action, such as death on the stage, bodily agony, wounds and the like.

XII

The parts of Tragedy which must be treated as elements of the whole have been already mentioned. We now come to the quantitative parts, and the separate parts into which Tragedy is divided, namely, Prologue, Episode, Exode, Choric song; this last being divided into Parode and Stasimon. These are common to all plays: peculiar to some are the songs of actors from the stage and the Commoi.

The Prologue is that entire part of a tragedy which precedes the Parode of the Chorus. The Episode is that entire part of a tragedy which is between complete choric songs. The Exode is that entire part of a tragedy which has no choric song after it. Of the Choric part the Parode is the first undivided utterance of the Chorus: the Stasimon is a Choric ode without anapaests or trochaic tetrameters: the Commos is a joint lamentation of

Chorus and actors. The parts of Tragedy which must be treated as elements of the whole have been already mentioned. The quantitative parts the separate parts into which it is divided—are here enumerated.

XIII

As the sequel to what has already been said, we must proceed to consider what the poet should aim at, and what he should avoid, in constructing his plots; and by what means the specific effect of Tragedy will be produced.

A perfect tragedy should, as we have seen, be arranged not on the simple but on the complex plan. It should, moreover, imitate actions which excite pity and fear, this being the distinctive mark of tragic imitation. It follows plainly, in the first place, that the change of fortune presented must not be the spectacle of a virtuous man brought from prosperity to adversity: for this moves neither pity nor fear; it merely shocks us. Nor, again, that of a bad man passing from adversity to prosperity: for nothing can be more alien to the spirit of Tragedy; it possesses no single tragic quality; it neither satisfies the moral sense nor calls forth pity or fear. Nor, again, should the downfall of the utter villain be exhibited. A plot of this kind would, doubtless, satisfy the moral sense, but it would inspire neither pity nor fear; for pity is aroused by unmerited misfortune, fear by the misfortune of a man like ourselves. Such an event, therefore, will be neither pitiful nor terrible. There remains, then, the character between these two extremes,—that of a man who is not eminently good and just,—yet whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty. He must be one who is highly renowned and prosperous,—a personage like Oedipus, Thyestes, or other illustrious men of such families.

A well constructed plot should, therefore, be single in its

issue, rather than double as some maintain. The change of fortune should be not from bad to good, but, reversely, from good to bad. It should come about as the result not of vice, but of some great error or frailty, in a character either such as we have described, or better rather than worse. The practice of the stage bears out our view. At first the poets recounted any legend that came in their way. Now, the best tragedies are founded on the story of a few houses, on the fortunes of Alcmaeon, Oedipus, Orestes, Meleager, Thyestes, Telephus, and those others who have done or suffered something terrible. A tragedy, then, to be perfect according to the rules of art should be of this construction. Hence they are in error who censure Euripides just because he follows this principle in his plays, many of which end unhappily. It is, as we have said, the right ending. The best proof is that on the stage and in dramatic competition, such plays, if well worked out, are the most tragic in effect; and Euripides, faulty though he may be in the general management of his subject, yet is felt to be the most tragic of the poets.

In the second rank comes the kind of tragedy which some place first. Like the *Odyssey*, it has a double thread of plot, and also an opposite catastrophe for the good and for the bad. It is accounted the best because of the weakness of the spectators; for the poet is guided in what he writes by the wishes of his audience. The pleasure, however, thence derived is not the true tragic pleasure. It is proper rather to Comedy, where those who, in the piece, are the deadliest enemies—like Orestes and Aegisthus—quit the stage as friends at the close, and no one slays or is slain.

XIV

Fear and pity may be aroused by spectacular means; but they may also result from the inner structure of the piece, which

is the better way, and indicates a superior poet. For the plot ought to be so constructed that, even without the aid of the eye, he who hears the tale told will thrill with horror and melt to pity at what takes place. This is the impression we should receive from hearing the story of the Oedipus. But to produce this effect by the mere spectacle is a less artistic method, and dependent on extraneous aids. Those who employ spectacular means to create a sense not of the terrible but only of the monstrous, are strangers to the purpose of Tragedy; for we must not demand of Tragedy any and every kind of pleasure, but only that which is proper to it. And since the pleasure which the poet should afford is that which comes from pity and fear through imitation, it is evident that this quality must be impressed upon the incidents.

Let us then determine what are the circumstances which strike us as terrible or pitiful.

Actions capable of this effect must happen between persons who are either friends or enemies or indifferent to one another. If an enemy kills an enemy, there is nothing to excite pity either in the act or the intention,—except so far as the suffering in itself is pitiful. So again with indifferent persons. But when the tragic incident occurs between those who are near or dear to one another—if, for example, a brother kills, or intends to kill, a brother, a son his father, a mother her son, a son his mother, or any other deed of the kind is done—these are the situations to be looked for by the poet. He may not indeed destroy the framework of the received legends—the fact, for instance, that Clytemnestra was slain by Orestes and Eriphyle by Alcmaeon but he ought to show invention of his own, and skilfully handle the traditional material. Let us explain more clearly what is meant by skilful handling.

The action may be done consciously and with knowledge of the persons, in the manner of the older poets. It is thus too that Euripides makes Medea slay her children. Or, again, the deed of horror may be done, but done in ignorance, and the tie of

kinship or friendship be discovered afterwards. The Oedipus of Sophocles is an example. Here, indeed, the incident is outside the drama proper; but cases occur where it falls within the action of the play: one may cite the Alcmaeon of Astydamas, or Telegonus in the Wounded Odysseus. Again, there is a third case,— (to be about to act with knowledge of the persons and then not to act. The fourth case is) when some one is about to do an irreparable deed through ignorance, and makes the discovery before it is done. These are the only possible ways. For the deed must either be done or not done,—and that wittingly or unwittingly. But of all these ways, to be about to act knowing the persons, and then not to act, is the worst. It is shocking without being tragic, for no disaster follows. It is, therefore, never, or very rarely, found in poetry. One instance, however, is in the Antigone, where Haemon threatens to kill Creon. The next and better way is that the deed should be perpetrated. Still better, that it should be perpetrated in ignorance, and the discovery made afterwards. There is then nothing to shock us, while the discovery produces a startling effect. The last case is the best, as when in the Cresphontes Merope is about to slay her son, but, recognising who he is, spares his life. So in the Iphigenia, the sister recognises the brother just in time. Again in the Helle, the son recognises the mother when on the point of giving her up. This, then, is why a few families only, as has been already observed, furnish the subjects of tragedy. It was not art, but happy chance, that led the poets in search of subjects to impress the tragic quality upon their plots. They are compelled, therefore, to have recourse to those houses whose history contains moving incidents like these.

Enough has now been said concerning the structure of the incidents, and the right kind of plot.

XV

In respect of Character there are four things to be aimed at. First, and most important, it must be good. Now any speech or action that manifests moral purpose of any kind will be expressive of character: the character will be good if the purpose is good. This rule is relative to each class. Even a woman may be good, and also a slave; though the woman may be said to be an inferior being, and the slave quite worthless. The second thing to aim at is propriety. There is a type of manly valour; but valour in a woman, or unscrupulous cleverness, is inappropriate. Thirdly, character must be true to life: for this is a distinct thing from goodness and propriety, as here described. The fourth point is consistency: for though the subject of the imitation, who suggested the type, be inconsistent, still he must be consistently inconsistent. As an example of motiveless degradation of character, we have Menelaus in the *Orestes*: of character indecorous and inappropriate, the lament of Odysseus in the *Scylla*, and the speech of Melanippe: of inconsistency, the *Iphigenia at Aulis*,—for *Iphigenia* the suppliant in no way resembles her later self.

As in the structure of the plot, so too in the portraiture of character, the poet should always aim either at the necessary or the probable. Thus a person of a given character should speak or act in a given way, by the rule either of necessity or of probability; just as this event should follow that by necessary or probable sequence. It is therefore evident that the unravelling of the plot, no less than the complication, must arise out of the plot itself, it must not be brought about by the 'Deus ex Machina'—as in the *Medea*, or in the *Return of the Greeks* in the *Iliad*. The 'Deus ex Machina' should be employed only for events external to the drama,—for antecedent or subsequent events, which lie beyond the range of human knowledge, and which require to be reported or foretold; for to the gods we ascribe the power of seeing all things. Within the action there must be

nothing irrational. If the irrational cannot be excluded, it should be outside the scope of the tragedy. Such is the irrational element in the Oedipus of Sophocles.

Again, since Tragedy is an imitation of persons who are above the common level, the example of good portrait-painters should be followed. They, while reproducing the distinctive form of the original, make a likeness which is true to life and yet more beautiful. So too the poet, in representing men who are irascible or indolent, or have other defects of character, should preserve the type and yet ennoble it. In this way Achilles is portrayed by Agathon and Homer.

These then are rules the poet should observe. Nor should he neglect those appeals to the senses, which, though not among the essentials, are the concomitants of poetry; for here too there is much room for error. But of this enough has been said in our published treatises.

2. The Poetics of Aristotle - Section 2

XVI

What Recognition is has been already explained. We will now enumerate its kinds.

First, the least artistic form, which, from poverty of wit, is most commonly employed recognition by signs. Of these some are congenital,—such as ‘the spear which the earth-born race bear on their bodies,’ or the stars introduced by Carcinus in his *Thyestes*. Others are acquired after birth; and of these some are bodily marks, as scars; some external tokens, as necklaces, or the little ark in the Tyro by which the discovery is effected. Even these admit of more or less skilful treatment. Thus in the recognition of Odysseus by his scar, the discovery is made in one way by the nurse, in another by the swineherds. The use of tokens for the express purpose of proof—and, indeed, any formal proof with or without tokens—is a less artistic mode of recognition. A better kind is that which comes about by a turn of incident, as in the Bath Scene in the *Odyssey*.

Next come the recognitions invented at will by the poet, and on that account wanting in art. For example, Orestes in the *Iphigenia* reveals the fact that he is Orestes. She, indeed, makes herself known by the letter; but he, by speaking himself, and saying what the poet, not what the plot requires. This, therefore, is nearly allied to the fault above mentioned:—for Orestes might as well have brought tokens with him. Another similar instance is the ‘voice of the shuttle’ in the *Tereus* of Sophocles.

The third kind depends on memory when the sight of some

object awakens a feeling: as in the Cyprians of Dicaeogenes, where the hero breaks into tears on seeing the picture; or again in the 'Lay of Alcinous,' where Odysseus, hearing the minstrel play the lyre, recalls the past and weeps; and hence the recognition.

The fourth kind is by process of reasoning. Thus in the Choephoroi: 'Some one resembling me has come: no one resembles me but Orestes: therefore Orestes has come.' Such too is the discovery made by Iphigenia in the play of Polyidus the Sophist. It was a natural reflection for Orestes to make, 'So I too must die at the altar like my sister.' So, again, in the Tydeus of Theodectes, the father says, 'I came to find my son, and I lose my own life.' So too in the Phineidae: the women, on seeing the place, inferred their fate:—'Here we are doomed to die, for here we were cast forth.' Again, there is a composite kind of recognition involving false inference on the part of one of the characters, as in the Odysseus Disguised as a Messenger. A said (that no one else was able to bend the bow;... hence B (the disguised Odysseus) imagined that A would) recognise the bow which, in fact, he had not seen; and to bring about a recognition by this means that the expectation A would recognise the bow is false inference.

But, of all recognitions, the best is that which arises from the incidents themselves, where the startling discovery is made by natural means. Such is that in the Oedipus of Sophocles, and in the Iphigenia; for it was natural that Iphigenia should wish to dispatch a letter. These recognitions alone dispense with the artificial aid of tokens or amulets. Next come the recognitions by process of reasoning.

XVII

In constructing the plot and working it out with the proper diction, the poet should place the scene, as far as possible,

before his eyes. In this way, seeing everything with the utmost vividness, as if he were a spectator of the action, he will discover what is in keeping with it, and be most unlikely to overlook inconsistencies. The need of such a rule is shown by the fault found in Carcinus. Amphiaraus was on his way from the temple. This fact escaped the observation of one who did not see the situation. On the stage, however, the piece failed, the audience being offended at the oversight.

Again, the poet should work out his play, to the best of his power, with appropriate gestures; for those who feel emotion are most convincing through natural sympathy with the characters they represent; and one who is agitated storms, one who is angry rages, with the most life-like reality. Hence poetry implies either a happy gift of nature or a strain of madness. In the one case a man can take the mould of any character; in the other, he is lifted out of his proper self.

As for the story, whether the poet takes it ready made or constructs it for himself, he should first sketch its general outline, and then fill in the episodes and amplify in detail. The general plan may be illustrated by the Iphigenia. A young girl is sacrificed; she disappears mysteriously from the eyes of those who sacrificed her; She is transported to another country, where the custom is to offer up all strangers to the goddess. To this ministry she is appointed. Some time later her own brother chances to arrive. The fact that the oracle for some reason ordered him to go there, is outside the general plan of the play. The purpose, again, of his coming is outside the action proper. However, he comes, he is seized, and, when on the point of being sacrificed, reveals who he is. The mode of recognition may be either that of Euripides or of Polyidus, in whose play he exclaims very naturally:—'So it was not my sister only, but I too, who was doomed to be sacrificed'; and by that remark he is saved.

After this, the names being once given, it remains to fill in the episodes. We must see that they are relevant to the action. In

the case of Orestes, for example, there is the madness which led to his capture, and his deliverance by means of the purificatory rite. In the drama, the episodes are short, but it is these that give extension to Epic poetry. Thus the story of the Odyssey can be stated briefly. A certain man is absent from home for many years; he is jealously watched by Poseidon, and left desolate. Meanwhile his home is in a wretched plight—suitors are wasting his substance and plotting against his son. At length, tempest-tost, he himself arrives; he makes certain persons acquainted with him; he attacks the suitors with his own hand, and is himself preserved while he destroys them. This is the essence of the plot; the rest is episode.

XVIII

Every tragedy falls into two parts,—Complication and Unravelling or Denouement. Incidents extraneous to the action are frequently combined with a portion of the action proper, to form the Complication; the rest is the Unravelling. By the Complication I mean all that extends from the beginning of the action to the part which marks the turning-point to good or bad fortune. The Unravelling is that which extends from the beginning of the change to the end. Thus, in the Lynceus of Theodectes, the Complication consists of the incidents presupposed in the drama, the seizure of the child, and then again, The Unravelling extends from the accusation of murder to the end.

There are four kinds of Tragedy, the Complex, depending entirely on Reversal of the Situation and Recognition; the Pathetic (where the motive is passion),—such as the tragedies on Ajax and Ixion; the Ethical (where the motives are ethical),—such as the Phthiotides and the Peleus. The fourth kind is the Simple (We here exclude the purely spectacular element), exemplified by the Phorcidæ, the Prometheus, and

scenes laid in Hades. The poet should endeavour, if possible, to combine all poetic elements; or failing that, the greatest number and those the most important; the more so, in face of the cavilling criticism of the day. For whereas there have hitherto been good poets, each in his own branch, the critics now expect one man to surpass all others in their several lines of excellence.

In speaking of a tragedy as the same or different, the best test to take is the plot. Identity exists where the Complication and Unravelling are the same. Many poets tie the knot well, but unravel it ill. Both arts, however, should always be mastered.

Again, the poet should remember what has been often said, and not make an Epic structure into a Tragedy—by an Epic structure I mean one with a multiplicity of plots—as if, for instance, you were to make a tragedy out of the entire story of the Iliad. In the Epic poem, owing to its length, each part assumes its proper magnitude. In the drama the result is far from answering to the poet's expectation. The proof is that the poets who have dramatised the whole story of the Fall of Troy, instead of selecting portions, like Euripides; or who have taken the whole tale of Niobe, and not a part of her story, like Aeschylus, either fail utterly or meet with poor success on the stage. Even Agathon has been known to fail from this one defect. In his *Reversals of the Situation*, however, he shows a marvellous skill in the effort to hit the popular taste,—to produce a tragic effect that satisfies the moral sense. This effect is produced when the clever rogue, like Sisyphus, is outwitted, or the brave villain defeated. Such an event is probable in Agathon's sense of the word: 'it is probable,' he says, 'that many things should happen contrary to probability.'

The Chorus too should be regarded as one of the actors; it should be an integral part of the whole, and share in the action, in the manner not of Euripides but of Sophocles. As for the later poets, their choral songs pertain as little to the subject of the piece as to that of any other tragedy. They are, therefore, sung

as mere interludes, a practice first begun by Agathon. Yet what difference is there between introducing such choral interludes, and transferring a speech, or even a whole act, from one play to another?

XIX

It remains to speak of Diction and Thought, the other parts of Tragedy having been already discussed. Concerning Thought, we may assume what is said in the Rhetoric, to which inquiry the subject more strictly belongs. Under Thought is included every effect which has to be produced by speech, the subdivisions being,—proof and refutation; the excitation of the feelings, such as pity, fear, anger, and the like; the suggestion of importance or its opposite. Now, it is evident that the dramatic incidents must be treated from the same points of view as the dramatic speeches, when the object is to evoke the sense of pity, fear, importance, or probability. The only difference is, that the incidents should speak for themselves without verbal exposition; while the effects aimed at in speech should be produced by the speaker, and as a result of the speech. For what were the business of a speaker, if the Thought were revealed quite apart from what he says?

Next, as regards Diction. One branch of the inquiry treats of the Modes of Utterance. But this province of knowledge belongs to the art of Delivery and to the masters of that science. It includes, for instance,—what is a command, a prayer, a statement, a threat, a question, an answer, and so forth. To know or not to know these things involves no serious censure upon the poet's art. For who can admit the fault imputed to Homer by Protagoras,—that in the words, 'Sing, goddess, of the wrath,' he gives a command under the idea that he utters a prayer? For to tell some one to do a thing or not to do it is,

he says, a command. We may, therefore, pass this over as an inquiry that belongs to another art, not to poetry.

XX

[Language in general includes the following parts:—Letter, Syllable, Connecting word, Noun, Verb, Inflexion or Case, Sentence or Phrase.

A Letter is an indivisible sound, yet not every such sound, but only one which can form part of a group of sounds. For even brutes utter indivisible sounds, none of which I call a letter. The sound I mean may be either a vowel, a semi-vowel, or a mute. A vowel is that which without impact of tongue or lip has an audible sound. A semi-vowel, that which with such impact has an audible sound, as S and R. A mute, that which with such impact has by itself no sound, but joined to a vowel sound becomes audible, as G and D. These are distinguished according to the form assumed by the mouth and the place where they are produced; according as they are aspirated or smooth, long or short; as they are acute, grave, or of an intermediate tone; which inquiry belongs in detail to the writers on metre.

A Syllable is a non-significant sound, composed of a mute and a vowel: for GR without A is a syllable, as also with A,—GRA. But the investigation of these differences belongs also to metrical science.

A Connecting word is a non-significant sound, which neither causes nor hinders the union of many sounds into one significant sound; it may be placed at either end or in the middle of a sentence. Or, a non-significant sound, which out of several sounds, each of them significant, is capable of forming one significant sound,—as {alpha mu theta iota}, {pi epsilon rho iota}, and the like. Or, a non-significant sound, which marks the beginning, end, or division of a sentence; such, however, that it

cannot correctly stand by itself at the beginning of a sentence, as {mu epsilon nu}, {eta tau omicron iota}, {delta epsilon}.

A Noun is a composite significant sound, not marking time, of which no part is in itself significant: for in double or compound words we do not employ the separate parts as if each were in itself significant. Thus in Theodorus, 'god-given,' the {delta omega rho omicron nu} or 'gift' is not in itself significant.

A Verb is a composite significant sound, marking time, in which, as in the noun, no part is in itself significant. For 'man,' or 'white' does not express the idea of 'when'; but 'he walks,' or 'he has walked' does connote time, present or past.

Inflexion belongs both to the noun and verb, and expresses either the relation 'of,' 'to,' or the like; or that of number, whether one or many, as 'man' or 'men'; or the modes or tones in actual delivery, e.g. a question or a command. 'Did he go?' and 'go' are verbal inflexions of this kind.

A Sentence or Phrase is a composite significant sound, some at least of whose parts are in themselves significant; for not every such group of words consists of verbs and nouns—'the definition of man,' for example—but it may dispense even with the verb. Still it will always have some significant part, as 'in walking,' or 'Cleon son of Cleon.' A sentence or phrase may form a unity in two ways,—either as signifying one thing, or as consisting of several parts linked together. Thus the Iliad is one by the linking together of parts, the definition of man by the unity of the thing signified.]

XXI

Words are of two kinds, simple and double. By simple I mean those composed of non-significant elements, such as {gamma eta}. By double or compound, those composed either of a significant and non-significant element (though within the

whole word no element is significant), or of elements that are both significant. A word may likewise be triple, quadruple, or multiple in form, like so many Massilian expressions, e.g. 'Hermo-caico-xanthus who prayed to Father Zeus.'

Every word is either current, or strange, or metaphorical, or ornamental, or newly-coined, or lengthened, or contracted, or altered.

By a current or proper word I mean one which is in general use among a people; by a strange word, one which is in use in another country. Plainly, therefore, the same word may be at once strange and current, but not in relation to the same people. The word {sigma iota gamma upsilon nu omicron nu}, 'lance,' is to the Cyprians a current term but to us a strange one.

Metaphor is the application of an alien name by transference either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or by analogy, that is, proportion. Thus from genus to species, as: 'There lies my ship'; for lying at anchor is a species of lying. From species to genus, as: 'Verily ten thousand noble deeds hath Odysseus wrought'; for ten thousand is a species of large number, and is here used for a large number generally. From species to species, as: 'With blade of bronze drew away the life,' and 'Cleft the water with the vessel of unyielding bronze.' Here {alpha rho upsilon rho alpha iota}, 'to draw away,' is used for {tau alpha mu epsilon iota nu}, 'to cleave,' and {tau alpha mu epsilon iota nu} again for {alpha rho upsilon alpha iota},—each being a species of taking away. Analogy or proportion is when the second term is to the first as the fourth to the third. We may then use the fourth for the second, or the second for the fourth. Sometimes too we qualify the metaphor by adding the term to which the proper word is relative. Thus the cup is to Dionysus as the shield to Ares. The cup may, therefore, be called 'the shield of Dionysus,' and the shield 'the cup of Ares.' Or, again, as old age is to life, so is evening to day. Evening may therefore be called 'the old age of the day,' and old age, 'the evening of life,' or, in the phrase of Empedocles,

'life's setting sun.' For some of the terms of the proportion there is at times no word in existence; still the metaphor may be used. For instance, to scatter seed is called sowing: but the action of the sun in scattering his rays is nameless. Still this process bears to the sun the same relation as sowing to the seed. Hence the expression of the poet 'sowing the god-created light.' There is another way in which this kind of metaphor may be employed. We may apply an alien term, and then deny of that term one of its proper attributes; as if we were to call the shield, not 'the cup of Ares,' but 'the wineless cup.'

{An ornamental word...}

A newly-coined word is one which has never been even in local use, but is adopted by the poet himself. Some such words there appear to be: as {epsilon rho nu upsilon gamma epsilon sigma}, 'sprouters,' for {kappa epsilon rho alpha tau alpha}, 'horns,' and {alpha rho eta tau eta rho}, 'supplicator,' for {iota epsilon rho epsilon upsilon sigma}, 'priest.'

A word is lengthened when its own vowel is exchanged for a longer one, or when a syllable is inserted. A word is contracted when some part of it is removed. Instances of lengthening are,—{pi omicron lambda eta omicron sigma} for {pi omicron lambda epsilon omega sigma}, and {Pi eta lambda eta iota alpha delta epsilon omega} for {Pi eta lambda epsilon iota delta omicron upsilon}: of contraction,—{kappa rho iota}, {delta omega}, and {omicron psi}, as in {mu iota alpha / gamma iota nu epsilon tau alpha iota / alpha mu phi omicron tau epsilon rho omega nu / omicron psi}.

An altered word is one in which part of the ordinary form is left unchanged, and part is re-cast; as in {delta epsilon xi iota-tau epsilon rho omicron nu / kappa alpha tau alpha / mu alpha zeta omicron nu}, {delta epsilon xi iota tau epsilon rho omicron nu} is for {delta epsilon xi iota omicron nu}.

[Nouns in themselves are either masculine, feminine, or neuter. Masculine are such as end in {nu}, {rho}, {sigma}, or in some letter compounded with {sigma},—these being two,

and {xi}. Feminine, such as end in vowels that are always long, namely {eta} and {omega}, and—of vowels that admit of lengthening—those in {alpha}. Thus the number of letters in which nouns masculine and feminine end is the same; for {psi} and {xi} are equivalent to endings in {sigma}. No noun ends in a mute or a vowel short by nature. Three only end in {iota},—{mu eta lambda iota}, {kappa omicron mu mu iota}, {pi epsilon pi epsilon rho iota}: five end in {upsilon}. Neuter nouns end in these two latter vowels; also in {nu} and {sigma}.]

XXII

The perfection of style is to be clear without being mean. The clearest style is that which uses only current or proper words; at the same time it is mean:—witness the poetry of Cleophon and of Sthenelus. That diction, on the other hand, is lofty and raised above the commonplace which employs unusual words. By unusual, I mean strange (or rare) words, metaphorical, lengthened,—anything, in short, that differs from the normal idiom. Yet a style wholly composed of such words is either a riddle or a jargon; a riddle, if it consists of metaphors; a jargon, if it consists of strange (or rare) words. For the essence of a riddle is to express true facts under impossible combinations. Now this cannot be done by any arrangement of ordinary words, but by the use of metaphor it can. Such is the riddle:—‘A man I saw who on another man had glued the bronze by aid of fire,’ and others of the same kind. A diction that is made up of strange (or rare) terms is a jargon. A certain infusion, therefore, of these elements is necessary to style; for the strange (or rare) word, the metaphorical, the ornamental, and the other kinds above mentioned, will raise it above the commonplace and mean, while the use of proper words will make it perspicuous. But nothing contributes more to produce a clearness of diction that is remote from commonness than the lengthening,

contraction, and alteration of words. For by deviating in exceptional cases from the normal idiom, the language will gain distinction; while, at the same time, the partial conformity with usage will give perspicuity. The critics, therefore, are in error who censure these licenses of speech, and hold the author up to ridicule. Thus Eucleides, the elder, declared that it would be an easy matter to be a poet if you might lengthen syllables at will. He caricatured the practice in the very form of his diction, as in the verse: '{Epsilon pi iota chi alpha rho eta nu / epsilon iota delta omicron nu / Mu alpha rho alpha theta omega nu alpha delta epsilon / Beta alpha delta iota zeta omicron nu tau alpha}', or, {omicron upsilon kappa / alpha nu / gamma / epsilon rho alpha mu epsilon nu omicron sigma / tau omicron nu / epsilon kappa epsilon iota nu omicron upsilon / epsilon lambda lambda epsilon beta omicron rho omicron nu}. To employ such license at all obtrusively is, no doubt, grotesque; but in any mode of poetic diction there must be moderation. Even metaphors, strange (or rare) words, or any similar forms of speech, would produce the like effect if used without propriety and with the express purpose of being ludicrous. How great a difference is made by the appropriate use of lengthening, may be seen in Epic poetry by the insertion of ordinary forms in the verse. So, again, if we take a strange (or rare) word, a metaphor, or any similar mode of expression, and replace it by the current or proper term, the truth of our observation will be manifest. For example Aeschylus and Euripides each composed the same iambic line. But the alteration of a single word by Euripides, who employed the rarer term instead of the ordinary one, makes one verse appear beautiful and the other trivial. Aeschylus in his *Philoctetes* says: {Phi alpha gamma epsilon delta alpha iota nu alpha / delta / eta / mu omicron upsilon / sigma alpha rho kappa alpha sigma / epsilon rho theta iota epsilon iota / pi omicron delta omicron sigma}.

Euripides substitutes {Theta omicron iota nu alpha tau alpha

iota} 'feasts on' for {epsilon sigma theta iota epsilon iota} 'feeds on.' Again, in the line, {nu upsilon nu / delta epsilon / mu / epsilon omega nu / omicron lambda iota gamma iota gamma upsilon sigma / tau epsilon / kappa alpha iota / omicron upsilon tau iota delta alpha nu omicron sigma / kappa alpha iota / alpha epsilon iota kappa eta sigma}, the difference will be felt if we substitute the common words, {nu upsilon nu / delta epsilon / mu / epsilon omega nu / mu iota kappa rho omicron sigma / tau epsilon / kappa alpha iota / alpha rho theta epsilon nu iota kappa omicron sigma / kappa alpha iota / alpha epsilon iota delta gamma sigma}. Or, if for the line, {delta iota phi rho omicron nu / alpha epsilon iota kappa epsilon lambda iota omicron nu / kappa alpha tau alpha theta epsilon iota sigma / omicron lambda iota gamma eta nu / tau epsilon / tau rho alpha pi epsilon iota sigma / omicron lambda iota gamma eta nu / tau epsilon / tau rho alpha pi epsilon zeta alpha nu,} We read, {delta iota phi rho omicron nu / mu omicron chi theta eta rho omicron nu / kappa alpha tau alpha theta epsilon iota sigma / mu iota kappa rho alpha nu / tau epsilon / tau rho alpha pi epsilon zeta alpha nu}.

Or, for {eta iota omicron nu epsilon sigma / beta omicron omicron omega rho iota nu, eta iota omicron nu epsilon sigma kappa rho alpha zeta omicron upsilon rho iota nu}

Again, Ariphrades ridiculed the tragedians for using phrases which no one would employ in ordinary speech: for example, {delta omega mu alpha tau omega nu / alpha pi omicron} instead of {alpha pi omicron / delta omega mu alpha tau omega nu}, {rho epsilon theta epsilon nu}, {epsilon gamma omega / delta epsilon / nu iota nu}, {Alpha chi iota lambda lambda epsilon omega sigma / pi epsilon rho iota} instead of {pi epsilon rho iota / 'Alpha chi iota lambda lambda epsilon omega sigma}, and the like. It is precisely because such phrases are not part of the current idiom that they give distinction to the style. This, however, he failed to see.

It is a great matter to observe propriety in these several

modes of expression, as also in compound words, strange (or rare) words, and so forth. But the greatest thing by far is to have a command of metaphor. This alone cannot be imparted by another; it is the mark of genius, for to make good metaphors implies an eye for resemblances.

Of the various kinds of words, the compound are best adapted to Dithyrambs, rare words to heroic poetry, metaphors to iambic. In heroic poetry, indeed, all these varieties are serviceable. But in iambic verse, which reproduces, as far as may be, familiar speech, the most appropriate words are those which are found even in prose. These are,—the current or proper, the metaphorical, the ornamental.

Concerning Tragedy and imitation by means of action this may suffice.

XXIII

As to that poetic imitation which is narrative in form and employs a single metre, the plot manifestly ought, as in a tragedy, to be constructed on dramatic principles. It should have for its subject a single action, whole and complete, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. It will thus resemble a living organism in all its unity, and produce the pleasure proper to it. It will differ in structure from historical compositions, which of necessity present not a single action, but a single period, and all that happened within that period to one person or to many, little connected together as the events may be. For as the sea-fight at Salamis and the battle with the Carthaginians in Sicily took place at the same time, but did not tend to any one result, so in the sequence of events, one thing sometimes follows another, and yet no single result is thereby produced. Such is the practice, we may say, of most poets. Here again, then, as has been already observed, the transcendent excellence of Homer is manifest. He never attempts to make the whole war

of Troy the subject of his poem, though that war had a beginning and an end. It would have been too vast a theme, and not easily embraced in a single view. If, again, he had kept it within moderate limits, it must have been over-complicated by the variety of the incidents. As it is, he detaches a single portion, and admits as episodes many events from the general story of the war—such as the Catalogue of the ships and others—thus diversifying the poem. All other poets take a single hero, a single period, or an action single indeed, but with a multiplicity of parts. Thus did the author of the *Cypria* and of the *Little Iliad*. For this reason the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* each furnish the subject of one tragedy, or, at most, of two; while the *Cypria* supplies materials for many, and the *Little Iliad* for eight—the *Award of the Arms*, the *Philoctetes*, the *Neoptolemus*, the *Eurypylus*, the *Mendicant Odysseus*, the *Laconian Women*, the *Fall of Ilium*, the *Departure of the Fleet*.

XXIV

Again, Epic poetry must have as many kinds as Tragedy: it must be simple, or complex, or 'ethical,' or 'pathetic.' The parts also, with the exception of song and spectacle, are the same; for it requires Reversals of the Situation, Recognitions, and Scenes of Suffering. Moreover, the thoughts and the diction must be artistic. In all these respects Homer is our earliest and sufficient model. Indeed each of his poems has a twofold character. The *Iliad* is at once simple and 'pathetic,' and the *Odyssey* complex (for Recognition scenes run through it), and at the same time 'ethical.' Moreover, in diction and thought they are supreme.

Epic poetry differs from Tragedy in the scale on which it is constructed, and in its metre. As regards scale or length, we have already laid down an adequate limit:—the beginning and the end must be capable of being brought within a single view. This condition will be satisfied by poems on a smaller scale

than the old epics, and answering in length to the group of tragedies presented at a single sitting.

Epic poetry has, however, a great—a special—capacity for enlarging its dimensions, and we can see the reason. In Tragedy we cannot imitate several lines of actions carried on at one and the same time; we must confine ourselves to the action on the stage and the part taken by the players. But in Epic poetry, owing to the narrative form, many events simultaneously transacted can be presented; and these, if relevant to the subject, add mass and dignity to the poem. The Epic has here an advantage, and one that conduces to grandeur of effect, to diverting the mind of the hearer, and relieving the story with varying episodes. For sameness of incident soon produces satiety, and makes tragedies fail on the stage.

As for the metre, the heroic measure has proved its fitness by the test of experience. If a narrative poem in any other metre or in many metres were now composed, it would be found incongruous. For of all measures the heroic is the stateliest and the most massive; and hence it most readily admits rare words and metaphors, which is another point in which the narrative form of imitation stands alone. On the other hand, the iambic and the trochaic tetrameter are stirring measures, the latter being akin to dancing, the former expressive of action. Still more absurd would it be to mix together different metres, as was done by Chaeremon. Hence no one has ever composed a poem on a great scale in any other than heroic verse. Nature herself, as we have said, teaches the choice of the proper measure.

Homer, admirable in all respects, has the special merit of being the only poet who rightly appreciates the part he should take himself. The poet should speak as little as possible in his own person, for it is not this that makes him an imitator. Other poets appear themselves upon the scene throughout, and imitate but little and rarely. Homer, after a few prefatory words,

at once brings in a man, or woman, or other personage; none of them wanting in characteristic qualities, but each with a character of his own.

The element of the wonderful is required in Tragedy. The irrational, on which the wonderful depends for its chief effects, has wider scope in Epic poetry, because there the person acting is not seen. Thus, the pursuit of Hector would be ludicrous if placed upon the stage—the Greeks standing still and not joining in the pursuit, and Achilles waving them back. But in the Epic poem the absurdity passes unnoticed. Now the wonderful is pleasing: as may be inferred from the fact that every one tells a story with some addition of his own, knowing that his hearers like it. It is Homer who has chiefly taught other poets the art of telling lies skilfully. The secret of it lies in a fallacy, For, assuming that if one thing is or becomes, a second is or becomes, men imagine that, if the second is, the first likewise is or becomes. But this is a false inference. Hence, where the first thing is untrue, it is quite unnecessary, provided the second be true, to add that the first is or has become. For the mind, knowing the second to be true, falsely infers the truth of the first. There is an example of this in the Bath Scene of the *Odyssey*.

Accordingly, the poet should prefer probable impossibilities to improbable possibilities. The tragic plot must not be composed of irrational parts. Everything irrational should, if possible, be excluded; or, at all events, it should lie outside the action of the play (as, in the *Oedipus*, the hero's ignorance as to the manner of Laius' death); not within the drama,—as in the *Electra*, the messenger's account of the Pythian games; or, as in the *Mysians*, the man who has come from Tegea to Mysia and is still speechless. The plea that otherwise the plot would have been ruined, is ridiculous; such a plot should not in the first instance be constructed. But once the irrational has been introduced and an air of likelihood imparted to it, we must accept it in spite of the absurdity. Take even the irrational

incidents in the *Odyssey*, where Odysseus is left upon the shore of Ithaca. How intolerable even these might have been would be apparent if an inferior poet were to treat the subject. As it is, the absurdity is veiled by the poetic charm with which the poet invests it.

The diction should be elaborated in the pauses of the action, where there is no expression of character or thought. For, conversely, character and thought are merely obscured by a diction that is over brilliant.

XXV

With respect to critical difficulties and their solutions, the number and nature of the sources from which they may be drawn may be thus exhibited.

The poet being an imitator, like a painter or any other artist, must of necessity imitate one of three objects,—things as they were or are, things as they are said or thought to be, or things as they ought to be. The vehicle of expression is language,—either current terms or, it may be, rare words or metaphors. There are also many modifications of language, which we concede to the poets. Add to this, that the standard of correctness is not the same in poetry and politics, any more than in poetry and any other art. Within the art of poetry itself there are two kinds of faults, those which touch its essence, and those which are accidental. If a poet has chosen to imitate something, (but has imitated it incorrectly) through want of capacity, the error is inherent in the poetry. But if the failure is due to a wrong choice if he has represented a horse as throwing out both his off legs at once, or introduced technical inaccuracies in medicine, for example, or in any other art the error is not essential to the poetry. These are the points of view from which we should consider and answer the objections raised by the critics.

First as to matters which concern the poet's own art. If he describes the impossible, he is guilty of an error; but the error may be justified, if the end of the art be thereby attained (the end being that already mentioned), if, that is, the effect of this or any other part of the poem is thus rendered more striking. A case in point is the pursuit of Hector. If, however, the end might have been as well, or better, attained without violating the special rules of the poetic art, the error is not justified: for every kind of error should, if possible, be avoided.

Again, does the error touch the essentials of the poetic art, or some accident of it? For example,—not to know that a hind has no horns is a less serious matter than to paint it inartistically.

Further, if it be objected that the description is not true to fact, the poet may perhaps reply,—‘But the objects are as they ought to be’: just as Sophocles said that he drew men as they ought to be; Euripides, as they are. In this way the objection may be met. If, however, the representation be of neither kind, the poet may answer,—‘This is how men say the thing is.’ This applies to tales about the gods. It may well be that these stories are not higher than fact nor yet true to fact: they are, very possibly, what Xenophanes says of them. But anyhow, ‘this is what is said.’ Again, a description may be no better than the fact: ‘still, it was the fact’; as in the passage about the arms: ‘Upright upon their butt-ends stood the spears.’ This was the custom then, as it now is among the Illyrians.

Again, in examining whether what has been said or done by some one is poetically right or not, we must not look merely to the particular act or saying, and ask whether it is poetically good or bad. We must also consider by whom it is said or done, to whom, when, by what means, or for what end; whether, for instance, it be to secure a greater good, or avert a greater evil.

Other difficulties may be resolved by due regard to the usage of language. We may note a rare word, as in {omicron upsilon rho eta alpha sigma / mu epsilon nu / pi rho omega tau omicron nu}, where the poet perhaps employs {omicron

upsilon rho eta alpha sigma} not in the sense of mules, but of sentinels. So, again, of Dolon: 'ill-favoured indeed he was to look upon.' It is not meant that his body was ill-shaped, but that his face was ugly; for the Cretans use the word {epsilon upsilon epsilon iota delta epsilon sigma}, 'well-favoured,' to denote a fair face. Again, {zeta omega rho omicron tau epsilon rho omicron nu / delta epsilon / kappa epsilon rho alpha iota epsilon}, 'mix the drink livelier,' does not mean 'mix it stronger' as for hard drinkers, but 'mix it quicker.'

Sometimes an expression is metaphorical, as 'Now all gods and men were sleeping through the night,'—while at the same time the poet says: 'Often indeed as he turned his gaze to the Trojan plain, he marvelled at the sound of flutes and pipes.' 'All' is here used metaphorically for 'many,' all being a species of many. So in the verse,—'alone she hath no part....,' {omicron iota eta}, 'alone,' is metaphorical; for the best known may be called the only one.

Again, the solution may depend upon accent or breathing. Thus Hippias of Thasos solved the difficulties in the lines,—{delta iota delta omicron mu epsilon nu (delta iota delta omicron mu epsilon nu) delta epsilon / omicron iota,} and {tau omicron / mu epsilon nu / omicron upsilon (omicron upsilon) kappa alpha tau alpha pi upsilon theta epsilon tau alpha iota / omicron mu beta rho omega}.

Or again, the question may be solved by punctuation, as in Empedocles,—'Of a sudden things became mortal that before had learnt to be immortal, and things unmixed before mixed.'

Or again, by ambiguity of meaning,—as {pi alpha rho omega chi eta kappa epsilon nu / delta epsilon / pi lambda epsilon omega / nu upsilon xi}, where the word {pi lambda epsilon omega} is ambiguous.

Or by the usage of language. Thus any mixed drink is called {omicron iota nu omicron sigma}, 'wine.' Hence Ganymede is said 'to pour the wine to Zeus,' though the gods do not drink wine. So too workers in iron are called {chi alpha lambda kappa

epsilon alpha sigma], or workers in bronze. This, however, may also be taken as a metaphor.

Again, when a word seems to involve some inconsistency of meaning, we should consider how many senses it may bear in the particular passage. For example: 'there was stayed the spear of bronze'—we should ask in how many ways we may take 'being checked there.' The true mode of interpretation is the precise opposite of what Glaucon mentions. Critics, he says, jump at certain groundless conclusions; they pass adverse judgment and then proceed to reason on it; and, assuming that the poet has said whatever they happen to think, find fault if a thing is inconsistent with their own fancy. The question about Icarius has been treated in this fashion. The critics imagine he was a Lacedaemonian. They think it strange, therefore, that Telemachus should not have met him when he went to Lacedaemon. But the Cephallenian story may perhaps be the true one. They allege that Odysseus took a wife from among themselves, and that her father was Icadius not Icarius. It is merely a mistake, then, that gives plausibility to the objection.

In general, the impossible must be justified by reference to artistic requirements, or to the higher reality, or to received opinion. With respect to the requirements of art, a probable impossibility is to be preferred to a thing improbable and yet possible. Again, it may be impossible that there should be men such as Zeuxis painted. 'Yes,' we say, 'but the impossible is the higher thing; for the ideal type must surpass the reality.' To justify the irrational, we appeal to what is commonly said to be. In addition to which, we urge that the irrational sometimes does not violate reason; just as 'it is probable that a thing may happen contrary to probability.'

Things that sound contradictory should be examined by the same rules as in dialectical refutation whether the same thing is meant, in the same relation, and in the same sense. We should therefore solve the question by reference to what the

poet says himself, or to what is tacitly assumed by a person of intelligence.

The element of the irrational, and, similarly, depravity of character, are justly censured when there is no inner necessity for introducing them. Such is the irrational element in the introduction of Aegeus by Euripides and the badness of Menelaus in the Orestes.

Thus, there are five sources from which critical objections are drawn. Things are censured either as impossible, or irrational, or morally hurtful, or contradictory, or contrary to artistic correctness. The answers should be sought under the twelve heads above mentioned.

XXVI

The question may be raised whether the Epic or Tragic mode of imitation is the higher. If the more refined art is the higher, and the more refined in every case is that which appeals to the better sort of audience, the art which imitates anything and everything is manifestly most unrefined. The audience is supposed to be too dull to comprehend unless something of their own is thrown in by the performers, who therefore indulge in restless movements. Bad flute-players twist and twirl, if they have to represent 'the quoit-throw,' or hustle the coryphaeus when they perform the 'Scylla.' Tragedy, it is said, has this same defect. We may compare the opinion that the older actors entertained of their successors. Mynniscus used to call Callippides 'ape' on account of the extravagance of his action, and the same view was held of Pindarus. Tragic art, then, as a whole, stands to Epic in the same relation as the younger to the elder actors. So we are told that Epic poetry is addressed to a cultivated audience, who do not need gesture; Tragedy, to an inferior public. Being then unrefined, it is evidently the lower of the two.

Now, in the first place, this censure attaches not to the poetic but to the histrionic art; for gesticulation may be equally overdone in epic recitation, as by Sosi-stratus, or in lyrical competition, as by Mnasitheus the Opuntian. Next, all action is not to be condemned any more than all dancing—but only that of bad performers. Such was the fault found in Callippides, as also in others of our own day, who are censured for representing degraded women. Again, Tragedy like Epic poetry produces its effect even without action; it reveals its power by mere reading. If, then, in all other respects it is superior, this fault, we say, is not inherent in it.

And superior it is, because it has all the epic elements—it may even use the epic metre—with the music and spectacular effects as important accessories; and these produce the most vivid of pleasures. Further, it has vividness of impression in reading as well as in representation. Moreover, the art attains its end within narrower limits; for the concentrated effect is more pleasurable than one which is spread over a long time and so diluted. What, for example, would be the effect of the Oedipus of Sophocles, if it were cast into a form as long as the Iliad? Once more, the Epic imitation has less unity; as is shown by this, that any Epic poem will furnish subjects for several tragedies. Thus if the story adopted by the poet has a strict unity, it must either be concisely told and appear truncated; or, if it conform to the Epic canon of length, it must seem weak and watery. (Such length implies some loss of unity,) if, I mean, the poem is constructed out of several actions, like the Iliad and the Odyssey, which have many such parts, each with a certain magnitude of its own. Yet these poems are as perfect as possible in structure; each is, in the highest degree attainable, an imitation of a single action.

If, then, Tragedy is superior to Epic poetry in all these respects, and, moreover, fulfils its specific function better as an art for each art ought to produce, not any chance pleasure, but

the pleasure proper to it, as already stated it plainly follows that Tragedy is the higher art, as attaining its end more perfectly.

Thus much may suffice concerning Tragic and Epic poetry in general; their several kinds and parts, with the number of each and their differences; the causes that make a poem good or bad; the objections of the critics and the answers to these objections.

PART II

OEDIPUS

3. Oedipus the King - Part I

Oedipus the King

By Sophocles

Translation by F. Storr, BA

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Argument

o Laius, King of Thebes, an oracle foretold that the child born to him by his queen Jocasta would slay his father and wed his mother. So when in time a son was born the infant's feet were riveted together and he was left to die on Mount Cithaeron. But a shepherd found the babe and tended him, and delivered him to another shepherd who took him to his master, the King of Corinth. Polybus being childless adopted the boy, who grew up believing that he was indeed the King's son. Afterwards doubting his parentage he inquired of the Delphic god and heard himself the word declared before to Laius. Wherefore he fled from what he deemed his father's house and in his flight he encountered and unwillingly slew his father Laius. Arriving at Thebes he answered the riddle of the Sphinx and the grateful Thebans made their deliverer king. So he reigned in the room of Laius, and espoused the widowed queen. Children were born to them and Thebes prospered under his rule, but again a grievous plague fell upon the city. Again the

oracle was consulted and it bade them purge themselves of blood-guiltiness. Oedipus denounces the crime of which he is unaware, and undertakes to track out the criminal. Step by step it is brought home to him that he is the man. The closing scene reveals Jocasta slain by her own hand and Oedipus blinded by his own act and praying for death or exile.

Dramatis Personae

Oedipus.

The Priest of Zeus.

Creon.

Chorus of Theban Elders.

Teiresias.

Jocasta.

Messenger.

HEard of Laius.

Second Messenger.

Scene

Thebes. Before the Palace of Oedipus.

Suppliants of all ages are seated round the altar at the palace
at their head a PRIEST OF ZEUS. To them enter OEDIPUS.

OEDIPUS

My children, latest born to Cadmus old,
Why sit ye here as suppliants, in your hands
Branches of olive filleted with wool?
What means this reek of incense everywhere,
And everywhere laments and litanies?

Children, it were not meet that I should learn
From others, and am hither come, myself,
I Oedipus, your world-renowned king.
Ho! aged sire, whose venerable locks
Proclaim thee spokesman of this company,
Explain your mood and purport. Is it dread
Of ill that moves you or a boon ye crave?
My zeal in your behalf ye cannot doubt;
Ruthless indeed were I and obdurate
If such petitioners as you I spurned.

PRIEST

Yea, Oedipus, my sovereign lord and king,
Thou seest how both extremes of age besiege
Thy palace altars—fledglings hardly winged,
and greybeards bowed with years; priests, as am I
of Zeus, and these the flower of our youth.
Meanwhile, the common folk, with wreathed boughs
Crowd our two market-places, or before
Both shrines of Pallas congregate, or where
Ismenus gives his oracles by fire.
For, as thou seest thyself, our ship of State,
Sore buffeted, can no more lift her head,
Foundered beneath a weltering surge of blood.
A blight is on our harvest in the ear,
A blight upon the grazing flocks and herds,
A blight on wives in travail; and withal
Armed with his blazing torch the God of Plague
Hath swooped upon our city emptying
The house of Cadmus, and the murky realm
Of Pluto is full fed with groans and tears.

Therefore, O King, here at thy hearth we sit,
I and these children; not as deeming thee
A new divinity, but the first of men;

First in the common accidents of life,
And first in visitations of the Gods.
Art thou not he who coming to the town
of Cadmus freed us from the tax we paid
To the fell songstress? Nor hadst thou received
Prompting from us or been by others schooled;
No, by a god inspired (so all men deem,
And testify) didst thou renew our life.
And now, O Oedipus, our peerless king,
All we thy votaries beseech thee, find
Some succor, whether by a voice from heaven
Whispered, or haply known by human wit.
Tried counselors, methinks, are aptest found 1
To furnish for the future pregnant rede.
Upraise, O chief of men, upraise our State!
Look to thy laurels! for thy zeal of yore
Our country's savior thou art justly hailed:
O never may we thus record thy reign:-
"He raised us up only to cast us down."
Uplift us, build our city on a rock.
Thy happy star ascendant brought us luck,
O let it not decline! If thou wouldst rule
This land, as now thou reignest, better sure
To rule a peopled than a desert realm.
Nor battlements nor galleys aught avail,
If men to man and guards to guard them tail.

OEDIPUS

Ah! my poor children, known, ah, known too well,
The quest that brings you hither and your need.
Ye sicken all, well wot I, yet my pain,
How great soever yours, outtops it all.
Your sorrow touches each man severally,
Him and none other, but I grieve at once

Both for the general and myself and you.
Therefore ye rouse no sluggard from day-dreams.
Many, my children, are the tears I've wept,
And threaded many a maze of weary thought.
Thus pondering one clue of hope I caught,
And tracked it up; I have sent Menoeceus' son,
Creon, my consort's brother, to inquire
Of Pythian Phoebus at his Delphic shrine,
How I might save the State by act or word.
And now I reckon up the tale of days
Since he set forth, and marvel how he fares.
'Tis strange, this endless tarrying, passing strange.
But when he comes, then I were base indeed,
If I perform not all the god declares.

PRIEST

Thy words are well timed; even as thou speakest
That shouting tells me Creon is at hand.

OEDIPUS

O King Apollo! may his joyous looks
Be presage of the joyous news he brings!

PRIEST

As I surmise, 'tis welcome; else his head
Had scarce been crowned with berry-laden bays.

OEDIPUS

We soon shall know; he's now in earshot range.
[Enter CREON]
My royal cousin, say, Menoeceus' child,

What message hast thou brought us from the god?

CREON

Good news, for e'en intolerable ills,
Finding right issue, tend to naught but good.

OEDIPUS

How runs the oracle? thus far thy words
Give me no ground for confidence or fear.

CREON

If thou wouldst hear my message publicly,
I'll tell thee straight, or with thee pass within.

OEDIPUS

Speak before all; the burden that I bear
Is more for these my subjects than myself.

CREON

Let me report then all the god declared.
King Phoebus bids us straitly extirpate
A fell pollution that infests the land,
And no more harbor an inveterate sore.

OEDIPUS

What expiation means he? What's amiss?

CREON

Banishment, or the shedding blood for blood.
This stain of blood makes shipwreck of our state.

OEDIPUS

Whom can he mean, the miscreant thus denounced?

CREON

Before thou didst assume the helm of State,
The sovereign of this land was Laius.

OEDIPUS

I heard as much, but never saw the man.

CREON

He fell; and now the god's command is plain:
Punish his takers-off, whoe'er they be.

OEDIPUS

Where are they? Where in the wide world to find
The far, faint traces of a bygone crime?

CREON

In this land, said the god; "who seeks shall find;
Who sits with folded hands or sleeps is blind."

OEDIPUS

Was he within his palace, or afield,
Or traveling, when Laius met his fate?

CREON

Abroad; he started, so he told us, bound
For Delphi, but he never thence returned.

OEDIPUS

Came there no news, no fellow-traveler
To give some clue that might be followed up?

CREON

But one escape, who flying for dear life,
Could tell of all he saw but one thing sure.

OEDIPUS

And what was that? One clue might lead us far,
With but a spark of hope to guide our quest.

CREON

Robbers, he told us, not one bandit but
A troop of knaves, attacked and murdered him.

OEDIPUS

Did any bandit dare so bold a stroke,
Unless indeed he were suborned from Thebes?

CREON

So 'twas surmised, but none was found to avenge
His murder mid the trouble that ensued.

OEDIPUS

What trouble can have hindered a full quest,
When royalty had fallen thus miserably?

CREON

The riddling Sphinx compelled us to let slide
The dim past and attend to instant needs.

OEDIPUS

Well, *I* will start afresh and once again
Make dark things clear. Right worthy the concern
Of Phoebus, worthy thine too, for the dead;
I also, as is meet, will lend my aid
To avenge this wrong to Thebes and to the god.
Not for some far-off kinsman, but myself,
Shall I expel this poison in the blood;
For whoso slew that king might have a mind
To strike me too with his assassin hand.
Therefore in righting him I serve myself.
Up, children, haste ye, quit these altar stairs,
Take hence your suppliant wands, go summon hither
The Theban commons. With the god's good help
Success is sure; 'tis ruin if we fail.
[Exeunt OEDIPUS and CREON]

PRIEST

Come, children, let us hence; these gracious words
Forestall the very purpose of our suit.
And may the god who sent this oracle
Save us withal and rid us of this pest.

[Exeunt PRIEST and SUPPLIANTS]

CHORUS

(Str. 1)

Sweet-voiced daughter of Zeus from thy gold-paved Pythian shrine

Wafted to Thebes divine,

What dost thou bring me? My soul is racked and shivers with fear

(Healer of Delos, hear!)

Hast thou some pain unknown before,

Or with the circling years renewest a penance of yore?

Offspring of golden Hope, thou voice immortal, O tell me.

(Ant. 1)

First on Athene I call; O Zeus-born goddess, defend!

Goddess and sister, befriend,

Artemis, Lady of Thebes, high-throned in the midst of our mart!

Lord of the death-winged dart!

Your threefold aid I crave

From death and ruin our city to save.

If in the days of old when we might have perished, ye drive

From our land the fiery plague, be near us now and defend us!

(Str. 2)

Ah me, what countless woes are mine!

All our host is in decline;

Weaponless my spirit lies.

Earth her gracious fruits denies;

Women wail in barren throes;

Life on life downstricken goes,

Swifter than the wind bird's flight,

Swifter than the Fire-God's might,

To the westering shores of Night.

(Ant. 2)

Wasted thus by death on death
All our city perisheth.
Corpses spread infection round;
None to tend or mourn is found.
Wailing on the altar stair
Wives and grandams rend the air—
Long-drawn moans and piercing cries
Blent with prayers and litanies.
Golden child of Zeus, O hear
Let thine angel face appear!

(Str. 3)

And grant that Ares whose hot breath I feel,
 Though without targe or steel
He stalks, whose voice is as the battle shout,
May turn in sudden rout,
To the unharbored Thracian waters sped,
 Or Amphitrite's bed.
 For what night leaves undone,
 Smit by the morrow's sun
Perisheth. Father Zeus, whose hand
Doth wield the lightning brand,
Slay him beneath thy levin bold, we pray,
 Slay him, O slay!

(Ant. 3)

O that thine arrows too, Lycean King,
 From that taut bow's gold string,
Might fly abroad, the champions of our rights;
 Yea, and the flashing lights

Of Artemis, wherewith the huntress sweeps
 Across the Lycian steeps.
Thee too I call with golden-snooded hair,
 Whose name our land doth bear,
Bacchus to whom thy Maenads Evøe shout;
 Come with thy bright torch, rout,
 Blithe god whom we adore,
 The god whom gods abhor.

[Enter OEDIPUS.]

OEDIPUS

Ye pray; 'tis well, but would ye hear my words
And heed them and apply the remedy,
Ye might perchance find comfort and relief.
Mind you, I speak as one who comes a stranger
To this report, no less than to the crime;
For how unaided could I track it far
Without a clue? Which lacking (for too late
Was I enrolled a citizen of Thebes)
This proclamation I address to all:—
Thebans, if any knows the man by whom
Laius, son of Labdacus, was slain,
I summon him to make clean shrift to me.
And if he shrinks, let him reflect that thus
Confessing he shall 'scape the capital charge;
For the worst penalty that shall befall him
Is banishment—unscathed he shall depart.
But if an alien from a foreign land
Be known to any as the murderer,
Let him who knows speak out, and he shall have
Due recompense from me and thanks to boot.
But if ye still keep silence, if through fear
For self or friends ye disregard my hest,
Hear what I then resolve; I lay my ban

On the assassin whosoe'er he be.
Let no man in this land, whereof I hold
The sovereign rule, harbor or speak to him;
Give him no part in prayer or sacrifice
Or lustral rites, but hound him from your homes.
For this is our defilement, so the god
Hath lately shown to me by oracles.
Thus as their champion I maintain the cause
Both of the god and of the murdered King.
And on the murderer this curse I lay
(On him and all the partners in his guilt):-
Wretch, may he pine in utter wretchedness!
And for myself, if with my privity
He gain admittance to my hearth, I pray
The curse I laid on others fall on me.
See that ye give effect to all my hest,
For my sake and the god's and for our land,
A desert blasted by the wrath of heaven.
For, let alone the god's express command,
It were a scandal ye should leave unpurged
The murder of a great man and your king,
Nor track it home. And now that I am lord,
Successor to his throne, his bed, his wife,
(And had he not been frustrate in the hope
Of issue, common children of one womb
Had forced a closer bond twixt him and me,
But Fate swooped down upon him), therefore I
His blood-avenger will maintain his cause
As though he were my sire, and leave no stone
Unturned to track the assassin or avenge
The son of Labdacus, of Polydore,
Of Cadmus, and Agenor first of the race.
And for the disobedient thus I pray:
May the gods send them neither timely fruits
Of earth, nor teeming increase of the womb,

But may they waste and pine, as now they waste,
Aye and worse stricken; but to all of you,
My loyal subjects who approve my acts,
May Justice, our ally, and all the gods
Be gracious and attend you evermore.

CHORUS

The oath thou profferest, sire, I take and swear.
I slew him not myself, nor can I name
The slayer. For the quest, 'twere well, methinks
That Phoebus, who proposed the riddle, himself
Should give the answer—who the murderer was.

OEDIPUS

Well argued; but no living man can hope
To force the gods to speak against their will.

CHORUS

May I then say what seems next best to me?

OEDIPUS

Aye, if there be a third best, tell it too.

CHORUS

My liege, if any man sees eye to eye
With our lord Phoebus, 'tis our prophet, lord
Teiresias; he of all men best might guide
A searcher of this matter to the light.

OEDIPUS

Here too my zeal has nothing lagged, for twice
At Creon's instance have I sent to fetch him,
And long I marvel why he is not here.

CHORUS

I mind me too of rumors long ago—
Mere gossip.

OEDIPUS

Tell them, I would fain know all.

CHORUS

'Twas said he fell by travelers.

OEDIPUS

So I heard,
But none has seen the man who saw him fall.

CHORUS

Well, if he knows what fear is, he will quail
And flee before the terror of thy curse.

OEDIPUS

Words scare not him who blenches not at deeds.

CHORUS

But here is one to arraign him. Lo, at length

They bring the god-inspired seer in whom
Above all other men is truth inborn.
[Enter TEIRESIAS, led by a boy.]

OEDIPUS

Teiresias, seer who comprehendest all,
Lore of the wise and hidden mysteries,
High things of heaven and low things of the earth,
Thou knowest, though thy blinded eyes see naught,
What plague infects our city; and we turn
To thee, O seer, our one defense and shield.
The purport of the answer that the God
Returned to us who sought his oracle,
The messengers have doubtless told thee—how
One course alone could rid us of the pest,
To find the murderers of Laius,
And slay them or expel them from the land.
Therefore begrudging neither augury
Nor other divination that is thine,
O save thyself, thy country, and thy king,
Save all from this defilement of blood shed.
On thee we rest. This is man's highest end,
To others' service all his powers to lend.

TEIRESIAS

Alas, alas, what misery to be wise
When wisdom profits nothing! This old lore
I had forgotten; else I were not here.

OEDIPUS

What ails thee? Why this melancholy mood?

TEIRESIAS

Let me go home; prevent me not; 'twere best
That thou shouldst bear thy burden and I mine.

OEDIPUS

For shame! no true-born Theban patriot
Would thus withhold the word of prophecy.

TEIRESIAS

Thy words, O king, are wide of the mark, and I
For fear lest I too trip like thee...

OEDIPUS

Oh speak,
Withhold not, I adjure thee, if thou know'st,
Thy knowledge. We are all thy suppliants.

TEIRESIAS

Aye, for ye all are witless, but my voice
Will ne'er reveal my miseries—or thine. 2

OEDIPUS

What then, thou knowest, and yet willst not speak!
Wouldst thou betray us and destroy the State?

TEIRESIAS

I will not vex myself nor thee. Why ask
Thus idly what from me thou shalt not learn?

OEDIPUS

Monster! thy silence would incense a flint.
Will nothing loose thy tongue? Can nothing melt thee,
Or shake thy dogged taciturnity?

TEIRESIAS

Thou blam'st my mood and seest not thine own
Wherewith thou art mated; no, thou taxest me.

OEDIPUS

And who could stay his choler when he heard
How insolently thou dost flout the State?

TEIRESIAS

Well, it will come what will, though I be mute.

OEDIPUS

Since come it must, thy duty is to tell me.

TEIRESIAS

I have no more to say; storm as thou wilt,
And give the rein to all thy pent-up rage.

OEDIPUS

Yea, I am wroth, and will not stint my words,
But speak my whole mind. Thou methinks thou art he,
Who planned the crime, aye, and performed it too,

All save the assassination; and if thou
Hadst not been blind, I had been sworn to boot
That thou alone didst do the bloody deed.

TEIRESIAS

Is it so? Then I charge thee to abide
By thine own proclamation; from this day
Speak not to these or me. Thou art the man,
Thou the accursed polluter of this land.

OEDIPUS

Vile slanderer, thou blurtest forth these taunts,
And think'st forsooth as seer to go scot free.

TEIRESIAS

Yea, I am free, strong in the strength of truth.

OEDIPUS

Who was thy teacher? not methinks thy art.

TEIRESIAS

Thou, goading me against my will to speak.

OEDIPUS

What speech? repeat it and resolve my doubt.

TEIRESIAS

Didst miss my sense wouldst thou goad me on?

OEDIPUS

I but half caught thy meaning; say it again.

TEIRESIAS

I say thou art the murderer of the man
Whose murderer thou pursuest.

OEDIPUS

Thou shalt rue it
Twice to repeat so gross a calumny.

TEIRESIAS

Must I say more to aggravate thy rage?

OEDIPUS

Say all thou wilt; it will be but waste of breath.

TEIRESIAS

I say thou livest with thy nearest kin
In infamy, unwitting in thy shame.

OEDIPUS

Think'st thou for aye unscathed to wag thy tongue?

TEIRESIAS

Yea, if the might of truth can aught prevail.

OEDIPUS

With other men, but not with thee, for thou
In ear, wit, eye, in everything art blind.

TEIRESIAS

Poor fool to utter gibes at me which all
Here present will cast back on thee ere long.

OEDIPUS

Offspring of endless Night, thou hast no power
O'er me or any man who sees the sun.

TEIRESIAS

No, for thy weird is not to fall by me.
I leave to Apollo what concerns the god.

OEDIPUS

Is this a plot of Creon, or thine own?

TEIRESIAS

Not Creon, thou thyself art thine own bane.

OEDIPUS

O wealth and empire and skill by skill
Outwitted in the battlefield of life,
What spite and envy follow in your train!
See, for this crown the State conferred on me.
A gift, a thing I sought not, for this crown
The trusty Creon, my familiar friend,

Hath lain in wait to oust me and suborned
This mountebank, this juggling charlatan,
This tricky beggar-priest, for gain alone
Keen-eyed, but in his proper art stone-blind.
Say, sirrah, hast thou ever proved thyself
A prophet? When the riddling Sphinx was here
Why hadst thou no deliverance for this folk?
And yet the riddle was not to be solved
By guess-work but required the prophet's art;
Wherein thou wast found lacking; neither birds
Nor sign from heaven helped thee, but *I* came,
The simple Oedipus; *I* stopped her mouth
By mother wit, untaught of auguries.
This is the man whom thou wouldst undermine,
In hope to reign with Creon in my stead.
Methinks that thou and thine abettor soon
Will rue your plot to drive the scapegoat out.
Thank thy grey hairs that thou hast still to learn
What chastisement such arrogance deserves.

CHORUS

To us it seems that both the seer and thou,
O Oedipus, have spoken angry words.
This is no time to wrangle but consult
How best we may fulfill the oracle.

TEIRESIAS

King as thou art, free speech at least is mine
To make reply; in this I am thy peer.
I own no lord but Loxias; him I serve
And ne'er can stand enrolled as Creon's man.
Thus then I answer: since thou hast not spared
To twit me with my blindness—thou hast eyes,

Yet see'st not in what misery thou art fallen,
Nor where thou dwellest nor with whom for mate.
Dost know thy lineage? Nay, thou know'st it not,
And all unwitting art a double foe
To thine own kin, the living and the dead;
Aye and the dogging curse of mother and sire
One day shall drive thee, like a two-edged sword,
Beyond our borders, and the eyes that now
See clear shall henceforward endless night.
Ah whither shall thy bitter cry not reach,
What crag in all Cithaeron but shall then
Reverberate thy wail, when thou hast found
With what a hymeneal thou wast borne
Home, but to no fair haven, on the gale!
Aye, and a flood of ills thou guessest not
Shall set thyself and children in one line.
Flout then both Creon and my words, for none
Of mortals shall be stricken worse than thou.

OEDIPUS

Must I endure this fellow's insolence?
A murrain on thee! Get thee hence! Begone
Avaunt! and never cross my threshold more.

TEIRESIAS

I ne'er had come hadst thou not bidden me.

OEDIPUS

I know not thou wouldst utter folly, else
Long hadst thou waited to be summoned here.

TEIRESIAS

Such am I—as it seems to thee a fool,
But to the parents who begat thee, wise.

OEDIPUS

What sayest thou—"parents"? Who begat me, speak?

TEIRESIAS

This day shall be thy birth-day, and thy grave.

OEDIPUS

Thou lov'st to speak in riddles and dark words.

TEIRESIAS

In reading riddles who so skilled as thou?

OEDIPUS

Twit me with that wherein my greatness lies.

TEIRESIAS

And yet this very greatness proved thy bane.

OEDIPUS

No matter if I saved the commonwealth.

TEIRESIAS

'Tis time I left thee. Come, boy, take me home.

OEDIPUS

Aye, take him quickly, for his presence irks
And lets me; gone, thou canst not plague me more.

TEIRESIAS

I go, but first will tell thee why I came.
Thy frown I dread not, for thou canst not harm me.
Hear then: this man whom thou hast sought to arrest
With threats and warrants this long while, the wretch
Who murdered Laius—that man is here.
He passes for an alien in the land
But soon shall prove a Theban, native born.
And yet his fortune brings him little joy;
For blind of seeing, clad in beggar's weeds,
For purple robes, and leaning on his staff,
To a strange land he soon shall grope his way.
And of the children, inmates of his home,
He shall be proved the brother and the sire,
Of her who bare him son and husband both,
Co-partner, and assassin of his sire.
Go in and ponder this, and if thou find
That I have missed the mark, henceforth declare
I have no wit nor skill in prophecy.
[Exeunt TEIRESIAS and OEDIPUS]

CHORUS

(Str. 1)

Who is he by voice immortal named from Pythia's rocky cell,
Doer of foul deeds of bloodshed, horrors that no tongue can tell
A foot for flight he needs
Fleeter than storm-swift steeds,

For on his heels doth follow,
Armed with the lightnings of his Sire, Apollo.
Like sleuth-hounds too
The Fates pursue.

(Ant. 1)

Yea, but now flashed forth the summons from Parnassus' snowy pe
"Near and far the undiscovered doer of this murder seek!"

Now like a sullen bull he roves
Through forest brakes and upland groves,
And vainly seeks to fly
The doom that ever nigh
Flits o'er his head,
Still by the avenging Phoebus sped,
The voice divine,
From Earth's mid shrine.

(Str. 2)

Sore perplexed am I by the words of the master seer.
Are they true, are they false? I know not and bridle my tong
fear,
Fluttered with vague surmise; nor present nor future is clear.
Quarrel of ancient date or in days still near know I none
Twixt the Labdacidan house and our ruler, Polybus' son.
Proof is there none: how then can I challenge our King's good
How in a blood-feud join for an untracked deed of shame?

(Ant. 2)

All wise are Zeus and Apollo, and nothing is hid from their ken
They are gods; and in wits a man may surpass his fellow men;
But that a mortal seer knows more than I know—where
Hath this been proven? Or how without sign assured, can I blam
Him who saved our State when the winged songstress came,
Tested and tried in the light of us all, like gold assayed?

How can I now assent when a crime is on Oedipus laid?

CREON

Friends, countrymen, I learn King Oedipus
Hath laid against me a most grievous charge,
And come to you protesting. If he deems
That I have harmed or injured him in aught
By word or deed in this our present trouble,
I care not to prolong the span of life,
Thus ill-reputed; for the calumny
Hits not a single blot, but blasts my name,
If by the general voice I am denounced
False to the State and false by you my friends.

CHORUS

This taunt, it well may be, was blurted out
In petulance, not spoken advisedly.

CREON

Did any dare pretend that it was I
Prompted the seer to utter a forged charge?

CHORUS

Such things were said; with what intent I know not.

CREON

Were not his wits and vision all astray
When upon me he fixed this monstrous charge?

CHORUS

I know not; to my sovereign's acts I am blind.
But lo, he comes to answer for himself.

[Enter OEDIPUS.]

OEDIPUS

Sirrah, what mak'st thou here? Dost thou presume
To approach my doors, thou brazen-faced rogue,
My murderer and the filcher of my crown?
Come, answer this, didst thou detect in me
Some touch of cowardice or witlessness,
That made thee undertake this enterprise?
I seemed forsooth too simple to perceive
The serpent stealing on me in the dark,
Or else too weak to scotch it when I saw.
This *thou* art witless seeking to possess
Without a following or friends the crown,
A prize that followers and wealth must win.

CREON

Attend me. Thou hast spoken, 'tis my turn
To make reply. Then having heard me, judge.

OEDIPUS

Thou art glib of tongue, but I am slow to learn
Of thee; I know too well thy venomous hate.

CREON

First I would argue out this very point.

OEDIPUS

O argue not that thou art not a rogue.

CREON

If thou dost count a virtue stubbornness,
Unschool'd by reason, thou art much astray.

OEDIPUS

If thou dost hold a kinsman may be wronged,
And no pains follow, thou art much to seek.

CREON

Therein thou judgest rightly, but this wrong
That thou allegest—tell me what it is.

OEDIPUS

Didst thou or didst thou not advise that I
Should call the priest?

CREON

Yes, and I stand to it.

OEDIPUS

Tell me how long is it since Laius...

CREON

Since Laius...? I follow not thy drift.

OEDIPUS

By violent hands was spirited away.

CREON

In the dim past, a many years ago.

OEDIPUS

Did the same prophet then pursue his craft?

CREON

Yes, skilled as now and in no less repute.

OEDIPUS

Did he at that time ever glance at me?

CREON

Not to my knowledge, not when I was by.

OEDIPUS

But was no search and inquisition made?

CREON

Surely full quest was made, but nothing learnt.

OEDIPUS

Why failed the seer to tell his story *then*?

CREON

I know not, and not knowing hold my tongue.

OEDIPUS

This much thou knowest and canst surely tell.

CREON

What's mean'st thou? All I know I will declare.

OEDIPUS

But for thy prompting never had the seer
Ascribed to me the death of Laius.

CREON

If so he thou knowest best; but I
Would put thee to the question in my turn.

OEDIPUS

Question and prove me murderer if thou canst.

CREON

Then let me ask thee, didst thou wed my sister?

OEDIPUS

A fact so plain I cannot well deny.

CREON

And as thy consort queen she shares the throne?

OEDIPUS

I grant her freely all her heart desires.

CREON

And with you twain I share the triple rule?

OEDIPUS

Yea, and it is that proves thee a false friend.

CREON

Not so, if thou wouldst reason with thyself,
As I with myself. First, I bid thee think,
Would any mortal choose a troubled reign
Of terrors rather than secure repose,
If the same power were given him? As for me,
I have no natural craving for the name
Of king, preferring to do kingly deeds,
And so thinks every sober-minded man.
Now all my needs are satisfied through thee,
And I have naught to fear; but were I king,
My acts would oft run counter to my will.
How could a title then have charms for me
Above the sweets of boundless influence?
I am not so infatuate as to grasp
The shadow when I hold the substance fast.
Now all men cry me Godspeed! wish me well,
And every suitor seeks to gain my ear,

If he would hope to win a grace from thee.
Why should I leave the better, choose the worse?
That were sheer madness, and I am not mad.
No such ambition ever tempted me,
Nor would I have a share in such intrigue.
And if thou doubt me, first to Delphi go,
There ascertain if my report was true
Of the god's answer; next investigate
If with the seer I plotted or conspired,
And if it prove so, sentence me to death,
Not by thy voice alone, but mine and thine.
But O condemn me not, without appeal,
On bare suspicion. 'Tis not right to adjudge
Bad men at random good, or good men bad.
I would as lief a man should cast away
The thing he counts most precious, his own life,
As spurn a true friend. Thou wilt learn in time
The truth, for time alone reveals the just;
A villain is detected in a day.

CHORUS

To one who walketh warily his words
Commend themselves; swift counsels are not sure.

OEDIPUS

When with swift strides the stealthy plotter stalks
I must be quick too with my counterplot.
To wait his onset passively, for him
Is sure success, for me assured defeat.

CREON

What then's thy will? To banish me the land?

OEDIPUS

I would not have thee banished, no, but dead,
That men may mark the wages envy reaps.

CREON

I see thou wilt not yield, nor credit me.

OEDIPUS

[None but a fool would credit such as thou.] 3

CREON

Thou art not wise.

OEDIPUS

Wise for myself at least.

CREON

Why not for me too?

OEDIPUS

Why for such a knave?

CREON

Suppose thou lackest sense.

OEDIPUS

Yet kings must rule.

CREON

Not if they rule ill.

OEDIPUS

Oh my Thebans, hear him!

CREON

Thy Thebans? am not I a Theban too?

CHORUS

Cease, princes; lo there comes, and none too soon,
Jocasta from the palace. Who so fit
As peacemaker to reconcile your feud?
[Enter JOCASTA.]

JOCASTA

Misguided princes, why have ye upraised
This wordy wrangle? Are ye not ashamed,
While the whole land lies stricken, thus to voice
Your private injuries? Go in, my lord;
Go home, my brother, and forebear to make
A public scandal of a petty grief.

CREON

My royal sister, Oedipus, thy lord,
Hath bid me choose (O dread alternative!)

An outlaw's exile or a felon's death.

OEDIPUS

Yes, lady; I have caught him practicing
Against my royal person his vile arts.

CREON

May I ne'er speed but die accursed, if I
In any way am guilty of this charge.

JOCASTA

Believe him, I adjure thee, Oedipus,
First for his solemn oath's sake, then for mine,
And for thine elders' sake who wait on thee.

CHORUS

(Str. 1)

Hearken, King, reflect, we pray thee, but not stubborn but rele

OEDIPUS

Say to what should I consent?

CHORUS

Respect a man whose probity and troth
Are known to all and now confirmed by oath.

OEDIPUS

Dost know what grace thou cravest?

CHORUS

Yea, I know.

OEDIPUS

Declare it then and make thy meaning plain.

CHORUS

Brand not a friend whom babbling tongues assail;
Let not suspicion 'gainst his oath prevail.

OEDIPUS

Bethink you that in seeking this ye seek
In very sooth my death or banishment?

CHORUS

No, by the leader of the host divine!

(Str. 2)

Witness, thou Sun, such thought was never mine,
Unblest, unfriended may I perish,
If ever I such wish did cherish!
But O my heart is desolate
Musing on our stricken State,
Doubly fall'n should discord grow
Twixt you twain, to crown our woe.

OEDIPUS

Well, let him go, no matter what it cost me,
Or certain death or shameful banishment,

For your sake I relent, not his; and him,
Where'er he be, my heart shall still abhor.

CREON

Thou art as sullen in thy yielding mood
As in thine anger thou wast truculent.
Such tempers justly plague themselves the most.

OEDIPUS

Leave me in peace and get thee gone.

CREON

I go,
By thee misjudged, but justified by these.
[Exeunt CREON]

CHORUS

(Ant. 1)

Lady, lead indoors thy consort; wherefore longer here delay?

JOCASTA

Tell me first how rose the fray.

CHORUS

Rumors bred unjust suspicious and injustice rankles sore.

JOCASTA

Were both at fault?

CHORUS

Both.

JOCASTA

What was the tale?

CHORUS

Ask me no more. The land is sore distressed;
'Twere better sleeping ills to leave at rest.

OEDIPUS

Strange counsel, friend! I know thou mean'st me well,
And yet would'st mitigate and blunt my zeal.

CHORUS

(Ant. 2)

King, I say it once again,
Witless were I proved, insane,
If I lightly put away
Thee my country's prop and stay,
Pilot who, in danger sought,
To a quiet haven brought
Our distracted State; and now
Who can guide us right but thou?

JOCASTA

Let me too, I adjure thee, know, O king,
What cause has stirred this unrelenting wrath.

OEDIPUS

I will, for thou art more to me than these.
Lady, the cause is Creon and his plots.

JOCASTA

But what provoked the quarrel? make this clear.

OEDIPUS

He points me out as Laius' murderer.

JOCASTA

Of his own knowledge or upon report?

OEDIPUS

He is too cunning to commit himself,
And makes a mouthpiece of a knavish seer.

JOCASTA

Then thou mayest ease thy conscience on that score.
Listen and I'll convince thee that no man
Hath scot or lot in the prophetic art.
Here is the proof in brief. An oracle
Once came to Laius (I will not say
'Twas from the Delphic god himself, but from
His ministers) declaring he was doomed
To perish by the hand of his own son,
A child that should be born to him by me.
Now Laius—so at least report affirmed—

Was murdered on a day by highwaymen,
No natives, at a spot where three roads meet.
As for the child, it was but three days old,
When Laius, its ankles pierced and pinned
Together, gave it to be cast away
By others on the trackless mountain side.
So then Apollo brought it not to pass
The child should be his father's murderer,
Or the dread terror find accomplishment,
And Laius be slain by his own son.
Such was the prophet's horoscope. O king,
Regard it not. Whate'er the god deems fit
To search, himself unaided will reveal.

OEDIPUS

What memories, what wild tumult of the soul
Came o'er me, lady, as I heard thee speak!

JOCASTA

What mean'st thou? What has shocked and startled thee?

OEDIPUS

Methought I heard thee say that Laius
Was murdered at the meeting of three roads.

JOCASTA

So ran the story that is current still.

OEDIPUS

Where did this happen? Dost thou know the place?

JOCASTA

Phocis the land is called; the spot is where
Branch roads from Delphi and from Daulis meet.

OEDIPUS

And how long is it since these things befell?

JOCASTA

'Twas but a brief while were thou wast proclaimed
Our country's ruler that the news was brought.

OEDIPUS

O Zeus, what hast thou willed to do with me!

JOCASTA

What is it, Oedipus, that moves thee so?

OEDIPUS

Ask me not yet; tell me the build and height
Of Laius? Was he still in manhood's prime?

JOCASTA

Tall was he, and his hair was lightly strewn
With silver; and not unlike thee in form.

OEDIPUS

O woe is me! Mehtinks unwittingly
I laid but now a dread curse on myself.

JOCASTA

What say'st thou? When I look upon thee, my king,
I tremble.

OEDIPUS

'Tis a dread presentiment
That in the end the seer will prove not blind.
One further question to resolve my doubt.

JOCASTA

I quail; but ask, and I will answer all.

OEDIPUS

Had he but few attendants or a train
Of armed retainers with him, like a prince?

JOCASTA

They were but five in all, and one of them
A herald; Laius in a mule-car rode.

OEDIPUS

Alas! 'tis clear as noonday now. But say,
Lady, who carried this report to Thebes?

JOCASTA

A serf, the sole survivor who returned.

OEDIPUS

Haply he is at hand or in the house?

JOCASTA

No, for as soon as he returned and found
Thee reigning in the stead of Laius slain,
He clasped my hand and supplicated me
To send him to the alps and pastures, where
He might be farthest from the sight of Thebes.
And so I sent him. 'Twas an honest slave
And well deserved some better recompense.

OEDIPUS

Fetch him at once. I fain would see the man.

JOCASTA

He shall be brought; but wherefore summon him?

OEDIPUS

Lady, I fear my tongue has overrun
Discretion; therefore I would question him.

JOCASTA

Well, he shall come, but may not I too claim
To share the burden of thy heart, my king?

OEDIPUS

And thou shalt not be frustrate of thy wish.
Now my imaginings have gone so far.
Who has a higher claim that thou to hear
My tale of dire adventures? Listen then.
My sire was Polybus of Corinth, and
My mother Merope, a Dorian;
And I was held the foremost citizen,
Till a strange thing befell me, strange indeed,
Yet scarce deserving all the heat it stirred.
A roisterer at some banquet, flown with wine,
Shouted "Thou art not true son of thy sire."
It irked me, but I stomached for the nonce
The insult; on the morrow I sought out
My mother and my sire and questioned them.
They were indignant at the random slur
Cast on my parentage and did their best
To comfort me, but still the venom'd barb
Rankled, for still the scandal spread and grew.
So privily without their leave I went
To Delphi, and Apollo sent me back
Baulked of the knowledge that I came to seek.
But other grievous things he prophesied,
Woes, lamentations, mourning, portents dire;
To wit I should defile my mother's bed
And raise up seed too loathsome to behold,
And slay the father from whose loins I sprang.
Then, lady,—thou shalt hear the very truth—
As I drew near the triple-branching roads,
A herald met me and a man who sat
In a car drawn by colts—as in thy tale—
The man in front and the old man himself
Threatened to thrust me rudely from the path,
Then jostled by the charioteer in wrath
I struck him, and the old man, seeing this,

Watched till I passed and from his car brought down
Full on my head the double-pointed goad.

Yet was I quits with him and more; one stroke
Of my good staff sufficed to fling him clean
Out of the chariot seat and laid him prone.
And so I slew them every one. But if
Betwixt this stranger there was aught in common
With Laius, who more miserable than I,
What mortal could you find more god-aborred?
Wretch whom no sojourner, no citizen
May harbor or address, whom all are bound
To harry from their homes. And this same curse
Was laid on me, and laid by none but me.
Yea with these hands all gory I pollute
The bed of him I slew. Say, am I vile?
Am I not utterly unclean, a wretch
Doomed to be banished, and in banishment
Forgo the sight of all my dearest ones,
And never tread again my native earth;
Or else to wed my mother and slay my sire,
Polybus, who begat me and upreared?
If one should say, this is the handiwork
Of some inhuman power, who could blame
His judgment? But, ye pure and awful gods,
Forbid, forbid that I should see that day!
May I be blotted out from living men
Ere such a plague spot set on me its brand!

CHORUS

We too, O king, are troubled; but till thou
Hast questioned the survivor, still hope on.

OEDIPUS

My hope is faint, but still enough survives
To bid me bide the coming of this herd.

JOCASTA

Suppose him here, what wouldst thou learn of him?

OEDIPUS

I'll tell thee, lady; if his tale agrees
With thine, I shall have 'scaped calamity.

JOCASTA

And what of special import did I say?

OEDIPUS

In thy report of what the herdsman said
Laius was slain by robbers; now if he
Still speaks of robbers, not a robber, I
Slew him not; "one" with "many" cannot square.
But if he says one lonely wayfarer,
The last link wanting to my guilt is forged.

JOCASTA

Well, rest assured, his tale ran thus at first,
Nor can he now retract what then he said;
Not I alone but all our townsfolk heard it.
E'en should he vary somewhat in his story,
He cannot make the death of Laius
In any wise jump with the oracle.
For Loxias said expressly he was doomed
To die by my child's hand, but he, poor babe,

He shed no blood, but perished first himself.
So much for divination. Henceforth I
Will look for signs neither to right nor left.

OEDIPUS

Thou reasonest well. Still I would have thee send
And fetch the bondsman hither. See to it.

JOCASTA

That will I straightway. Come, let us within.
I would do nothing that my lord mislikes.
[Exeunt OEDIPUS and JOCASTA]

CHORUS

(Str. 1)

My lot be still to lead
 The life of innocence and fly
Irreverence in word or deed,
 To follow still those laws ordained on high
Whose birthplace is the bright ethereal sky
 No mortal birth they own,
 Olympus their progenitor alone:
Ne'er shall they slumber in oblivion cold,
The god in them is strong and grows not old.

(Ant. 1)

 Of insolence is bred
The tyrant; insolence full blown,
 With empty riches surfeited,
Scales the precipitous height and grasps the throne.
 Then topples o'er and lies in ruin prone;

No foothold on that dizzy steep.
But O may Heaven the true patriot keep
Who burns with emulous zeal to serve the State.
God is my help and hope, on him I wait.

(Str. 2)

But the proud sinner, or in word or deed,
That will not Justice heed,
Nor reverence the shrine
Of images divine,
Perdition seize his vain imaginings,
If, urged by greed profane,
He grasps at ill-got gain,
And lays an impious hand on holiest things.
Who when such deeds are done
Can hope heaven's bolts to shun?
If sin like this to honor can aspire,
Why dance I still and lead the sacred choir?

(Ant. 2)

No more I'll seek earth's central oracle,
Or Abae's hallowed cell,
Nor to Olympia bring
My votive offering.
If before all God's truth be not bade plain.
O Zeus, reveal thy might,
King, if thou'rt named aright
Omnipotent, all-seeing, as of old;
For Laius is forgot;
His weird, men heed it not;
Apollo is forsook and faith grows cold.
[Enter JOCASTA.]

JOCASTA

My lords, ye look amazed to see your queen
With wreaths and gifts of incense in her hands.
I had a mind to visit the high shrines,
For Oedipus is overwrought, alarmed
With terrors manifold. He will not use
His past experience, like a man of sense,
To judge the present need, but lends an ear
To any croaker if he augurs ill.
Since then my counsels naught avail, I turn
To thee, our present help in time of trouble,
Apollo, Lord Lycean, and to thee
My prayers and supplications here I bring.
Lighten us, lord, and cleanse us from this curse!
For now we all are cowed like mariners
Who see their helmsman dumbstruck in the storm.
[Enter Corinthian MESSENGER.]

MESSENGER

My masters, tell me where the palace is
Of Oedipus; or better, where's the king.

CHORUS

Here is the palace and he bides within;
This is his queen the mother of his children.

MESSENGER

All happiness attend her and the house,
Blessed is her husband and her marriage-bed.

JOCASTA

My greetings to thee, stranger; thy fair words
Deserve a like response. But tell me why
Thou comest—what thy need or what thy news.

MESSENGER

Good for thy consort and the royal house.

JOCASTA

What may it be? Whose messenger art thou?

MESSENGER

The Isthmian commons have resolved to make
Thy husband king—so 'twas reported there.

JOCASTA

What! is not aged Polybus still king?

MESSENGER

No, verily; he's dead and in his grave.

JOCASTA

What! is he dead, the sire of Oedipus?

MESSENGER

If I speak falsely, may I die myself.

JOCASTA

Quick, maiden, bear these tidings to my lord.
Ye god-sent oracles, where stand ye now!
This is the man whom Oedipus long shunned,
In dread to prove his murderer; and now
He dies in nature's course, not by his hand.
[Enter OEDIPUS.]

OEDIPUS

My wife, my queen, Jocasta, why hast thou
Summoned me from my palace?

JOCASTA

Hear this man,
And as thou hearest judge what has become
Of all those awe-inspiring oracles.

OEDIPUS

Who is this man, and what his news for me?

JOCASTA

He comes from Corinth and his message this:
Thy father Polybus hath passed away.

OEDIPUS

What? let me have it, stranger, from thy mouth.

MESSENGER

If I must first make plain beyond a doubt

My message, know that Polybus is dead.

OEDIPUS

By treachery, or by sickness visited?

MESSENGER

One touch will send an old man to his rest.

OEDIPUS

So of some malady he died, poor man.

MESSENGER

Yes, having measured the full span of years.

OEDIPUS

Out on it, lady! why should one regard
The Pythian hearth or birds that scream i' the air?
Did they not point at me as doomed to slay
My father? but he's dead and in his grave
And here am I who ne'er unsheathed a sword;
Unless the longing for his absent son
Killed him and so *I* slew him in a sense.
But, as they stand, the oracles are dead—
Dust, ashes, nothing, dead as Polybus.

JOCASTA

Say, did not I foretell this long ago?

OEDIPUS

Thou didst: but I was misled by my fear.

JOCASTA

Then let I no more weigh upon thy soul.

OEDIPUS

Must I not fear my mother's marriage bed.

JOCASTA

Why should a mortal man, the sport of chance,
With no assured foreknowledge, be afraid?
Best live a careless life from hand to mouth.
This wedlock with thy mother fear not thou.
How oft it chances that in dreams a man
Has wed his mother! He who least regards
Such brainsick phantasies lives most at ease.

OEDIPUS

I should have shared in full thy confidence,
Were not my mother living; since she lives
Though half convinced I still must live in dread.

JOCASTA

And yet thy sire's death lights out darkness much.

OEDIPUS

Much, but my fear is touching her who lives.

MESSENGER

Who may this woman be whom thus you fear?

OEDIPUS

Merope, stranger, wife of Polybus.

MESSENGER

And what of her can cause you any fear?

OEDIPUS

A heaven-sent oracle of dread import.

MESSENGER

A mystery, or may a stranger hear it?

OEDIPUS

Aye, 'tis no secret. Loxias once foretold
That I should mate with mine own mother, and shed
With my own hands the blood of my own sire.
Hence Corinth was for many a year to me
A home distant; and I trove abroad,
But missed the sweetest sight, my parents' face.

MESSENGER

Was this the fear that exiled thee from home?

OEDIPUS

Yea, and the dread of slaying my own sire.

MESSENGER

Why, since I came to give thee pleasure, King,
Have I not rid thee of this second fear?

OEDIPUS

Well, thou shalt have due guerdon for thy pains.

MESSENGER

Well, I confess what chiefly made me come
Was hope to profit by thy coming home.

OEDIPUS

Nay, I will ne'er go near my parents more.

MESSENGER

My son, 'tis plain, thou know'st not what thou doest.

OEDIPUS

How so, old man? For heaven's sake tell me all.

MESSENGER

If this is why thou darest to return.

OEDIPUS

Yea, lest the god's word be fulfilled in me.

MESSENGER

Lest through thy parents thou shouldst be accursed?

OEDIPUS

This and none other is my constant dread.

MESSENGER

Dost thou not know thy fears are baseless all?

OEDIPUS

How baseless, if I am their very son?

MESSENGER

Since Polybus was naught to thee in blood.

OEDIPUS

What say'st thou? was not Polybus my sire?

MESSENGER

As much thy sire as I am, and no more.

OEDIPUS

My sire no more to me than one who is naught?

MESSENGER

Since I begat thee not, no more did he.

OEDIPUS

What reason had he then to call me son?

MESSENGER

Know that he took thee from my hands, a gift.

OEDIPUS

Yet, if no child of his, he loved me well.

MESSENGER

A childless man till then, he warmed to thee.

OEDIPUS

A foundling or a purchased slave, this child?

MESSENGER

I found thee in Cithaeron's wooded glens.

OEDIPUS

What led thee to explore those upland glades?

MESSENGER

My business was to tend the mountain flocks.

OEDIPUS

A vagrant shepherd journeying for hire?

MESSENGER

True, but thy savior in that hour, my son.

OEDIPUS

My savior? from what harm? what ailed me then?

MESSENGER

Those ankle joints are evidence enow.

OEDIPUS

Ah, why remind me of that ancient sore?

MESSENGER

I loosed the pin that riveted thy feet.

OEDIPUS

Yes, from my cradle that dread brand I bore.

MESSENGER

Whence thou deriv'st the name that still is thine.

OEDIPUS

Who did it? I adjure thee, tell me who

Say, was it father, mother?

MESSENGER

I know not.

The man from whom I had thee may know more.

OEDIPUS

What, did another find me, not thyself?

MESSENGER

Not I; another shepherd gave thee me.

OEDIPUS

Who was he? Would'st thou know again the man?

MESSENGER

He passed indeed for one of Laius' house.

OEDIPUS

The king who ruled the country long ago?

MESSENGER

The same: he was a herdsman of the king.

OEDIPUS

And is he living still for me to see him?

MESSENGER

His fellow-countrymen should best know that.

OEDIPUS

Doth any bystander among you know
The herd he speaks of, or by seeing him
Afield or in the city? answer straight!
The hour hath come to clear this business up.

CHORUS

Methinks he means none other than the hind
Whom thou anon wert fain to see; but that
Our queen Jocasta best of all could tell.

OEDIPUS

Madam, dost know the man we sent to fetch?
Is the same of whom the stranger speaks?

JOCASTA

Who is the man? What matter? Let it be.
'Twere waste of thought to weigh such idle words.

OEDIPUS

No, with such guiding clues I cannot fail
To bring to light the secret of my birth.

JOCASTA

Oh, as thou carest for thy life, give o'er
This quest. Enough the anguish *I* endure.

OEDIPUS

Be of good cheer; though I be proved the son
Of a bondwoman, aye, through three descents
Triply a slave, thy honor is unsmirched.

JOCASTA

Yet humor me, I pray thee; do not this.

OEDIPUS

I cannot; I must probe this matter home.

JOCASTA

'Tis for thy sake I advise thee for the best.

OEDIPUS

I grow impatient of this best advice.

JOCASTA

Ah mayst thou ne'er discover who thou art!

OEDIPUS

Go, fetch me here the herd, and leave yon woman
To glory in her pride of ancestry.

JOCASTA

O woe is thee, poor wretch! With that last word

I leave thee, henceforth silent evermore.
[Exit JOCASTA]

CHORUS

Why, Oedipus, why stung with passionate grief
Hath the queen thus departed? Much I fear
From this dead calm will burst a storm of woes.

OEDIPUS

Let the storm burst, my fixed resolve still holds,
To learn my lineage, be it ne'er so low.
It may be she with all a woman's pride
Thinks scorn of my base parentage. But I
Who rank myself as Fortune's favorite child,
The giver of good gifts, shall not be shamed.
She is my mother and the changing moons
My brethren, and with them I wax and wane.
Thus sprung why should I fear to trace my birth?
Nothing can make me other than I am.

CHORUS

(Str.)

If my soul prophetic err not, if my wisdom aught avail,
Thee, Cithaeron, I shall hail,
As the nurse and foster-mother of our Oedipus shall greet
Ere tomorrow's full moon rises, and exalt thee as is meet.
Dance and song shall hymn thy praises, lover of our royal race.
Phoebus, may my words find grace!

(Ant.)

Child, who bare thee, nymph or goddess? sure thy sure was mor

man,

Haply the hill-roamer Pan.

Of did Loxias beget thee, for he haunts the upland wold;
Or Cyllene's lord, or Bacchus, dweller on the hilltops cold?
Did some Heliconian Oread give him thee, a new-born joy?
Nymphs with whom he love to toy?

OEDIPUS

Elders, if I, who never yet before
Have met the man, may make a guess, methinks
I see the herdsman who we long have sought;
His time-worn aspect matches with the years
Of yonder aged messenger; besides
I seem to recognize the men who bring him
As servants of my own. But you, perchance,
Having in past days known or seen the herd,
May better by sure knowledge my surmise.

CHORUS

I recognize him; one of Laius' house;
A simple hind, but true as any man.

4. Oedipus the King - Part II

[Enter HERDSMAN.]

OEDIPUS

Corinthian, stranger, I address thee first,
Is this the man thou meanest!

MESSENGER

This is he.

OEDIPUS

And now old man, look up and answer all
I ask thee. Wast thou once of Laius' house?

HERDSMAN

I was, a thrall, not purchased but home-bred.

OEDIPUS

What was thy business? how wast thou employed?

HERDSMAN

The best part of my life I tended sheep.

OEDIPUS

What were the pastures thou didst most frequent?

HERDSMAN

Cithaeron and the neighboring alps.

OEDIPUS

Then there

Thou must have known yon man, at least by fame?

HERDSMAN

Yon man? in what way? what man dost thou mean?

OEDIPUS

The man here, having met him in past times...

HERDSMAN

Off-hand I cannot call him well to mind.

MESSENGER

No wonder, master. But I will revive
His blunted memories. Sure he can recall
What time together both we drove our flocks,
He two, I one, on the Cithaeron range,
For three long summers; I his mate from spring
Till rose Arcturus; then in winter time
I led mine home, he his to Laius' folds.
Did these things happen as I say, or no?

HERDSMAN

'Tis long ago, but all thou say'st is true.

MESSENGER

Well, thou mast then remember giving me
A child to rear as my own foster-son?

HERDSMAN

Why dost thou ask this question? What of that?

MESSENGER

Friend, he that stands before thee was that child.

HERDSMAN

A plague upon thee! Hold thy wanton tongue!

OEDIPUS

Softly, old man, rebuke him not; thy words
Are more deserving chastisement than his.

HERDSMAN

O best of masters, what is my offense?

OEDIPUS

Not answering what he asks about the child.

HERDSMAN

He speaks at random, babbles like a fool.

OEDIPUS

If thou lack'st grace to speak, I'll loose thy tongue.

HERDSMAN

For mercy's sake abuse not an old man.

OEDIPUS

Arrest the villain, seize and pinion him!

HERDSMAN

Alack, alack!

What have I done? what wouldst thou further learn?

OEDIPUS

Didst give this man the child of whom he asks?

HERDSMAN

I did; and would that I had died that day!

OEDIPUS

And die thou shalt unless thou tell the truth.

HERDSMAN

But, if I tell it, I am doubly lost.

OEDIPUS

The knave methinks will still prevaricate.

HERDSMAN

Nay, I confessed I gave it long ago.

OEDIPUS

Whence came it? was it thine, or given to thee?

HERDSMAN

I had it from another, 'twas not mine.

OEDIPUS

From whom of these our townsmen, and what house?

HERDSMAN

Forbear for God's sake, master, ask no more.

OEDIPUS

If I must question thee again, thou'rt lost.

HERDSMAN

Well then—it was a child of Laius' house.

OEDIPUS

Slave-born or one of Laius' own race?

HERDSMAN

Ah me!

I stand upon the perilous edge of speech.

OEDIPUS

And I of hearing, but I still must hear.

HERDSMAN

Know then the child was by repute his own,
But she within, thy consort best could tell.

OEDIPUS

What! she, she gave it thee?

HERDSMAN

'Tis so, my king.

OEDIPUS

With what intent?

HERDSMAN

To make away with it.

OEDIPUS

What, she its mother.

HERDSMAN

Fearing a dread weird.

OEDIPUS

What weird?

HERDSMAN

'Twas told that he should slay his sire.

OEDIPUS

What didst thou give it then to this old man?

HERDSMAN

Through pity, master, for the babe. I thought
He'd take it to the country whence he came;
But he preserved it for the worst of woes.
For if thou art in sooth what this man saith,
God pity thee! thou wast to misery born.

OEDIPUS

Ah me! ah me! all brought to pass, all true!
O light, may I behold thee nevermore!
I stand a wretch, in birth, in wedlock cursed,
A parricide, incestuously, triply cursed!
[Exit OEDIPUS]

CHORUS

(Str. 1)

Races of mortal man
Whose life is but a span,
I count ye but the shadow of a shade!
For he who most doth know
Of bliss, hath but the show;
A moment, and the visions pale and fade.
Thy fall, O Oedipus, thy piteous fall
Warns me none born of women blest to call.

(Ant. 1)

For he of marksmen best,
O Zeus, outshot the rest,
And won the prize supreme of wealth and power.
By him the vulture maid
Was quelled, her witchery laid;
He rose our savior and the land's strong tower.
We hailed thee king and from that day adored
Of mighty Thebes the universal lord.

(Str. 2)

O heavy hand of fate!
Who now more desolate,
Whose tale more sad than thine, whose lot more dire?
O Oedipus, discrowned head,
Thy cradle was thy marriage bed;
One harborage sufficed for son and sire.
How could the soil thy father eared so long
Endure to bear in silence such a wrong?

(Ant. 2)

All-seeing Time hath caught

Guilt, and to justice brought
The son and sire commingled in one bed.
O child of Laius' ill-starred race
Would I had ne'er beheld thy face;
I raise for thee a dirge as o'er the dead.
Yet, sooth to say, through thee I drew new breath,
And now through thee I feel a second death.
[Enter SECOND MESSENGER.]

SECOND MESSENGER

Most grave and reverend senators of Thebes,
What Deeds ye soon must hear, what sights behold
How will ye mourn, if, true-born patriots,
Ye reverence still the race of Labdacus!
Not Ister nor all Phasis' flood, I ween,
Could wash away the blood-stains from this house,
The ills it shrouds or soon will bring to light,
Ills wrought of malice, not unwittingly.
The worst to bear are self-inflicted wounds.

CHORUS

Grievous enough for all our tears and groans
Our past calamities; what canst thou add?

SECOND MESSENGER

My tale is quickly told and quickly heard.
Our sovereign lady queen Jocasta's dead.

CHORUS

Alas, poor queen! how came she by her death?

SECOND MESSENGER

By her own hand. And all the horror of it,
Not having seen, yet cannot comprehend.
Nathless, as far as my poor memory serves,
I will relate the unhappy lady's woe.
When in her frenzy she had passed inside
The vestibule, she hurried straight to win
The bridal-chamber, clutching at her hair
With both her hands, and, once within the room,
She shut the doors behind her with a crash.
"Laius," she cried, and called her husband dead
Long, long ago; her thought was of that child
By him begot, the son by whom the sire
Was murdered and the mother left to breed
With her own seed, a monstrous progeny.
Then she bewailed the marriage bed whereon
Poor wretch, she had conceived a double brood,
Husband by husband, children by her child.
What happened after that I cannot tell,
Nor how the end befell, for with a shriek
Burst on us Oedipus; all eyes were fixed
On Oedipus, as up and down he strode,
Nor could we mark her agony to the end.
For stalking to and fro "A sword!" he cried,
"Where is the wife, no wife, the teeming womb
That bore a double harvest, me and mine?"
And in his frenzy some supernal power
(No mortal, surely, none of us who watched him)
Guided his footsteps; with a terrible shriek,
As though one beckoned him, he crashed against
The folding doors, and from their staples forced
The wrenched bolts and hurled himself within.
Then we beheld the woman hanging there,
A running noose entwined about her neck.

But when he saw her, with a maddened roar
He loosed the cord; and when her wretched corpse
Lay stretched on earth, what followed—O 'twas dread!
He tore the golden brooches that upheld
Her queenly robes, upraised them high and smote
Full on his eye-balls, uttering words like these:
"No more shall ye behold such sights of woe,
Deeds I have suffered and myself have wrought;
Henceforward quenched in darkness shall ye see
Those ye should ne'er have seen; now blind to those
Whom, when I saw, I vainly yearned to know."

Such was the burden of his moan, whereto,
Not once but oft, he struck with his hand uplift
His eyes, and at each stroke the ensanguined orbs
Bedewed his beard, not oozing drop by drop,
But one black gory downpour, thick as hail.
Such evils, issuing from the double source,
Have whelmed them both, confounding man and wife.
Till now the storied fortune of this house
Was fortunate indeed; but from this day
Woe, lamentation, ruin, death, disgrace,
All ills that can be named, all, all are theirs.

CHORUS

But hath he still no respite from his pain?

SECOND MESSENGER

He cries, "Unbar the doors and let all Thebes
Behold the slayer of his sire, his mother's—"
That shameful word my lips may not repeat.
He vows to fly self-banished from the land,
Nor stay to bring upon his house the curse
Himself had uttered; but he has no strength

Nor one to guide him, and his torture's more
Than man can suffer, as yourselves will see.
For lo, the palace portals are unbarred,
And soon ye shall behold a sight so sad
That he who must abhorred would pity it.
[Enter OEDIPUS blinded.]

CHORUS

Woeful sight! more woeful none
These sad eyes have looked upon.
Whence this madness? None can tell
Who did cast on thee his spell,
prowling all thy life around,
Leaping with a demon bound.
Hapless wretch! how can I brook
On thy misery to look?
Though to gaze on thee I yearn,
Much to question, much to learn,
Horror-struck away I turn.

OEDIPUS

Ah me! ah woe is me!
Ah whither am I borne!
How like a ghost forlorn
My voice flits from me on the air!
On, on the demon goads. The end, ah where?

CHORUS

An end too dread to tell, too dark to see.

OEDIPUS

(Str. 1)

Dark, dark! The horror of darkness, like a shroud,
Wraps me and bears me on through mist and cloud.
Ah me, ah me! What spasms athwart me shoot,
What pangs of agonizing memory?

CHORUS

No marvel if in such a plight thou feel'st
The double weight of past and present woes.

OEDIPUS

(Ant. 1)

Ah friend, still loyal, constant still and kind,
Thou carest for the blind.
I know thee near, and though bereft of eyes,
Thy voice I recognize.

CHORUS

O doer of dread deeds, how couldst thou mar
Thy vision thus? What demon goaded thee?

OEDIPUS

(Str. 2)

Apollo, friend, Apollo, he it was
That brought these ills to pass;
But the right hand that dealt the blow
Was mine, none other. How,
How, could I longer see when sight
Brought no delight?

CHORUS

Alas! 'tis as thou sayest.

OEDIPUS

Say, friends, can any look or voice
Or touch of love henceforth my heart rejoice?

Haste, friends, no fond delay,

Take the twice cursed away

Far from all ken,

The man abhorred of gods, accursed of men.

CHORUS

O thy despair well suits thy desperate case.

Would I had never looked upon thy face!

OEDIPUS

(Ant. 2)

My curse on him whoe'er unriv'd
The waif's fell fetters and my life revived!
He meant me well, yet had he left me there,
He had saved my friends and me a world of care.

CHORUS

I too had wished it so.

OEDIPUS

Then had I never come to shed
My father's blood nor climbed my mother's bed;
The monstrous offspring of a womb defiled,
Co-mate of him who gendered me, and child.

Was ever man before afflicted thus,
Like Oedipus.

CHORUS

I cannot say that thou hast counseled well,
For thou wert better dead than living blind.

OEDIPUS

What's done was well done. Thou canst never shake
My firm belief. A truce to argument.
For, had I sight, I know not with what eyes
I could have met my father in the shades,
Or my poor mother, since against the twain
I sinned, a sin no gallows could atone.
Aye, but, ye say, the sight of children joys
A parent's eyes. What, born as mine were born?
No, such a sight could never bring me joy;
Nor this fair city with its battlements,
Its temples and the statues of its gods,
Sights from which I, now wretchedst of all,
Once ranked the foremost Theban in all Thebes,
By my own sentence am cut off, condemned
By my own proclamation 'gainst the wretch,
The miscreant by heaven itself declared
Unclean—and of the race of Laius.
Thus branded as a felon by myself,
How had I dared to look you in the face?
Nay, had I known a way to choke the springs
Of hearing, I had never shrunk to make
A dungeon of this miserable frame,
Cut off from sight and hearing; for 'tis bliss
to bide in regions sorrow cannot reach.
Why didst thou harbor me, Cithaeron, why

Didst thou not take and slay me? Then I never
Had shown to men the secret of my birth.
O Polybus, O Corinth, O my home,
Home of my ancestors (so wast thou called)
How fair a nursling then I seemed, how foul
The canker that lay festering in the bud!
Now is the blight revealed of root and fruit.
Ye triple high-roads, and thou hidden glen,
Coppice, and pass where meet the three-branched ways,
Ye drank my blood, the life-blood these hands spilt,
My father's; do ye call to mind perchance
Those deeds of mine ye witnessed and the work
I wrought thereafter when I came to Thebes?
O fatal wedlock, thou didst give me birth,
And, having borne me, sowed again my seed,
Mingling the blood of fathers, brothers, children,
Brides, wives and mothers, an incestuous brood,
All horrors that are wrought beneath the sun,
Horrors so foul to name them were unmeet.
O, I adjure you, hide me anywhere
Far from this land, or slay me straight, or cast me
Down to the depths of ocean out of sight.
Come hither, deign to touch an abject wretch;
Draw near and fear not; I myself must bear
The load of guilt that none but I can share.
[Enter CREON.]

CREON

Lo, here is Creon, the one man to grant
Thy prayer by action or advice, for he
Is left the State's sole guardian in thy stead.

OEDIPUS

Ah me! what words to accost him can I find?
What cause has he to trust me? In the past
I have been proved his rancorous enemy.

CREON

Not in derision, Oedipus, I come
Nor to upbraid thee with thy past misdeeds.
(To BYSTANDERS)
But shame upon you! if ye feel no sense
Of human decencies, at least revere
The Sun whose light beholds and nurtures all.
Leave not thus nakedly for all to gaze at
A horror neither earth nor rain from heaven
Nor light will suffer. Lead him straight within,
For it is seemly that a kinsman's woes
Be heard by kin and seen by kin alone.

OEDIPUS

O listen, since thy presence comes to me
A shock of glad surprise—so noble thou,
And I so vile—O grant me one small boon.
I ask it not on my behalf, but thine.

CREON

And what the favor thou wouldst crave of me?

OEDIPUS

Forth from thy borders thrust me with all speed;
Set me within some vasty desert where
No mortal voice shall greet me any more.

CREON

This had I done already, but I deemed
It first behooved me to consult the god.

OEDIPUS

His will was set forth fully—to destroy
The parricide, the scoundrel; and I am he.

CREON

Yea, so he spake, but in our present plight
'Twere better to consult the god anew.

OEDIPUS

Dare ye inquire concerning such a wretch?

CREON

Yea, for thyself wouldst credit now his word.

OEDIPUS

Aye, and on thee in all humility
I lay this charge: let her who lies within
Receive such burial as thou shalt ordain;
Such rites 'tis thine, as brother, to perform.
But for myself, O never let my Thebes,
The city of my sires, be doomed to bear
The burden of my presence while I live.
No, let me be a dweller on the hills,
On yonder mount Cithaeron, famed as mine,
My tomb predestined for me by my sire

And mother, while they lived, that I may die
Slain as they sought to slay me, when alive.
This much I know full surely, nor disease
Shall end my days, nor any common chance;
For I had ne'er been snatched from death, unless
I was predestined to some awful doom.

So be it. I reckon not how Fate deals with me
But my unhappy children—for my sons
Be not concerned, O Creon, they are men,
And for themselves, where'er they be, can fend.
But for my daughters twain, poor innocent maids,
Who ever sat beside me at the board
Sharing my viands, drinking of my cup,
For them, I pray thee, care, and, if thou wiltst,
O might I feel their touch and make my moan.
Hear me, O prince, my noble-hearted prince!
Could I but blindly touch them with my hands
I'd think they still were mine, as when I saw.
[ANTIGONE and ISMENE are led in.]
What say I? can it be my pretty ones
Whose sobs I hear? Has Creon pitied me
And sent me my two darlings? Can this be?

CREON

'Tis true; 'twas I procured thee this delight,
Knowing the joy they were to thee of old.

OEDIPUS

God speed thee! and as meed for bringing them
May Providence deal with thee kindlier
Than it has dealt with me! O children mine,
Where are ye? Let me clasp you with these hands,
A brother's hands, a father's; hands that made

Lack-luster sockets of his once bright eyes;
Hands of a man who blindly, recklessly,
Became your sire by her from whom he sprang.
Though I cannot behold you, I must weep
In thinking of the evil days to come,
The slights and wrongs that men will put upon you.
Where'er ye go to feast or festival,
No merrymaking will it prove for you,
But oft abashed in tears ye will return.
And when ye come to marriageable years,
Where's the bold wooers who will jeopardize
To take unto himself such disrepute
As to my children's children still must cling,
For what of infamy is lacking here?
"Their father slew his father, sowed the seed
Where he himself was gendered, and begat
These maidens at the source wherefrom he sprang."
Such are the gibes that men will cast at you.
Who then will wed you? None, I ween, but ye
Must pine, poor maids, in single barrenness.
O Prince, Menoeceus' son, to thee, I turn,
With the it rests to father them, for we
Their natural parents, both of us, are lost.
O leave them not to wander poor, unwed,
Thy kin, nor let them share my low estate.
O pity them so young, and but for thee
All destitute. Thy hand upon it, Prince.
To you, my children I had much to say,
Were ye but ripe to hear. Let this suffice:
Pray ye may find some home and live content,
And may your lot prove happier than your sire's.

CREON

Thou hast had enough of weeping; pass within.

OEDIPUS

I must obey,
Though 'tis grievous.

CREON

Weep not, everything must have its day

OEDIPUS

Well I go, but on conditions.

CREON

What thy terms for going, say.

OEDIPUS

Send me from the land an exile.

CREON

Ask this of the gods, not me.

OEDIPUS

But I am the gods' abhorrence.

CREON

Then they soon will grant thy plea

OEDIPUS

Lead me hence, then, I am willing.

CREON

Come, but let thy children g

OEDIPUS

Rob me not of these my children!

CREON

Crave not mastery in all,
For the mastery that raised thee was thy bane and wrought thy f

CHORUS

Look ye, countrymen and Thebans, this is Oedipus the great,
He who knew the Sphinx's riddle and was mightiest in our state.
Who of all our townsmen gazed not on his fame with envious eyes
Now, in what a sea of troubles sunk and overwhelmed he lies!
Therefore wait to see life's ending ere thou count one mortal b
Wait till free from pain and sorrow he has gained his final res

PART III

LYSISTRATA

5. Lysistrata - Part I

LYSISTRATA

Translated from the Greek of

ARISTOPHANES

Illustrations by Norman Lindsay





The Persons of the Drama

Lysistrata

Calonice

Myrrhine

Lampito

Stratyllis, etc.

Chorus of Women

Magistrate

Cinesias

Spartan Herald

Envoys

Athenians

Porter, Market Idlers, etc.

Chorus of Old Men

LYSISTRATA *stands alone with the Propylaea at her back.*

LYSISTRATA

If they were trysting for a Bacchanal,
A feast of Pan or Colias or Genetyllis,
The tambourines would block the rowdy streets,
But now there's not a woman to be seen
Except—ah, yes—this neighbour of mine yonder.

Enter CALONICE.

Good day Calonice.

CALONICE

Good day Lysistrata.
But what has vexed you so? Tell me, child.
What are these black looks for? It doesn't suit you
To knit your eyebrows up glumly like that.

LYSISTRATA

Calonice, it's more than I can bear,
I am hot all over with blushes for our sex.
Men say we're slippery rogues—

CALONICE

And aren't they right?

LYSISTRATA

Yet summoned on the most tremendous business
For deliberation, still they snuggle in bed.

CALONICE

My dear, they'll come. It's hard for women, you know,
To get away. There's so much to do;

Husbands to be patted and put in good tempers:
Servants to be poked out: children washed
Or soothed with lullays or fed with mouthfuls of pap.

LYSISTRATA

But I tell you, here's a far more weighty object.

CALONICE

What is it all about, dear Lysistrata,
That you've called the women hither in a troop?
What kind of an object is it?

LYSISTRATA

A tremendous thing!

CALONICE

And long?

LYSISTRATA

Indeed, it may be very lengthy.

CALONICE

Then why aren't they here?

LYSISTRATA

No man's connected with it;
If that was the case, they'd soon come fluttering along.
No, no. It concerns an object I've felt over
And turned this way and that for sleepless nights.

CALONICE

It must be fine to stand such long attention.

LYSISTRATA

So fine it comes to this—Greece saved by Woman!

CALONICE

By Woman? Wretched thing, I'm sorry for it.

LYSISTRATA

Our country's fate is henceforth in our hands:
To destroy the Peloponnesians root and branch—

CALONICE

What could be nobler!

LYSISTRATA

Wipe out the Boeotians—

CALONICE

Not utterly. Have mercy on the eels!

[Footnote: The Boeotian eels were highly esteemed delicacies
in Athens.]

LYSISTRATA

But with regard to Athens, note I'm careful
Not to say any of these nasty things;
Still, thought is free.... But if the women join us
From Peloponnesus and Boeotia, then
Hand in hand we'll rescue Greece.

CALONICE

How could we do
Such a big wise deed? We women who dwell
Quietly adorning ourselves in a back-room
With gowns of lucid gold and gawdy toilets
Of stately silk and dainty little slippers....

LYSISTRATA

These are the very armaments of the rescue.

These crocus-gowns, this outlay of the best myrrh,
Slippers, cosmetics dusting beauty, and robes
With rippling creases of light.

CALONICE

Yes, but how?

LYSISTRATA

No man will lift a lance against another–

CALONICE

I'll run to have my tunic dyed crocus.

LYSISTRATA

Or take a shield–

CALONICE

I'll get a stately gown.

LYSISTRATA

Or unscabbard a sword–

CALONICE

Let me buy a pair of slipper.

LYSISTRATA

Now, tell me, are the women right to lag?

CALONICE

They should have turned birds, they should have grown
wings and flown.

LYSISTRATA

My friend, you'll see that they are true Athenians:

Always too late. Why, there's not a woman
From the shoreward demes arrived, not one from Salamis.

CALONICE

I know for certain they awoke at dawn,
And got their husbands up if not their boat sails.

LYSISTRATA

And I'd have staked my life the Acharnian dames
Would be here first, yet they haven't come either!

CALONICE

Well anyhow there is Theagenes' wife
We can expect—she consulted Hecate.
But look, here are some at last, and more behind them.
See ... where are they from?

CALONICE

From Anagyra they come.

LYSISTRATA

Yes, they generally manage to come first.
Enter MYRRHINE.

MYRRHINE

Are we late, Lysistrata? ... What is that?
Nothing to say?

LYSISTRATA

I've not much to say for you,
Myrrhine, dawdling on so vast an affair.

MYRRHINE

I couldn't find my girdle in the dark.
But if the affair's so wonderful, tell us, what is it?

LYSISTRATA

No, let us stay a little longer till
The Peloponnesian girls and the girls of Bocotia
Are here to listen.

MYRRHINE

That's the best advice.
Ah, there comes Lampito.
Enter LAMPITO.

LYSISTRATA

Welcome Lampito!
Dear Spartan girl with a delightful face,
Washed with the rosy spring, how fresh you look
In the easy stride of your sleek slenderness,
Why you could strangle a bull!

LAMPITO

I think I could.
It's frae exercise and kicking high behind.

[Footnote: The translator has put the speech of the Spartan characters
in Scotch dialect which is related to English about as was the
Spartan
dialect to the speech of Athens. The Spartans, in their
character,
anticipated the shrewd, canny, uncouth Scotch highlander of
modern
times.]

LYSISTRATA

What lovely breasts to own!

LAMPITO

Oo ... your fingers
Assess them, ye tickler, wi' such tender chucks
I feel as if I were an altar-victim.

LYSISTRATA
Who is this youngster?

LAMPITO
A Boeotian lady.

LYSISTRATA
There never was much undergrowth in Boeotia,
Such a smooth place, and this girl takes after it.

CALONICE
Yes, I never saw a skin so primly kept.

LYSISTRATA
This girl?

LAMPITO
A sonsie open-looking jinker!
She's a Corinthian.

LYSISTRATA
Yes, isn't she
Very open, in some ways particularly.

LAMPITO
But who's garred this Council o' Women to meet here?

LYSISTRATA
I have.

LAMPITO

Propound then what you want o' us.

MYRRHINE

What is the amazing news you have to tell?

LYSISTRATA

I'll tell you, but first answer one small question.

MYRRHINE

As you like.

LYSISTRATA

Are you not sad your children's fathers
Go endlessly off soldiering afar
In this plodding war? I am willing to wager
There's not one here whose husband is at home.

CALONICE

Mine's been in Thrace, keeping an eye on Eucrates
For five months past.

MYRRHINE

And mine left me for Pylos
Seven months ago at least.

LAMPITO

And as for mine
No sooner has he slipped out frae the line
He straps his shield and he's snickt off again.

LYSISTRATA

And not the slightest glitter of a lover!
And since the Milesians betrayed us, I've not seen
The image of a single upright man
To be a marble consolation to us.

Now will you help me, if I find a means
To stamp the war out.

MYRRHINE

By the two Goddesses, Yes!
I will though I've to pawn this very dress
And drink the barter-money the same day.

CALONICE

And I too though I'm split up like a turbot
And half is hackt off as the price of peace.

LAMPITO

And I too! Why, to get a peep at the shy thing
I'd clamber up to the tip-top o' Taygetus.

LYSISTRATA

Then I'll expose my mighty mystery.
O women, if we would compel the men
To bow to Peace, we must refrain—

MYRRHINE

From what?
O tell us!

LYSISTRATA

Will you truly do it then?

MYRRHINE

We will, we will, if we must die for it.

LYSISTRATA

We must refrain from every depth of love....
Why do you turn your backs? Where are you going?
Why do you bite your lips and shake your heads?

Why are your faces blanched? Why do you weep?
Will you or won't you, or what do you mean?

MYRRHINE

No, I won't do it. Let the war proceed.

CALONICE

No, I won't do it. Let the war proceed.

LYSISTRATA

You too, dear turbot, you that said just now
You didn't mind being split right up in the least?

CALONICE

Anything else? O bid me walk in fire
But do not rob us of that darling joy.
What else is like it, dearest Lysistrata?

LYSISTRATA

And you?

MYRRHINE

O please give me the fire instead.

LYSISTRATA

Lewd to the least drop in the tiniest vein,
Our sex is fitly food for Tragic Poets,
Our whole life's but a pile of kisses and babies.
But, hardy Spartan, if you join with me
All may be righted yet. O help me, help me.

LAMPITO

It's a sair, sair thing to ask of us, by the Twa,
A lass to sleep her lane and never fill

Love's lack except wi' makeshifts.... But let it be.
Peace maun be thought of first.

LYSISTRATA

My friend, my friend!
The only one amid this herd of weaklings.

CALONICE

But if—which heaven forbid—we should refrain
As you would have us, how is Peace induced?

LYSISTRATA

By the two Goddesses, now can't you see
All we have to do is idly sit indoors
With smooth roses powdered on our cheeks,
Our bodies burning naked through the folds
Of shining Amorgos' silk, and meet the men
With our dear Venus-plats plucked trim and neat.
Their stirring love will rise up furiously,
They'll beg our arms to open. That's our time!
We'll disregard their knocking, beat them off—
And they will soon be rabid for a Peace.
I'm sure of it.

LAMPITO

Just as Menelaus, they say,
Seeing the bosom of his naked Helen
Flang down the sword.

CALONICE

But we'll be tearful fools
If our husbands take us at our word and leave us.

LYSISTRATA

There's only left then, in Pherecrates' phrase,
To flay a skinned dog—flay more our flayed desires.

CALONICE

Bah, proverbs will never warm a celibate.
But what avail will your scheme be if the men
Drag us for all our kicking on to the couch?

LYSISTRATA

Cling to the doorposts.

CALONICE

But if they should force us?

LYSISTRATA

Yield then, but with a sluggish, cold indifference.
There is no joy to them in sullen mating.
Besides we have other ways to madden them;
They cannot stand up long, and they've no delight
Unless we fit their aim with merry succour.

CALONICE

Well if you must have it so, we'll all agree.

LAMPITO

For us I ha' no doubt. We can persuade
Our men to strike a fair an' decent Peace,
But how will ye pitch out the battle-frenzy
O' the Athenian populace?

LYSISTRATA

I promise you
We'll wither up that curse.

LAMPITO

I don't believe it.
Not while they own ane trireme oared an' rigged,
Or a' those stacks an' stacks an' stacks O' sillier.

LYSISTRATA

I've thought the whole thing out till there's no flaw.
We shall surprise the Acropolis today:
That is the duty set the older dames.
While we sit here talking, they are to go
And under pretence of sacrificing, seize it.

LAMPITO

Certie, that's fine; all's working for the best.

LYSISTRATA

Now quickly, Lampito, let us tie ourselves
To this high purpose as tightly as the hemp of words
Can knot together.

LAMPITO

Set out the terms in detail
And we'll a' swear to them.

LYSISTRATA

Of course.... Well then
Where is our Scythianess? Why are you staring?
First lay the shield, boss downward, on the floor
And bring the victim's inwards.

CAILONICE

But, Lysistrata,
What is this oath that we're to swear?

LYSISTRATA

What oath!

In Aeschylus they take a slaughtered sheep
And swear upon a buckler. Why not we?

CALONICE

O Lysistrata, Peace sworn on a buckler!

LYSISTRATA

What oath would suit us then?

CALONICE

Something burden bearing
Would be our best insignia.... A white horse!
Let's swear upon its entrails.

LYSISTRATA

A horse indeed!

CALONICE

Then what will symbolise us?

LYSISTRATA

This, as I tell you—
First set a great dark bowl upon the ground
And disembowel a skin of Thasian wine,
Then swear that we'll not add a drop of water.

LAMPITO

Ah, what aith could clink pleasanter than that!

LYSISTRATA

Bring me a bowl then and a skin of wine.

CALONICE

My dears, see what a splendid bowl it is;
I'd not say No if asked to sip it off.

LYSISTRATA

Put down the bowl. Lay hands, all, on the victim.
Skiey Queen who givest the last word in arguments,
And thee, O Bowl, dear comrade, we beseech:
Accept our oblation and be propitious to us.

CALONICE

What healthy blood, la, how it gushes out!

LAMPITO

An' what a leesome fragrance through the air.

LYSISTRATA

Now, dears, if you will let me, I'll speak first.

CALONICE

Only if you draw the lot, by Aphrodite!

LYSISTRATA

SO, grasp the brim, you, Lampito, and all.
You, Calonice, repeat for the rest
Each word I say. Then you must all take oath
And pledge your arms to the same stern conditions—

LYSISTRATA

To husband or lover I'll not open arms

CALONICE

To husband or lover I'll not open arms

LYSISTRATA

Though love and denial may enlarge his charms.

CALONICE

Though love and denial may enlarge his charms.
O, O, my knees are failing me, Lysistrata!

LYSISTRATA

But still at home, ignoring him, I'll stay,

CALONICE

But still at home, ignoring him, I'll stay,

LYSISTRATA

Beautiful, clad in saffron silks all day.

CALONICE

Beautiful, clad in saffron silks all day.

LYSISTRATA

If then he seizes me by dint of force,

CALONICE

If then he seizes me by dint of force,

LYSISTRATA

I'll give him reason for a long remorse.

CALONICE

I'll give him reason for a long remorse.

LYSISTRATA

I'll never lie and stare up at the ceiling,

CALONICE

I'll never lie and stare up at the ceiling,

LYSISTRATA

Nor like a lion on all fours go kneeling.

CALONICE

Nor like a lion on all fours go kneeling.

LYSISTRATA

If I keep faith, then bounteous cups be mine.

CALONICE

If I keep faith, then bounteous cups be mine.

LYSISTRATA

If not, to nauseous water change this wine.

CALONICE

If not, to nauseous water change this wine.

LYSISTRATA

Do you all swear to this?

MYRRHINE

We do, we do.

LYSISTRATA

Then I shall immolate the victim thus.

She drinks.

CALONICE

Here now, share fair, haven't we made a pact?

Let's all quaff down that friendship in our turn.

LAMPITO

Hark, what caterwauling hubbub's that?

LYSISTRATA

As I told you,

The women have appropriated the citadel.
So, Lampito, dash off to your own land
And raise the rebels there. These will serve as hostages,
While we ourselves take our places in the ranks
And drive the bolts right home.

6. Lysistrata - Part II



CALONICE

But won't the men
March straight against us?

LYSISTRATA

And what if they do?
No threat shall creak our hinges wide, no torch
Shall light a fear in us; we will come out
To Peace alone.

CALONICE

That's it, by Aphrodite!
As of old let us seem hard and obdurate.

*LAMPITO and some go off; the others go up into the
Acropolis.*

Chorus of OLD MEN enter to attack the captured Acropolis.
Make room, Draces, move ahead; why your shoulder's chafed,
I see,

With lugging uphill these lopped branches of the olive-tree.
How upside-down and wrong-way-round a long life sees things
grow.

Ah, Strymodorus, who'd have thought affairs could tangle so?

The women whom at home we fed,
Like witless fools, with fostering bread,
Have impiously come to this—
They've stolen the Acropolis,
With bolts and bars our orders flout
And shut us out.

Come, Philurgus, bustle thither; lay our faggots on the
ground,

In neat stacks beleaguering the insurgents all around;
And the vile conspiratresses, plotters of such mischief dire,
Pile and burn them all together in one vast and righteous pyre:
Fling with our own hands Lycon's wife to fry in the thickest fire.
By Demeter, they'll get no brag while I've a vein to beat!
Cleomenes himself was hurtled out in sore defeat.
His stiff-backed Spartan pride was bent.

Out, stripped of all his arms, he went:
A pigmy cloak that would not stretch
To hide his rump (the draggled wretch),
Six sprouting years of beard, the spilth
Of six years' filth.

That was a siege! Our men were ranged in lines of seventeen
deep

Before the gates, and never left their posts there, even to sleep.
Shall I not smite the rash presumption then of foes like these,
Detested both of all the gods and of Euripides—
Else, may the Marathon-plain not boast my trophied victories!

Ah, now, there's but a little space
To reach the place!
A deadly climb it is, a tricky road
With all this bumping load:
A pack-ass soon would tire....

How these logs bruise my shoulders! further still
Jog up the hill,
And puff the fire inside,
Or just as we reach the top we'll find it's died.
Ough, phew!
I choke with the smoke.

Lord Heracles, how acrid-hot
Out of the pot
This mad-dog smoke leaps, worrying me
And biting angrily....
'Tis Lemnian fire that smokes,
Or else it would not sting my eyelids thus....
Haste, all of us;
Athena invokes our aid.
Laches, now or never the assault must be made!
Ough, phew!
I choke with the smoke. ..

Thanked be the gods! The fire peeps up and crackles as it should.

Now why not first slide off our backs these weary loads of wood
And dip a vine-branch in the brazier till it glows, then straight
Hurl it at the battering-ram against the stubborn gate?
If they refuse to draw the bolts in immediate compliance,
We'll set fire to the wood, and smoke will strangle their defiance.

Phew, what a spluttering drench of smoke! Come, now from off my back....

Is there no Samos-general to help me to unpack?

Ah there, that's over! For the last time now it's galled my shoulder.

Flare up thine embers, brazier, and dutifully smoulder,
To kindle a brand, that I the first may strike the citadel.
Aid me, Lady Victory, that a triumph-trophy may tell
How we did anciently this insane audacity quell!

Chorus of WOMEN.

What's that rising yonder? That ruddy glare, that smoky skurry?

O is it something in a blaze? Quick, quick, my comrades, hurry! Nicodice, helter-skelter!

Or poor Calyce's in flames

And Cratylla's stifled in the welter.

O these dreadful old men

And their dark laws of hate!

There, I'm all of a tremble lest I turn out to be too late.

I could scarcely get near to the spring though I rose before dawn,

What with tattling of tongues and rattling of pitchers in one jostling din

With slaves pushing in!...

Still here at last the water's drawn

And with it eagerly I run

To help those of my friends who stand

In danger of being burned alive.

For I am told a dribbling band

Of greybeards hobble to the field,

Great faggots in each palsied hand,

As if a hot bath to prepare,

And threatening that out they'll drive

These wicked women or soon leave them charring into ashes there.

O Goddess, suffer not, I pray, this harsh deed to be done,

But show us Greece and Athens with their warlike acts repealed!

For this alone, in this thy hold,

Thou Goddess with the helm of gold,

We laid hands on thy sanctuary,

Athene.... Then our ally be

And where they cast their fires of slaughter

Direct our water!

STRATYLLIS (*caught*)

Let me go!

WOMEN

You villainous old men, what's this you do?

No honest man, no pious man, could do such things as you.

MEN

Ah ha, here's something most original, I have no doubt:

A swarm of women sentinels to man the walls without.

WOMEN

So then we scare you, do we? Do we seem a fearful host?

You only see the smallest fraction mustered at this post.

MEN

Ho, Phaedrias, shall we put a stop to all these chattering tricks?

Suppose that now upon their backs we splintered these our sticks?

WOMEN

Let us lay down the pitchers, so our bodies will be free,

In case these lumping fellows try to cause some injury.

MEN

O hit them hard and hit again and hit until they run away,

And perhaps they'll learn, like Bupalus, not to have too much to say.

WOMEN

Come on, then—do it! I won't budge, but like a dog I'll bite

At every little scrap of meat that dangles in my sight.

MEN

Be quiet, or I'll bash you out of any years to come.

WOMEN

Now you just touch Stratyllis with the top-joint of your thumb.

MEN

What vengeance can you take if with my fists your face I beat?

WOMEN

I'll rip you with my teeth and strew your entrails at your feet.

MEN

Now I appreciate Euripides' strange subtlety:
Woman is the most shameless beast of all the beasts that be.

WOMEN

Rhodippe, come, and let's pick up our water-jars once more.

MEN

Ah cursed drab, what have you brought this water for?

WOMEN

What is your fire for then, you smelly corpse? Yourself to burn?

MEN

To build a pyre and make your comrades ready for the urn.

WOMEN

And I've the water to put out your fire immediately.

MEN

What, you put out my fire?

WOMEN

Yes, sirrah, as you soon will see.

MEN

I don't know why I hesitate to roast you with this flame.

WOMEN

If you have any soap you'll go off cleaner than you came.

MEN

Cleaner, you dirty slut?

WOMEN

A nuptial-bath in which to lie!

MEN

Did you hear that insolence?

WOMEN

I'm a free woman, I.

MEN

I'll make you hold your tongue.



WOMEN

Henceforth you'll serve in no more juries.

MEN

Burn off her hair for her.

WOMEN

Now forward, water, quench their furies!

MEN

O dear, O dear!

WOMEN

So ... was it hot?

MEN

Hot! ... Enough, O hold.

WOMEN

Watered, perhaps you'll bloom again—why not?

MEN

Brrr, I'm wrinkled up from shivering with cold.

WOMEN

Next time you've fire you'll warm yourself and leave us to our lot.

MAGISTRATE *enters with attendant* SCYTHIANS.

MAGISTRATE

Have the luxurious rites of the women glittered
Their libertine show, their drumming tapped out crowds,

The Sabazian Mysteries summoned their mob,
Adonis been wept to death on the terraces,
As I could hear the last day in the Assembly?
For Demonstratus—let bad luck befoul him—
Was roaring, “We must sail for Sicily,”
While a woman, throwing herself about in a dance
Lopsided with drink, was shrilling out “Adonis,
Woe for Adonis.” Then Demonstratus shouted,
“We must levy hoplites at Zacynthus,”
And there the woman, up to the ears in wine,
Was screaming “Weep for Adonis” on the house-top,
The scoundrelly politician, that lunatic ox,
Bellowing bad advice through tipsy shrieks:
Such are the follies wantoning in them.

MEN

O if you knew their full effrontery!
All of the insults they’ve done, besides sousing us
With water from their pots to our public disgrace
For we stand here wringing our clothes like grown-up infants.

MAGISTRATE

By Poseidon, justly done! For in part with us
The blame must lie for dissolute behaviour
And for the pampered appetites they learn.
Thus grows the seedling lust to blossoming:
We go into a shop and say, “Here, goldsmith,
You remember the necklace that you wrought my wife;
Well, the other night in fervour of a dance
Her clasp broke open. Now I’m off for Salamis;
If you’ve the leisure, would you go tonight
And stick a bolt-pin into her opened clasp.”
Another goes to a cobbler; a soldierly fellow,
Always standing up erect, and says to him,
“Cobbler, a sandal-strap of my wife’s pinches her,

Hurts her little toe in a place where she's sensitive.
Come at noon and see if you can stretch out wider
This thing that troubles her, loosen its tightness."
And so you view the result. Observe my case—
I, a magistrate, come here to draw
Money to buy oar-blades, and what happens?
The women slam the door full in my face.
But standing still's no use. Bring me a crowbar,
And I'll chastise this their impertinence.
What do you gape at, wretch, with dazzled eyes?
Peering for a tavern, I suppose.
Come, force the gates with crowbars, prise them apart!
I'll prise away myself too.... (LYSISTRATA *appears*.)

LYSISTRATA

Stop this banging.
I'm coming of my own accord.... Why bars?
It is not bars we need but common sense.

MAGISTRATE

Indeed, you slut! Where is the archer now?
Arrest this woman, tie her hands behind.

LYSISTRATA

If he brushes me with a finger, by Artemis,
The public menial, he'll be sorry for it.

MAGISTRATE

Are you afraid? Grab her about the middle.
Two of you then, lay hands on her and end it.

CALONICE

By Pandrosos I if your hand touches her
I'll spread you out and trample on your guts.

MAGISTRATE

My guts! Where is the other archer gone?
Bind that minx there who talks so prettily.

MYRRHINE

By Phosphor, if your hand moves out her way
You'd better have a surgeon somewhere handy.

MAGISTRATE

You too! Where is that archer? Take that woman.
I'll put a stop to these surprise-parties.

STRATYLLIS

By the Tauric Artemis, one inch nearer
My fingers, and it's a bald man that'll be yelling.

MAGISTRATE

Tut tut, what's here? Deserted by my archers....
But surely women never can defeat us;
Close up your ranks, my Scythians. Forward at them.

LYSISTRATA

By the Goddesses, you'll find that here await you
Four companies of most pugnacious women
Armed cap-a-pie from the topmost luring curl
To the lowest angry dimple.

MAGISTRATE

On, Scythians, bind them.

LYSISTRATA

On, gallant allies of our high design,
Vendors of grain-eggs-pulse-and-vegetables,
Ye garlic-tavern-keepers of bakeries,
Strike, batter, knock, hit, slap, and scratch our foes,

Be finely imprudent, say what you think of them....
Enough! retire and do not rob the dead.

MAGISTRATE

How basely did my archer-force come off.

LYSISTRATA

Ah, ha, you thought it was a herd of slaves
You had to tackle, and you didn't guess
The thirst for glory ardent in our blood.

MAGISTRATE

By Apollo, I know well the thirst that heats you–
Especially when a wine-skin's close.

MEN

You waste your breath, dear magistrate, I fear, in answering
back.
What's the good of argument with such a rampageous pack?
Remember how they washed us down (these very clothes I
wore)
With water that looked nasty and that smelt so even more.

WOMEN

What else to do, since you advanced too dangerously nigh.
If you should do the same again, I'll punch you in the eye.
Though I'm a stay-at-home and most a quiet life enjoy,
Polite to all and every (for I'm naturally coy),
Still if you wake a wasps' nest then of wasps you must beware.

MEN

How may this ferocity be tamed? It grows too great to bear.
Let us question them and find if they'll perchance declare
The reason why they strangely dare
To seize on Cranaos' citadel,

This eyrie inaccessible,
This shrine above the precipice,
The Acropolis.
Probe them and find what they mean with this idle talk; listen,
but watch they don't try to deceive.
You'd be neglecting your duty most certainly if now this
mystery
unplumbed you leave.

MAGISTRATE

Women there! Tell what I ask you, directly....
Come, without rambling, I wish you to state
What's your rebellious intention in barring up thus on our
noses
our own temple-gate.

LYSISTRATA

To take first the treasury out of your management, and so
stop the war
through the absence of gold.

MAGISTRATE

Is gold then the cause of the war?

LYSISTRATA

Yes, gold caused it and miseries more, too many to be told.
'Twas for money, and money alone, that Pisander with all of the
army of
mob-agitators.
Raised up revolutions. But, as for the future, it won't be worth
while
to set up to be traitors.
Not an obol they'll get as their loot, not an obol! while we have
the
treasure-chest in our command.

MAGISTRATE

What then is that you propose?

LYSISTRATA

Just this—merely to take the exchequer henceforth in hand.

MAGISTRATE

The exchequer!

LYSISTRATA

Yes, why not? Of our capabilities you have had various clear evidences.

Firstly remember we have always administered soundly the budget of all home-expenses.

MAGISTRATE

But this matter's different.

LYSISTRATA

How is it different?

MAGISTRATE

Why, it deals chiefly with war-time supplies.

LYSISTRATA

But we abolish war straight by our policy.

MAGISTRATE

What will you do if emergencies arise?

LYSISTRATA

Face them our own way.

MAGISTRATE

What *you* will?

LYSISTRATA

Yes we will!

MAGISTRATE

Then there's no help for it; we're all destroyed.

LYSISTRATA

No, willy-nilly you must be safeguarded.

MAGISTRATE

What madness is this?

LYSISTRATA

Why, it seems you're annoyed.

It must be done, that's all.

MAGISTRATE

Such awful oppression never,

O never in the past yet I bore.

LYSISTRATA

You must be saved, sirrah—that's all there is to it.

MAGISTRATE

If we don't want to be saved?

LYSISTRATA

All the more.

MAGISTRATE

Why do you women come prying and meddling in matters of

state touching
war-time and peace?

LYSISTRATA

That I will tell you.

MAGISTRATE

O tell me or quickly I'll—

LYSISTRATA

Hearken awhile and from threatening cease.

MAGISTRATE

I cannot, I cannot; it's growing too insolent.

WOMEN

Come on; you've far more than we have to dread.

MAGISTRATE

Stop from your croaking, old carrion-crow there....
Continue.

LYSISTRATA

Be calm then and I'll go ahead.
All the long years when the hopeless war dragged along we,
unassuming,
forgotten in quiet,
Endured without question, endured in our loneliness all your
incessant
child's antics and riot.
Our lips we kept tied, though aching with silence, though well
all the
while in our silence we knew
How wretchedly everything still was progressing by listening
dumbly the

day long to you.

For always at home you continued discussing the war and its politics

loudly, and we

Sometimes would ask you, our hearts deep with sorrowing
though we spoke

lightly, though happy to see,

“What’s to be inscribed on the side of the Treaty-stone

What, dear, was said in the Assembly today?”

“Mind your own business,” he’d answer me growlingly

“hold your tongue, woman, or else go away.”

And so I would hold it.

WOMEN

I’d not be silent for any man living on earth, no, not !!

MAGISTRATE

Not for a staff?

LYSISTRATA

Well, so I did nothing but sit in the house, feeling dreary, and
sigh,

While ever arrived some fresh tale of decisions more foolish by
far and

presaging disaster.

Then I would say to him, “O my dear husband, why still do they
rush on

destruction the faster?”

At which he would look at me sideways, exclaiming, “Keep for
your web

and your shuttle your care,

Or for some hours hence your cheeks will be sore and hot; leave
this

alone, war is Man’s sole affair!”

MAGISTRATE

By Zeus, but a man of fine sense, he.

LYSISTRATA

How sensible?

You dotard, because he at no time had lent
His intractable ears to absorb from our counsel one temperate
word of

advice, kindly meant?

But when at the last in the streets we heard shouted
(everywhere ringing
the ominous cry)

“Is there no one to help us, no saviour in Athens?” and, “No,
there is

no one,” come back in reply.

At once a convention of all wives through Hellas here for a
serious

purpose was held,

To determine how husbands might yet back to wisdom despite
their

reluctance in time be compelled.

Why then delay any longer? It’s settled. For the future you’ll
take

up our old occupation.

Now in turn you’re to hold tongue, as we did, and listen while
we show

the way to recover the nation.

MAGISTRATE

You talk to us! Why, you’re mad. I’ll not stand it.

LYSISTRATA

Cease babbling, you fool; till I end, hold your tongue.

MAGISTRATE

If I should take orders from one who wears veils, may my neck straightaway be deservedly wrung.

LYSISTRATA

O if that keeps pestering you,
I've a veil here for your hair,
I'll fit you out in everything
As is only fair.

CALONICE

Here's a spindle that will do.

MYRRHINE

I'll add a wool-basket too.

LYSISTRATA

Girdled now sit humbly at home,
Munching beans, while you card wool and comb. For war from now on
is the Women's affair.

WOMEN.

Come then, down pitchers, all,
And on, courageous of heart,
In our comradely venture
Each taking her due part.

I could dance, dance, dance, and be fresher after,
I could dance away numberless suns,
To no weariness let my knees bend.
Earth I could brave with laughter,
Having such wonderful girls here to friend.
O the daring, the gracious, the beautiful ones!
Their courage unswerving and witty
Will rescue our city.

O sprung from the seed of most valiant-wombed grand-

mothers,
scions of savage and dangerous nettles!
Prepare for the battle, all. Gird up your angers. Our way
the wind of sweet victory settles.

LYSISTRATA

O tender Eros and Lady of Cyprus, some flush of beauty I
pray you devise
To flash on our bosoms and, O Aphrodite, rosily gleam on
our valorous thighs!
Joy will raise up its head through the legions warring and
all of the far-serried ranks of mad-love
Bristle the earth to the pillared horizon, pointing in vain to
the heavens above.
I think that perhaps then they'll give us our title—
Peace-makers.

MAGISTRATE

What do you mean? Please explain.

LYSISTRATA

First, we'll not see you now flourishing arms about into the
Marketing-place clang again.

WOMEN

No, by the Paphian.

LYSISTRATA

Still I can conjure them as past were the herbs stand or
crockery's sold
Like Corybants jingling (poor sots) fully armoured, they noisily
round
on their promenade strolled.

MAGISTRATE

And rightly; that's discipline, they–

LYSISTRATA

But what's sillier than to go on an errand of buying a fish
Carrying along an immense. Gorgon-buckler instead the usual
platter
or dish?
A phylarch I lately saw, mounted on horse-back, dressed for the
part
with long ringlets and all,
Stow in his helmet the omelet bought steaming from an old
woman who
kept a food-stall.
Nearby a soldier, a Thracian, was shaking wildly his spear like
Tereus
in the play,
To frighten a fig-girl while unseen the ruffian filched from her
fruit-trays the ripest away.

MAGISTRATE

How, may I ask, will your rule re-establish order and justice in
lands
so tormented?

LYSISTRATA

Nothing is easier.

MAGISTRATE

Out with it speedily–what is this plan that you boast you've
invented?

LYSISTRATA

If, when yarn we are winding, It chances to tangle, then, as
perchance you
may know, through the skein

This way and that still the spool we keep passing till it is finally clear

all again:

So to untangle the War and its errors, ambassadors out on all sides we will

send

This way and that, here, there and round about—soon you will find that the

War has an end.

MAGISTRATE

So with these trivial tricks of the household, domestic analogies of

threads, skeins and spools,

You think that you'll solve such a bitter complexity, unwind such political

problems, you fools!

LYSISTRATA

Well, first as we wash dirty wool so's to cleanse it, so with a pitiless

zeal we will scrub

Through the whole city for all greasy fellows; burrs too, the parasites,

off we will rub.

That verminous plague of insensate place-seekers soon between thumb and

forefinger we'll crack.

All who inside Athens' walls have their dwelling into one great common

basket we'll pack.

Disenfranchised or citizens, allies or aliens, pell-mell the lot of them

in we will squeeze.

Till they discover humanity's meaning.... As for disjointed and

far
colonies,
Then you must never from this time imagine as scattered
about just like
lost hanks of wool.
Each portion we'll take and wind in to this centre, inward to
Athens
each loyalty pull,
Till from the vast heap where all's piled together at last can be
woven
a strong Cloak of State.

MAGISTRATE

How terrible is it to stand here and watch them carding and
winding at
will with our fate,
Witless in war as they are.

LYSISTRATA

What of us then, who ever in vain for our children must weep
Borne but to perish afar and in vain?

MAGISTRATE

Not that, O let that one memory sleep!

LYSISTRATA

Then while we should be companioned still merrily, happy as
brides may,
the livelong night,
Kissing youth by, we are forced to lie single.... But leave for a
moment
our pitiful plight,
It hurts even more to behold the poor maidens helpless
wrinkling in
staler virginity.

MAGISTRATE

Does not a man age?

LYSISTRATA

Not in the same way. Not as a woman grows withered, grows he.

He, when returned from the war, though grey-headed, yet if he wishes can choose out a wife.

But she has no solace save peering for omens, wretched and lonely the rest of her life.

MAGISTRATE

But the old man will often select—

LYSISTRATA

O why not finish and die?

A bier is easy to buy,

A honey-cake I'll knead you with joy,

This garland will see you are decked.

CALONICE

I've a wreath for you too.

MYRRHINE

I also will fillet you.

LYSISTRATA

What more is lacking? Step aboard the boat.

See, Charon shouts ahoy.

You're keeping him, he wants to shove afloat.

MAGISTRATE

Outrageous insults! Thus my place to flout!

Now to my fellow-magistrates I'll go
And what you've perpetrated on me show.

LYSISTRATA

Why are you blaming us for laying you out?
Assure yourself we'll not forget to make
The third day offering early for your sake.

MAGISTRATE *retires*, LYSISTRATA *returns within*.

OLD MEN.

All men who call your loins your own, awake at last, arise
And strip to stand in readiness. For as it seems to me
Some more perilous offensive in their heads they now devise.
I'm sure a Tyranny
Like that of Hippias
In this I detect....
They mean to put us under
Themselves I suspect,
And that Laconians assembling
At Cleisthenes' house have played
A trick-of-war and provoked them
Madly to raid
The Treasury, in which term I include
The Pay for my food.

For is it not preposterous
They should talk this way to us
On a subject such as battle!

And, women as they are, about bronze bucklers dare prattle—
Make alliance with the Spartans—people I for one
Like very hungry wolves would always most sincere shun....
Some dirty game is up their sleeve,
I believe.
A Tyranny, no doubt... but they won't catch me, that know.
Henceforth on my guard I'll go,

A sword with myrtle-branches wreathed for ever in my hand,
And under arms in the Public Place I'll take my watchful stand,
Shoulder to shoulder with Aristogeiton. Now my staff I'll draw
And start at once by knocking
that shocking
Hag upon the jaw.

WOMEN.

Your own mother will not know you when you get back to the town.

But first, my friends and allies, let us lay these garments down,
And all ye fellow-citizens, hark to me while I tell
What will aid Athens well.

Just as is right, for I
Have been a sharer
In all the lavish splendour
Of the proud city.

I bore the holy vessels
At seven, then
I pounded barley
At the age of ten,
And clad in yellow robes,
Soon after this,

I was Little Bear to
Brauronian Artemis;
Then neckletted with figs,
Grown tall and pretty,
I was a Basket-bearer,
And so it's obvious I should
Give you advice that I think good,
The very best I can.

It should not prejudice my voice that I'm not born a man,
If I say something advantageous to the present situation.
For I'm taxed too, and as a toll provide men for the nation
While, miserable greybeards, you,

It is true,
Contribute nothing of any importance whatever to our needs;
But the treasure raised against the Medes
You've squandered, and do nothing in return, save that you
make
Our lives and persons hazardous by some imbecile mistakes
What can you answer? Now be careful, don't arouse my spite,
Or with my slipper I'll take you napping,
faces slapping
Left and right.

MEN.

What villainies they contrive!
Come, let vengeance fall,
You that below the waist are still alive,
Off with your tunics at my call—
Naked, all.
For a man must strip to battle like a man.
No quaking, brave steps taking, careless what's ahead, white
shoed,
in the nude, onward bold,
All ye who garrisoned Leipsidrion of old....
Let each one wag
As youthfully as he can,
And if he has the cause at heart
Rise at least a span.

We must take a stand and keep to it,
For if we yield the smallest bit
To their importunity.
Then nowhere from their inroads will be left to us immunity.
But they'll be building ships and soon their navies will attack
us,
As Artemisia did, and seek to fight us and to sack us.
And if they mount, the Knights they'll rob
Of a job,

For everyone knows how talented they all are in the saddle,
Having long practised how to straddle;
No matter how they're jogged there up and down, they're
never thrown.
Then think of Myron's painting, and each horse-backed
Amazon
In combat hand-to-hand with men.... Come, on these women
fall,
And in pierced wood-collars let's stick
quick
The necks of one and all.

WOMEN.

Don't cross me or I'll loose
The Beast that's kennelled here....
And soon you will be howling for a truce,
Howling out with fear.
But my dear,
Strip also, that women may battle unhindered....
But you, you'll be too sore to eat garlic more, or one black bean,
I really mean, so great's my spleen, to kick you black and blue
With these my dangerous legs.
I'll hatch the lot of you,
If my rage you dash on,
The way the relentless Beetle
Hatched the Eagle's eggs.
Scornfully aside I set
Every silly old-man threat
While Lampito's with me.
Or dear Ismenia, the noble Theban girl. Then let decree
Be hotly piled upon decree; in vain will be your labours,
You futile rogue abominated by your suffering neighbour
To Hecate's feast I yesterday went.
Off I sent
To our neighbours in Boeotia, asking as a gift to me

For them to pack immediately
That darling dainty thing ... a good fat eel [1] I meant of course;
[Footnote 1: *Vide supra*, p. 23.]

But they refused because some idiotic old decree's in force.
O this strange passion for decrees nothing on earth can check,
Till someone puts a foot out tripping you,
and slipping you
Break your neck.

LYSISTRATA *enters in dismay.*

WOMEN
Dear Mistress of our martial enterprise,
Why do you come with sorrow in your eyes?

LYSISTRATA
O 'tis our naughty femininity,
So weak in one spot, that hath saddened me.

WOMEN
What's this? Please speak.

LYSISTRATA
Poor women, O so weak!

WOMEN
What can it be? Surely your friends may know.

LYSISTRATA
Yea, I must speak it though it hurt me so.

WOMEN
Speak; can we help? Don't stand there mute in need.

LYSISTRATA

I'll blurt it out then—our women's army's mutinied.

WOMEN

O Zeus!

LYSISTRATA

What use is Zeus to our anatomy?

Here is the gaping calamity I meant:

I cannot shut their ravenous appetites

A moment more now. They are all deserting.

The first I caught was sidling through the postern

Close by the Cave of Pan: the next hoisting herself

With rope and pulley down: a third on the point

Of slipping past: while a fourth malcontent, seated

For instant flight to visit Orsilochnus

On bird-back, I dragged off by the hair in time....

They are all snatching excuses to sneak home.

Look, there goes one.... Hey, what's the hurry?

1ST WOMAN

I must get home. I've some Milesian wool

Packed wasting away, and moths are pushing through it.

LYSISTRATA

Fine moths indeed, I know. Get back within.

1ST WOMAN

By the Goddesses, I'll return instantly.

I only want to stretch it on my bed.

LYSISTRATA

You shall stretch nothing and go nowhere either.

1ST WOMAN

Must I never use my wool then?

LYSISTRATA

If needs be.

2ND WOMAN

How unfortunate I am! O my poor flax!
It's left at home unstript.

LYSISTRATA

So here's another
That wishes to go home and strip her flax.
Inside again!

2ND WOMAN

No, by the Goddess of Light,
I'll be back as soon as I have flayed it properly.

LYSISTRATA

You'll not flay anything. For if you begin
There'll not be one here but has a patch to be flayed.

3RD WOMAN

O holy Eilithya, stay this birth
Till I have left the precincts of the place!

LYSISTRATA

What nonsense is this?

3RD WOMAN

I'll drop it any minute.

LYSISTRATA

Yesterday you weren't with child.

3RD WOMAN

But I am today.
O let me find a midwife, Lysistrata.
O quickly!

LYSISTRATA
Now what story is this you tell?
What is this hard lump here?

3RD WOMAN
It's a male child.

LYSISTRATA
By Aphrodite, it isn't. Your belly's hollow,
And it has the feel of metal.... Well, I soon can see.
You hussy, it's Athene's sacred helm,
And you said you were with child.

3RD WOMAN
And so I am.

LYSISTRATA
Then why the helm?

3RD WOMAN
So if the throes should take me
Still in these grounds I could use it like a dove
As a laying-nest in which to drop the child.

LYSISTRATA
More pretexts! You can't hide your clear intent,
And anyway why not wait till the tenth day
Meditating a brazen name for your brass brat?

WOMAN

And I can't sleep a wink. My nerve is gone
Since I saw that snake-sentinel of the shrine.

WOMAN

And all those dreadful owls with their weird hooting!
Though I'm wearied out, I can't close an eye.

LYSISTRATA

You wicked women, cease from juggling lies.
You want your men. But what of them as well?
They toss as sleepless in the lonely night,
I'm sure of it. Hold out awhile, hold out,
But persevere a teeny-weeny longer.
An oracle has promised Victory
If we don't wrangle. Would you hear the words?

WOMEN

Yes, yes, what is it?

LYSISTRATA

Silence then, you chatterboxes.
Here—
*Whenas the swallows flocking in one place from the hoopoes
Deny themselves love's gambols any more,
All woes shall then have ending and great Zeus the Thunderer
Shall put above what was below before.*

WOMEN

Will the men then always be kept under us?

LYSISTRATA

*But if the swallows squabble among themselves and fly away
Out of the temple, refusing to agree,
Then The Most Wanton Birds in all the World
They shall be named for ever. That's his decree.*

WOMAN

It's obvious what it means.

LYSISTRATA

Now by all the gods

We must let no agony deter from duty,

Back to your quarters. For we are base indeed,

My friends, if we betray the oracle.

She goes out.

OLD MEN.

I'd like to remind you of a fable they used to employ,

When I was a little boy:

How once through fear of the marriage-bed a young man,

Melanion by name, to the wilderness ran,

And there on the hills he dwelt.

For hares he wove a net

Which with his dog he set—

Most likely he's there yet.

For he never came back home, so great was the fear he felt.

I loathe the sex as much as he,

And therefore I no less shall be

As chaste as was Melanion.

MAN

Grann'am, do you much mind men?

WOMAN

Onions you won't need, to cry.

MAN

From my foot you shan't escape.

WOMAN

What thick forests I espy.

MEN

So much Myronides' fierce beard
And thundering black back were feared,
That the foe fled when they were shown—
Brave he as Phormion.

WOMEN.

Well, I'll relate a rival fable just to show to you
A different point of view:
There was a rough-hewn fellow, Timon, with a face
That glowered as through a thorn-bush in a wild, bleak place.
He too decided on flight,
This very Furies' son,
All the world's ways to shun
And hide from everyone,
Spitting out curses on all knavish men to left and right.
But though he reared this hate for men,
He loved the women even then,
And never thought them enemies.

WOMAN

O your jaw I'd like to break.

MAN

That I fear do you suppose?

WOMAN

Learn what kicks my legs can make.

MAN

Raise them up, and you'll expose—

7. Lysistrata - Part III

WOMAN

Nay, you'll see there, I engage,
All is well kept despite my age,
And tended smooth enough to slip
From any adversary's grip.

LYSISTRATA *appears.*

LYSISTRATA

Hollo there, hasten hither to me
Skip fast along.

WOMAN

What is this? Why the noise?

LYSISTRATA

A man, a man! I spy a frenzied man!
He carries Love upon him like a staff.
O Lady of Cyprus, and Cythera, and Paphos,
I beseech you, keep our minds and hands to the oath.

WOMAN

Where is he, whoever he is?

LYSISTRATA

By the Temple of Chloe.

WOMAN

Yes, now I see him, but who can he be?

LYSISTRATA

Look at him. Does anyone recognise his face?

MYRRHINE

I do. He is my husband, Cinesias.

LYSISTRATA

You know how to work. Play with him, lead him on,
Seduce him to the cozening-point—kiss him, kiss him,
Then slip your mouth aside just as he's sure of it,
Ungirdle every caress his mouth feels at
Save that the oath upon the bowl has locked.

MYRRHINE

You can rely on me.

LYSISTRATA

I'll stay here to help
In working up his ardor to its height
Of vain magnificence.... The rest to their quarters.

Enter CINESIAS.

Who is this that stands within our lines?

CINESIAS

I.

LYSISTRATA

A man?

CINESIAS

Too much a man!

LYSISTRATA

Then be off at once.

CINESIAS

Who are you that thus eject me?

LYSISTRATA

Guard for the day.

CINESIAS

By all the gods, then call Myrrhine hither.

LYSISTRATA

So, call Myrrhine hither! Who are you?

CINESIAS

I am her husband Cinesias, son of Anthros.

LYSISTRATA

Welcome, dear friend! That glorious name of yours
Is quite familiar in our ranks. Your wife
Continually has it in her mouth.
She cannot touch an apple or an egg
But she must say, "This to Cinesias!"

CINESIAS

O is that true?

LYSISTRATA

By Aphrodite, it is.
If the conversation strikes on men, your wife
Cuts in with, "All are boobies by Cinesias."

CINESIAS

Then call her here.

LYSISTRATA

And what am I to get?

CINESIAS

This, if you want it.... See, what I have here.
But not to take away.

LYSISTRATA

Then I'll call her.

CINESIAS

Be quick, be quick. All grace is wiped from life
Since she went away. O sad, sad am I
When there I enter on that loneliness,
And wine is unvintaged of the sun's flavour.
And food is tasteless. But I've put on weight.

MYRRHINE (*above*)

I love him O so much! but he won't have it.
Don't call me down to him.

CINESIAS

Sweet little Myrrhine!
What do you mean? Come here.

MYRRHINE

O no I won't.
Why are you calling me? You don't want me.

CINESIAS

Not want you! with this week-old strength of love.

MYRRHINE

Farewell.

CINESIAS

Don't go, please don't go, Myrrhine.
At least you'll hear our child. Call your mother, lad.

CHILD

Mummy ... mummy ... mummy!

CINESIAS

There now, don't you feel pity for the child?
He's not been fed or washed now for six days.

MYRRHINE

I certainly pity him with so heartless a father.

CINESIAS

Come down, my sweetest, come for the child's sake.

MYRRHINE

A trying life it is to be a mother!
I suppose I'd better go. *She comes down.*

CINESIAS

How much younger she looks,
How fresher and how prettier! Myrrhine,
Lift up your lovely face, your disdainful face;
And your ankle ... let your scorn step out its worst;
It only rubs me to more ardor here.

MYRRHINE (*playing with the child*)

You're as innocent as he's iniquitous.
Let me kiss you, honey-petting, mother's darling.

CINESIAS

How wrong to follow other women's counsel
And let loose all these throbbing voids in yourself
As well as in me. Don't you go throb-throb?

MYRRHINE

Take away your hands.

CINESIAS

Everything in the house
Is being ruined.

MYRRHINE

I don't care at all.

CINESIAS

The roosters are picking all your web to rags.
Do you mind that?

MYRRHINE

Not I.

CINESIAS

What time we've wasted
We might have drenched with Paphian laughter, flung
On Aphrodite's Mysteries. O come here.

MYRRHINE

Not till a treaty finishes the war.

CINESIAS

If you must have it, then we'll get it done.

MYRRHINE

Do it and I'll come home. Till then I am bound.

CINESIAS

Well, can't your oath perhaps be got around?

MYRRHINE

No ... no ... still I'll not say that I don't love you.

CINESIAS

You love me! Then dear girl, let me also love you.

MYRRHINE

You must be joking. The boy's looking on.

CINESIAS

Here, Manes, take the child home!... There, he's gone.
There's nothing in the way now. Come to the point.

MYRRHINE

Here in the open! In plain sight?

CINESIAS

In Pan's cave.
A splendid place.

MYRRHINE

Where shall I dress my hair again
Before returning to the citadel?

CINESIAS

You can easily primp yourself in the Clepsydra.

MYRRHINE

But how can I break my oath?

CINESIAS

Leave that to me,
I'll take all risk.

MYRRHINE

Well, I'll make you comfortable.

CINESIAS

Don't worry. I'd as soon lie on the grass.

MYRRHINE

No, by Apollo, in spite of all your faults
I won't have you lying on the nasty earth.
(From here MYRRHINE keeps on going off to fetch things.)

CINESIAS

Ah, how she loves me.

MYRRHINE

Rest there on the bench,
While I arrange my clothes. O what a nuisance,
I must find some cushions first.

CINESIAS

Why some cushions?
Please don't get them!

MYRRHINE

What? The plain, hard wood?
Never, by Artemis! That would be too vulgar.

CINESIAS

Open your arms!

MYRRHINE

No. Wait a second.

CINESIAS

O....
Then hurry back again.

MYRRHINE

Here the cushions are.
Lie down while I—O dear! But what a shame,
You need more pillows.

CINESIAS
I don't want them, dear.

MYRRHINE
But I do.

CINESIAS
Thwarted affection mine,
They treat you just like Heracles at a feast
With cheats of dainties, O disappointing arms!

MYRRHINE
Raise up your head.

CINESIAS
There, that's everything at last.

MYRRHINE
Yes, all.

CINESIAS
Then run to my arms, you golden girl.

MYRRHINE
I'm loosening my girdle now. But you've not forgotten?
You're not deceiving me about the Treaty?

CINESIAS
No, by my life, I'm not.

MYRRHINE

Why, you've no blanket.

CINESIAS

It's not the silly blanket's warmth but yours I want.

MYRRHINE

Never mind. You'll soon have both. I'll come straight back.

CINESIAS

The woman will choke me with her coverlets.

MYRRHINE

Get up a moment.

CINESIAS

I'm up high enough.

MYRRHINE

Would you like me to perfume you?

CINESIAS

By Apollo, no!

MYRRHINE

By Aphrodite, I'll do it anyway.

CINESIAS

Lord Zeus, may she soon use up all the myrrh.

MYRRHINE

Stretch out your hand. Take it and rub it in.

CINESIAS

Hmm, it's not as fragrant as might be; that is,
Not before it's smeared. It doesn't smell of kisses.

MYRRHINE

How silly I am: I've brought you Rhodian scents.

CINESIAS

It's good enough, leave it, love.

MYRRHINE

You must be jesting.

CINESIAS

Plague rack the man who first compounded scent!

MYRRHINE

Here, take this flask.

CINESIAS

I've a far better one.

Don't tease me, come here, and get nothing more.

MYRRHINE

I'm coming.... I'm just drawing off my shoes....

You're sure you will vote for Peace?

CINESIAS

I'll think about it.

She runs off.

I'm dead: the woman's worn me all away.

She's gone and left me with an anguished pulse.

MEN

Baulked in your amorous delight

How melancholy is your plight.

With sympathy your case I view;

For I am sure it's hard on you.

What human being could sustain
This unforeseen domestic strain,
And not a single trace
Of willing women in the place!

CINESIAS

O Zeus, what throbbing suffering!

MEN

She did it all, the harlot, she
With her atrocious harlotry.

WOMEN

Nay, rather call her darling-sweet.

MEN

What, sweet? She's a rude, wicked thing.

CINESIAS

A wicked thing, as I repeat.
O Zeus, O Zeus,
Canst Thou not suddenly let loose
Some twirling hurricane to tear
Her flapping up along the air
And drop her, when she's whirled around,
Here to the ground
Neatly impaled upon the stake
That's ready upright for her sake.
He goes out.

Enter SPARTAN HERALD.

The MAGISTRATE comes forward.

HERALD

What here gabs the Senate an' the Prytanes?
I've fetcht despatches for them.

MAGISTRATE
Are you a man
Or a monstrosity?

HERALD
My scrimp-brained lad,
I'm a herald, as ye see, who hae come frae Sparta
Anent a Peace.

MAGISTRATE
Then why do you hide that lance
That sticks out under your arms?

HERALD.
I've brought no lance.

MAGISTRATE
Then why do you turn aside and hold your cloak
So far out from your body? Is your groin swollen
With stress of travelling?

HERALD
By Castor, I'll swear
The man is wud.

MAGISTRATE
Indeed, your cloak is wide,
My rascal fellow.

HERALD
But I tell ye No!
Enow o' fleeing!

MAGISTRATE

Well, what is it then?

HERALD

It's my despatch cane.

MAGISTRATE

Of course—a Spartan cane!

But speak right out. I know all this too well.
Are new privations springing up in Sparta?

HERALD

Och, hard as could be: in lofty lusty columns
Our allies stand united. We maun get Pellene.

MAGISTRATE

Whence has this evil come? Is it from Pan?

HERALD

No. Lampito first ran asklent, then the others
Sprinted after her example, and blocked, the hizzies,
Their wames unskaited against our every fleece.

MAGISTRATE

What did you do?

HERALD

We are broken, and bent double,
Limp like men carrying lanthorns in great winds
About the city. They winna let us even
Wi' lightest neif skim their primsie pretties
Till we've concluded Peace-terms wi' a' Hellas.

MAGISTRATE

So the conspiracy is universal;
This proves it. Then return to Sparta. Bid them
Send envoys with full powers to treat of Peace;
And I will urge the Senate here to choose
Plenipotentiary ambassadors,
As argument adducing this connection.

HERALD

I'm off. Your wisdom none could contravert.
They retire.

MEN

There is no beast, no rush of fire, like woman so untamed.
She calmly goes her way where even panthers would be
shamed.

WOMEN

And yet you are fool enough, it seems, to dare to war with me,
When for your faithful ally you might win me easily.

MEN

Never could the hate I feel for womankind grow less.

WOMEN

Then have your will. But I'll take pity on your nakedness.
For I can see just how ridiculous you look, and so
Will help you with your tunic if close up I now may go.

MEN

Well, that, by Zeus, is no scoundrel-deed, I frankly will admit.
I only took them off myself in a scoundrel raging-fit.

WOMEN

Now you look sensible, and that you're men no one could
doubt.

If you were but good friends again, I'd take the insect out
That hurts your eye.

MEN

Is that what's wrong? That nasty bitie thing.
Please squeeze it out, and show me what it is that makes this
sting.
It's been painin' me a long while now.

WOMEN

Well I'll agree to that,
Although you're most unmannerly. O what a giant gnat.
Here, look! It comes from marshy Tricorysus, I can tell.

MEN

O thank you. It was digging out a veritable well.
Now that it's gone, I can't hold back my tears. See how they fall.

WOMEN

I'll wipe them off, bad as you are, and kiss you after all.

MEN

I won't be kissed.

WOMEN

O yes, you will. Your wishes do not matter.

MEN

O botheration take you all! How you cajole and flatter.
A hell it is to live with you; to live without, a hell:
How truly was that said. But come, these enmities let's quell.
You stop from giving orders and I'll stop from doing wrong.
So let's join ranks and seal our bargain with a choric song.

CHORUS.

Athenians, it's not our intention
To sow political dissension
By giving any scandal mention;
But on the contrary to promote good feeling in the state
By word and deed. We've had enough calamities of late.
So let a man or woman but divulge
They need a trifle, say,
Two minas, three or four,
I've purses here that bulge.
There's only one condition made
(Indulge my whim in this I pray)–
When Peace is signed once more,
On no account am I to be repaid.

And I'm making preparation
For a gay select collation
With some youths of reputation.
I've managed to produce some soup and they're slaughtering
for me
A sucking-pig: its flesh should taste as tender as could be.
I shall expect you at my house today.
To the baths make an early visit,
And bring your children along;
Don't dawdle on the way.
Ask no one; enter as if the place
Was all your own–yours henceforth is it.
If nothing chances wrong,
The door will then be shut bang in your face.

The SPARTAN AMBASSADORS approach.

CHORUS

Here come the Spartan envoys with long, worried beards.
Hail, Spartans how do you fare?
Did anything new arise?

SPARTANS

No need for a clutter o' words. Do ye see our condition?

CHORUS

The situation swells to greater tension.
Something will explode soon.

SPARTANS

It's awfu' truly.
But come, let us wi' the best speed we may
Scribble a Peace.

CHORUS

I notice that our men
Like wrestlers poised for contest, hold their clothes
Out from their bellies. An athlete's malady!
Since exercise alone can bring relief.

ATHENIANS

Can anyone tell us where Lysistrata is?
There is no need to describe our men's condition,
It shows up plainly enough.

CHORUS

It's the same disease.
Do you feel a jerking throbbing in the morning?

ATHENIANS

By Zeus, yes! In these straits, I'm racked all through.
Unless Peace is soon declared, we shall be driven
In the void of women to try Cleisthenes.

CHORUS

Be wise and cover those things with your tunics.
Who knows what kind of person may perceive you?

ATHENIANS

By Zeus, you're right.

SPARTANS

By the Twa Goddesses,

Indeed ye are. Let's put our tunics on.

ATHENIANS

Hail O my fellow-sufferers, hail Spartans.

SPARTANS

O hinnie darling, what a waefu' thing!

If they had seen us wi' our lunging waddies!

ATHENIANS

Tell us then, Spartans, what has brought you here?

SPARTANS

We come to treat o' Peace.

ATHENIANS

Well spoken there!

And we the same. Let us callout Lysistrata

Since she alone can settle the Peace-terms.

SPARTANS

Callout Lysistratus too if ye don't mind.

CHORUS

No indeed. She hears your voices and she comes.

Enter LYSISTRATA

Hail, Wonder of all women! Now you must be in turn

Hard, shifting, clear, deceitful, noble, crafty, sweet, and stern.

The foremost men of Hellas, smitten by your fascination,

Have brought their tangled quarrels here for your sole arbitration.

LYSISTRATA

An easy task if the love's raging home-sickness
Doesn't start trying out how well each other
Will serve instead of us. But I'll know at once
If they do. O where's that girl, Reconciliation?
Bring first before me the Spartan delegates,
And see you lift no rude or violent hands—
None of the churlish ways our husbands used.
But lead them courteously, as women should.
And if they grudge fingers, guide them by other methods,
And introduce them with ready tact. The Athenians
Draw by whatever offers you a grip.
Now, Spartans, stay here facing me. Here you,
Athenians. Both hearken to my words.
I am a woman, but I'm not a fool.
And what of natural intelligence I own
Has been filled out with the remembered precepts
My father and the city-elders taught me.
First I reproach you both sides equally
That when at Pylae and Olympia,
At Pytho and the many other shrines
That I could name, you sprinkle from one cup
The altars common to all Hellenes, yet
You wrack Hellenic cities, bloody Hellas
With deaths of her own sons, while yonder clangs
The gathering menace of barbarians.

ATHENIANS

We cannot hold it in much longer now.

LYSISTRATA

Now unto you, O Spartans, do I speak.

Do you forget how your own countryman,
Pericleidas, once came hither suppliant
Before our altars, pale in his purple robes,
Praying for an army when in Messenia
Danger growled, and the Sea-god made earth quaver.
Then with four thousand hoplites Cimon marched
And saved all Sparta. Yet base ingrates now,
You are ravaging the soil of your preservers.

ATHENIANS

By Zeus, they do great wrong, Lysistrata.

SPARTANS

Great wrong, indeed. O! What a luscious wench!

LYSISTRATA

And now I turn to the Athenians.
Have you forgotten too how once the Spartans
In days when you wore slavish tunics, came
And with their spears broke a Thessalian host
And all the partisans of Hippias?
They alone stood by your shoulder on that day.
They freed you, so that for the slave's short skirt
You should wear the trailing cloak of liberty.

SPARTANS

I've never seen a nobler woman anywhere.

ATHENIANS

Nor I one with such prettily jointing hips.

LYSISTRATA

Now, brethren twined with mutual benefactions,
Can you still war, can you suffer such disgrace?
Why not be friends? What is there to prevent you?

SPARTANS

We're agreed, gin that we get this tempting Mole.

LYSISTRATA

Which one?

SPARTANS

That ane we've wanted to get into,
O for sae lang.... Pylos, of course.

ATHENIANS

By Poseidon,
Never!

LYSISTRATA

Give it up.

ATHENIANS

Then what will we do?
We need that ticklish place united to us—

LYSISTRATA

Ask for some other lurking-hole in return.

ATHENIANS

Then, ah, we'll choose this snug thing here, Echinus,
Shall we call the nestling spot? And this backside haven,
These desirable twin promontories, the Maliac,
And then of course these Megarean Legs.

SPARTANS

Not that, O surely not that, never that.

LYSISTRATA

Agree! Now what are two legs more or less?

ATHENIANS

I want to strip at once and plough my land.

SPARTANS

And mine I want to fertilize at once.

LYSISTRATA

And so you can, when Peace is once declared.
If you mean it, get your allies' heads together
And come to some decision.

ATHENIANS

What allies?

There's no distinction in our politics:
We've risen as one man to this conclusion;
Every ally is jumping-mad to drive it home.

SPARTANS

And ours the same, for sure.

ATHENIANS

The Carystians first!
I'll bet on that.

LYSISTRATA

I agree with all of you.
Now off, and cleanse yourselves for the Acropolis,
For we invite you all in to a supper
From our commissariat baskets. There at table
You will pledge good behaviour and uprightness;
Then each man's wife is his to hustle home.

ATHENIANS

Come, as quickly as possible.

SPARTANS

As quick as ye like.

Lead on.

ATHENIANS

O Zeus, quick, quick, lead quickly on.

They hurry off.

CHORUS.

Broidered stuffs on high I'm heaping,
Fashionable cloaks and sweeping
Trains, not even gold gawds keeping.
Take them all, I pray you, take them all (I do not care)
And deck your children—your daughter, if the Basket she's to
bear.

Come, everyone of you, come in and take
Of this rich hoard a share.
Nought's tied so skilfully
But you its seal can break
And plunder all you spy inside.
I've laid out all that I can spare,
And therefore you will see
Nothing unless than I you're sharper-eyed.
If lacking corn a man should be
While his slaves clamour hungrily
And his excessive progeny,
Then I've a handfull of grain at home which is always to be had,
And to which in fact a more-than-life-size loaf I'd gladly add.

Then let the poor bring with them bag or sack
And take this store of food.
Manes, my man, I'll tell
To help them all to pack

Their wallets full. But O take care.
I had forgotten; don't intrude,
Or terrified you'll yell.
My dog is hungry too, and bites—beware!

*Some LOUNGERS from the Market with torches approach
the Banqueting hall. The PORTER bars their entrance.*

1ST MARKET-LOUNGER

Open the door.

PORTER

Here move along.

1ST MARKET-LOUNGER

What's this?

You're sitting down. Shall I singe you with my torch?
That's vulgar! O I couldn't do it ... yet
If it would gratify the audience,
I'll mortify myself.

2ND MARKET-LOUNGER

And I will too.

We'll both be crude and vulgar, yes we will.

PORTER

Be off at once now or you'll be wailing
Dirges for your hair. Get off at once,
And see you don't disturb the Spartan envoys
Just coming out from the splendid feast they've had.
The banqueters begin to come out.

1ST ATHENIAN

I've never known such a pleasant banquet before,

And what delightful fellows the Spartans are.
When we are warm with wine, how wise we grow.

2ND ATHENIAN

That's only fair, since sober we're such fools:
This is the advice I'd give the Athenians—
See our ambassadors are always drunk.
For when we visit Sparta sober, then
We're on the alert for trickery all the while
So that we miss half of the things they say,
And misinterpret things that were never said,
And then report the muddle back to Athens.
But now we're charmed with each other. They might cap
With the Telamon-catch instead of the Cleitagora,
And we'd applaud and praise them just the same;
We're not too scrupulous in weighing words.

PORTER

Why, here the rascals come again to plague me.
Won't you move on, you sorry loafers there!

MARKET-LOUNGER

Yes, by Zeus, they're already coming out.

SPARTANS

Now hinnie dearest, please tak' up your pipe
That I may try a spring an' sing my best
In honour o' the Athenians an' oursels.

ATHENIANS

Aye, take your pipe. By all the gods, there's nothing
Could glad my heart more than to watch you dance.

SPARTANS.

Mnemosyne,

Let thy fire storm these younkers,
O tongue wi' stormy ecstasy
My Muse that knows
Our deeds and theirs, how when at sea
Their navies swooped upon
The Medes at Artemision—
Gods for their courage, did they strike
Wrenching a triumph frae their foes;
While at Thermopylae
Leonidas' army stood: wild-boars they were like
Wild-boars that wi' fierce threat
Their terrible tusks whet;
The sweat ran streaming down each twisted face,
Faen blossoming i' strange petals o' death
Panted frae mortal breath,
The sweat drenched a' their bodies i' that place,
For the hurly-burly o' Persians glittered more
Than the sands on the shore.
Come, Hunting Girl, an' hear my prayer—
You whose arrows whizz in woodlands, come an' bless
This Peace we swear.
Let us be fenced wi' age long amity,
O let this bond stick ever firm through thee
In friendly happiness.
Henceforth no guilefu' perjury be seen!
O hither, hither O
Thou wildwood queen.

LYSISTRATA

Earth is delighted now, peace is the voice of earth.
Spartans, sort out your wives: Athenians, yours.
Let each catch hands with his wife and dance his joy,
Dance out his thanks, be grateful in music,
And promise reformation with his heels.

ATHENIANS.

O Dancers, forward. Lead out the Graces,
Call Artemis out;
Then her brother, the Dancer of Skies,
That gracious Apollo.
Invoke with a shout
Dionysus out of whose eyes
Breaks fire on the maenads that follow;
And Zeus with his flares of quick lightning, and call,
Happy Hera, Queen of all,
And all the Daimons summon hither to be
Witnesses of our revelry
And of the noble Peace we have made,
Aphrodite our aid.

Io Paieon, Io, cry—
For victory, leap!
Attained by me, leap!
Euoi Euoi Euai Euai.

SPARTANS

Piper, gie us the music for a new sang.

SPARTANS.

Leaving again lovely lofty Taygetus
Hither O Spartan Muse, hither to greet us,
And wi' our choric voice to raise
To Amyclean Apollo praise,
And Tyndareus' gallant sons whose days
Along Eurotas' banks merrily pass,
An' Athene o' the House o' Brass.

Now the dance begin;
Dance, making swirl your fringe o' woolly skin,
While we join voices
To hymn dear Sparta that rejoices
I' a beautifu' sang,

An' loves to see
Dancers tangled beautifully;
For the girls i' tumbled ranks
Along Eurotas' banks
Like wanton fillies thrang,
Frolicking there

An' like Bacchantes shaking the wild air
To comb a giddy laughter through the hair,
Bacchantes that clench thyrsi as they sweep
To the ecstatic leap.

An' Helen, Child o' Leda, come
Thou holy, nimble, gracefu' Queen,
Lead thou the dance, gather thy joyous tresses up i' bands
An' play like a fawn. To madden them, clap thy hands,
And sing praise to the warrior goddess templed i' our lands,
Her o' the House o' Brass.

PART IV

THE LITTLE CLAY CART

8. The Little Clay Cart - Act I

The Little Clay Cart – Mrcchakatika

ATTRIBUTED TO KING SHŪDRAKA

About this Translation

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Dramatis Personae

Chārudatta, *a Brahman merchant*

Rohasena, *his son*

Maitreya, *his friend*

Vardhamānaka, *a servant in his house*

Sansthānaka, *brother-in-law of King Pālaka*

Sthāvaraka, *his servant*

Another Servant of Sansthānaka

A Courtier

Aryaka, *a herdsman who becomes king*

Sharvilaka, *a Brahman, in love with Madanikā*
 A Shampooer, who becomes a Buddhist monk
 Māthura, *a gambling-master*
 Darduraka, *a gambler*
 Another Gambler
 Karnapūraka }
 Kumbhīlaka } *servants of Vasantasenā*
 Vīraka }
 Chandanaka } *policemen*
 Goha }
 Ahīnta } *headsmen*
Bastard pages, in Vasantasenā's house
A Judge, a Gild-warden, a Clerk, and a Beadle
 Vasantasenā, *a courtesan*
 Her Mother
 Madanikā, *maid to Vasantasenā*
Another Maid to Vasantasenā
The Wife of Chārudatta
 Radanikā, *a maid in Chārudatta's house*

SCENE

Ujjayinī (*called also Avanti*) and its Environs

Prologue

Benediction upon the audience

His bended knees the knotted girdle holds,
 Fashioned by doubling of a serpent's folds;

His sensitive organs, so he checks his breath,
Are numbed, till consciousness seems sunk in death;
Within himself, with eye of truth, he sees
The All-soul, free from all activities.
May His, may Shiva's meditation be
Your strong defense; on the Great Self thinks he,
Knowing full well the world's vacuity. 1

And again:

May Shiva's neck shield you from every harm,
That seems a threatening thunder-cloud, whereon,
Bright as the lightning-flash, lies Gauri's arm.2

Stage-director. Enough of this tedious work, which fritters away the interest of the audience! Let me then most reverently salute the honorable gentlemen, and announce our intention to produce a drama called "The Little Clay Cart." Its author was a man

Who vied with elephants in lordly grace;
Whose eyes were those of the chakora bird
That feeds on moonbeams; glorious his face
As the full moon; his person, all have heard,
Was altogether lovely. First in worth
Among the twice-born was this poet, known
As Shūdraka far over all the earth,
His virtue's depth unfathomed and alone.

1.14. S.

And again:

The Sāmaveda, the Rigveda too,
The science mathematical, he knew;
The arts wherein fair courtezans excel,
And all the lore of elephants as well.
Through Shiva's grace, his eye was never dim;
He saw his son a king in place of him.
The difficult horse-sacrifice he tried

Successfully; entered the fiery tide,
One hundred years and ten days old, and died.⁴

And yet again:

Eager for battle; sloth's determined foe;
Of scholars chief, who to the Veda cling;
Rich in the riches that ascetics know;
Glad, against the foeman's elephant to show
His valor;—such was Shūdraka, the king.⁵

And in this work of his,
Within the town, Avanti named,
Dwells one called Chārudatta, famed
No less for youth than poverty;
A merchant's son and Brahman, he.
His virtues have the power to move
Vasantasenā's inmost love;
Fair as the springtime's radiancy,
And yet a courtesan is she.⁶
So here king Shūdraka the tale imparts
Of love's pure festival in these two hearts,
Of prudent acts, a lawsuit's wrong and hate,
A rascal's nature, and the course of fate.⁷

[He walks about and looks around him.] Why, this music-room
of ours is empty. I wonder where the actors have gone.

[Reflecting.] Ah, I understand.

Empty his house, to whom no child was born;
Thrice empty his, who lacks true friends and sure;
To fools, the world is empty and forlorn;
But all that is, is empty to the poor.⁸

I have finished the concert. And I've been practicing so long
that the pupils of my eyes are dancing, and I'm so hungry that
my eyes are crackling like a lotus-seed, dried up by the fiercest
rays of the summer sun. I'll just call my wife and ask whether
there is anything for breakfast or not.

Hello! here I am—but no! Both the particular occasion and the general custom demand that I speak Prākṛit. [*Speaking in Prākṛit.*] Confound it! I've been practicing so long and I'm so hungry that my limbs are as weak as dried-up lotus-stalks. Suppose I go home and see whether my good wife has got anything ready or not. [*He walks about and looks around him.*] Here I am at home. I'll just go in. [*He enters and looks about.*] Merciful heavens! Why in the world is everything in our house turned upside down? A long stream of rice-water is flowing down the street. The ground, spotted black where the iron kettle has been rubbed clean, is as lovely as a girl with the beauty-marks of black cosmetic on her face. It smells so good that my hunger seems to blaze up and hurts me more than ever. Has some hidden treasure come to light? or am I hungry enough to think the whole world is made of rice? There surely isn't any breakfast in our house, and I'm starved to death. But everything seems topsyturvy here. One girl is preparing cosmetics, another is weaving garlands of flowers. [*Reflecting.*] What does it all mean? Well, I'll call my good wife and learn the truth. [*He looks toward the dressing-room.*] Mistress, will you come here a moment?

[*Enter an actress.*]

Actress. Here I am, sir.

Director. You are very welcome, mistress.

Actress. Command me, sir. What am I to do?

[3.8. S.]

Director. Mistress, I've been practicing so long and I'm so hungry that my limbs are as weak as dried-up lotus-stalks. Is there anything to eat in the house or not?

Actress. There's everything, sir.

Director. Well, what?

Actress. For instance—there's rice with sugar, melted butter, curdled milk, rice; and, all together, it makes you a dish fit for heaven. May the gods always be thus gracious to you!

Director. All that in our house? or are you joking?

Actress. [*Aside.*] Yes, I will have my joke. [*Aloud.*] It's in the market-place, sir.

Director. [*Angrily.*] You wretched woman, thus shall your own hope be cut off! And death shall find you out! For my expectations, like a scaffolding, have been raised so high, only to fall again.

Actress. Forgive me, sir, forgive me! It was only a joke.

Director. But what do these unusual preparations mean? One girl is preparing cosmetics, another is weaving garlands, and the very ground is adorned with sacrificial flowers of five different colors.

Actress. This is a fast day, sir.

Director. What fast?

Actress. The fast for a handsome husband.

Director. In this world, mistress, or the next?

Actress. In the next world, sir.

Director. [*Wrathfully.*] Gentlemen! look at this. She is sacrificing my food to get herself a husband in the next world.

Actress. Don't be angry, sir. I am fasting in the hope that you may be my husband in my next birth, too.

Director. But who suggested this fast to you?

Actress. Your own dear friend Jūrnavriddha.

Director. [*Angrily.*] Ah, Jūrnavriddha, son of a slave-wench! When, oh, when shall I see King Pālaka angry with you? Then you will be parted, as surely as the scented hair of some young bride.

P. 8.10]

Actress. Don't be angry, sir. It is only that I may have you in the next world that I celebrate this fast. [*She falls at his feet.*]

Director. Stand up, mistress, and tell me who is to officiate at this fast.

Actress. Some Brahman of our own sort whom we must invite.

Director. You may go then. And I will invite some Brahman of our own sort.

Actress. Very well, sir. *[Exit.]*

Director. *[Walking about.]* Good heavens! In this rich city of Ujjayinī how am I to find a Brahman of our own sort? *[He looks about him.]* Ah, here comes Chārudatta's friend Maitreya. Good! I'll ask him. Maitreya, you must be the first to break bread in our house to-day.

A voice behind the scenes. You must invite some other Brahman. I am busy.

Director. But, man, the feast is set and you have it all to yourself. Besides, you shall have a present.

The voice. I said no once. Why should you keep on urging me?

Director. He says no. Well, I must invite some other Brahman. *[Exit.]*

End of the prologue.

Act, The First

The Gems Are Left Behind

[Enter, with a cloak in his hand, Maitreya.]

Maitreya.

"You must invite some other Brahman. I am busy." And yet I really ought to be seeking invitations from a stranger. Oh, what a wretched state of affairs! When good Chārudatta was still wealthy, I used to eat my fill of the most deliciously fragrant sweetmeats, prepared day and night with the greatest of care. I would sit at the door of the courtyard, where I was surrounded by hundreds of dishes, and there, like a painter with his paint-boxes, I would simply touch them with my fingers and thrust them aside. I would stand chewing my cud like a bull in the

city market. And now he is so poor that I have to run here, there, and everywhere, and come home, like the pigeons, only to roost. Now here is this jasmine-scented cloak, which Chārudatta's good friend Jūrnavriddha has sent him. He bade me give it to Chārudatta, as soon as he had finished his devotions. So now I will look for Chārudatta. [*He walks about and looks around him.*] Chārudatta has finished his devotions, and here he comes with an offering for the divinities of the house.

[*Enter Chārudatta as described, and Radanikā.*]

Chārudatta. [*Looking up and sighing wearily.*]

Upon my threshold, where the offering
Was straightway seized by swans and flocking cranes,
The grass grows now, and these poor seeds I fling
Fall where the mouth of worms their sweetness stains.⁹

[*He walks about very slowly and seats himself.*]

Maitreya. Chārudatta is here. I must go and speak to him.
[*Approaching.*] My greetings to you. May happiness be yours.

P. 13.1]

Chārudatta. Ah, it is my constant friend Maitreya. You are very welcome, my friend. Pray be seated.

Maitreya. Thank you. [*He seats himself.*] Well, comrade, here is a jasmine-scented cloak which your good friend Jūrnavriddha has sent. He bade me give it you as soon as you had finished your devotions. [*He presents the cloak. Chārudatta takes it and remains sunk in thought.*] Well, what are you thinking about?

Chārudatta. My good friend,

A candle shining through the deepest dark
Is happiness that follows sorrow's strife;
But after bliss when man bears sorrow's mark,
His body lives a very death-in-life.¹⁰

Maitreya. Well, which would you rather, be dead or be poor?

Chārudatta. Ah, my friend,

Far better death than sorrows sure and slow;

Some passing suffering from death may flow,
But poverty brings never-ending woe.

Maitreya. My dear friend, be not thus cast down. Your wealth has been conveyed to them you love, and like the moon, after she has yielded her nectar to the gods, your waning fortunes win an added charm.

Chārudatta. Comrade, I do not grieve for my ruined fortunes.
But

This is my sorrow. They whom I
Would greet as guests, now pass me by.
“This is a poor man’s house,” they cry.

As flitting bees, the season o’er,
Desert the elephant, whose store
Of ichor spent, attracts no more.

Maitreya. Oh, confound the money! It is a trifle not worth thinking about. It is like a cattle-boy in the woods afraid of wasps; it doesn’t stay anywhere where it is used for food.

[8.5. S.

Chārud. Believe me, friend. My sorrow does not spring
From simple loss of gold;
For fortune is a fickle, changing thing,
Whose favors do not hold;
But he whose sometime wealth has taken wing,
Finds bosom-friends grow cold.¹³

Then too:

A poor man is a man ashamed; from shame
Springs want of dignity and worthy fame;
Such want gives rise to insults hard to bear;
Thence comes despondency; and thence, despair;
Despair breeds folly; death is folly’s fruit—
Ah! the lack of money is all evils root!¹⁴

Maitreya. But just remember what a trifle money is, after all, and be more cheerful.

Chārudatta. My friend, the poverty of a man is to him
A home of cares, a shame that haunts the mind,
Another form of warfare with mankind;
The abhorrence of his friends, a source of hate
From strangers, and from each once-loving mate;
But if his wife despise him, then 't were meet
In some lone wood to seek a safe retreat.
The flame of sorrow, torturing his soul,
Burns fiercely, yet contrives to leave him whole.¹⁵

Comrade, I have made my offering to the divinities of the house. Do you too go and offer sacrifice to the Divine Mothers at a place where four roads meet.

Maitreya. No!

Chārudatta. Why not?

Maitreya. Because the gods are not gracious to you even when thus honored. So what is the use of worshiping?

P. 16.8]

Chārudatta. Not so, my friend, not so! This is the constant duty of a householder.

The gods feel ever glad content
In the gifts, and the self-chastisement,
The meditations, and the prayers,
Of those who banish worldly cares.¹⁶

Why then do you hesitate? Go and offer sacrifice to the Mothers.

Maitreya. No, I'm not going. You must send somebody else. Anyway, everything seems to go wrong with me, poor Brahman that I am! It's like a reflection in a mirror; the right side becomes the left, and the left becomes the right. Besides, at this hour of the evening, people are abroad upon the king's highway—courtezans, courtiers, servants, and royal favorites.

They will take me now for fair prey, just as the black-snake out frog-hunting snaps up the mouse in his path. But what will you do sitting here?

Chārudatta. Good then, remain; and I will finish my devotions.

Voices behind the scenes. Stop, Vasantasenā, stop!

[*Enter Vasantasenā, pursued by the courtier, by Sansthānaka, and the servant.*]

Courtier. Vasantasenā! Stop, stop!

Ah, why should fear transform your tenderness?
Why should the dainty feet feel such distress,
That twinkle in the dance so prettily?
Why should your eyes, thus startled into fear,
Dart sidelong looks? Why, like the timid deer
Before pursuing hunters, should you flee?

Sansthānaka. Shtop, Vasantasenā, shtop!

Why flee? and run? and shtumble in your turning?
Be kind! You shall not die. Oh, shtop your feet!
With love, shweet girl, my tortured heart is burning.
As on a heap of coals a piece of meat.

[10.2 S.

Servant. Stop, courtezan, stop!

In fear you flee
Away from me,
As a summer peahen should;
But my lord and master
Struts fast and faster,
Like a woodcock in the wood.¹⁹

Courtier. Vasantasenā! Stop, stop!

Why should you tremble, should you flee,
A-quiver like the plantain tree?

Your garment's border, red and fair,
Is all a-shiver in the air;
Now and again, a lotus-bud
Falls to the ground, as red as blood.
A red realgar vein you seem,
Whence, smitten, drops of crimson stream.20

Sansthānaka. Shtop. Vasantasenā, shtop!

You wake my passion, my desire, my love;
You drive away my shleep in bed at night;
Both fear and terror sheem your heart to move;
You trip and shtumble in your headlong flight.
But Rāvana forced Kuntī to his will;
Jusht sho shall I enjoy you to the fill.21

Courtier. Ah, Vasantasenā,

Why should your fleeter flight
Outstrip my flying feet?
Why, like a snake in fright
Before the bird-king's might,
Thus seek to flee, my sweet?
Could I not catch the storm-wind in his flight?
Yet would not seize upon you, though I might.22

P. 19.9]

Sansthānaka. Lishten to me, shir!

Thish whip of robber Love, thish dancing-girl,
Eater of fish, deshtroyer of her kin,
Thish shnubnose, shtubborn, love-box, courtezan,
Thish clothes-line, wanton creature, maid of sin—
I gave her ten shweet names, and shtill
She will not bend her to my will.23

Courtier.

As courtier's fingers strike the lute's tense string,
The dancing ear-ring smites your wounded cheek.

Why should you flee, with dreadful terror weak,
As flees the crane when heaven's thunders ring?²⁴

Sansth.

Your jingling gems, girl, clink like anything;
Like Draupadī you flee, when Rāma kisshed her.
I'll sheize you quick, as once the monkey-king
Sheized Subhadrā, Vishvāvasu's shweet shishter.²⁵

Servant.

He's the royal protégé;
Do whatever he may say.
And you shall have good fish and flesh to eat.
For when dogs have all the fish
And the flesh that they can wish,
Even carrion seems to them no longer sweet.²⁶

Courtier. Mistress Vasantasenā,
The girdle drooping low upon your hips
Flashes as brilliant as the shining stars;
The wondrous terror of your fleeing mars
Your charms; for red realgar, loosened, slips
As on an imaged god, from cheek and lips.²⁷

Sansth.

We're chasing you with all our main and might,
As dogs a jackal when they hunt and find it;
But you are quick and nimble in your flight,
And shteal my heart with all the roots that bind it.²⁸

[11.23. S.

Vasantasenā. Pallavaka! Parabhritikā!

Sansthānaka. Mashter! a man! a man!

Courtier. Don't be a coward.

Vasantasenā. Mādhavikā! Mādhavikā!

Courtier. [Laughing.] Fool! She is calling her servants.

Sansthānaka. Mashter! Is she calling a woman?

Courtier. Why, of course.

Sansthānaka. Women! I kill hundreds of 'em. I'm a brave man.

Vasantasenā. [Seeing that no one answers.] Alas, how comes it that my very servants have fallen away from me? I shall have to defend myself by mother-wit.

Courtier. Don't stop the search.

Sansthānaka. Shqueal, Vasantasenā, shqueal for your cuckoo Parabhritikā, or for your blosshom Pallavaka or for all the month of May! Who's going to save you when I'm chasing you? Why shpeak of Bhīmasena? Or the shon Of Jamadagni, that thrice-mighty one? The ten-necked ogre? Shon of Kuntī fair? Jusht look at me! My fingers in your hair, Jusht like Duhshāsana, I'll tear, and tear.²⁹

Look, look!

My shword is sharp; good-by, poor head!

Let's chop it off, or kill you dead.

Then do not try my wrath to shun;

When you musht die, your life is done.³⁰

Vasantasenā. Sir, I am a weak woman.

Courtier. That is why you are still alive.

Sansthānaka. That is why you're not murdered.

Vasantasenā. [Aside.] Oh! his very courtesy frightens me. Come, I will try this. [Aloud.] Sir, what do you expect from this pursuit? my jewels?

P. 24.7]

Courtier. Heaven forbid! A garden creeper, mistress Vasantasenā, should not be robbed of its blossoms. Say no more about the jewels.

Vasantasenā. What is then your desire?

Sansthānaka. I'm a man, a big man, a regular Vāsudeva. You must love me.

Vasantasenā. [*Indignantly.*] Heavens! You weary me. Come, leave me! Your words are an insult.

Sansthānaka. [*Laughing and clapping his hands.*] Look, mashter, look! The courtesan's daughter is mighty affectionate with me, isn't she? Here she says "Come on! Heavens, you're weary. You're tired!" No, I haven't been walking to another village or another city. No, little mistress, I swear by the gentleman's head, I swear by my own feet! It's only by chasing about at your heels that I've grown tired and weary.

Courtier. [*Aside.*] What! is it possible that the idiot does not understand when she says "You weary me"? [*Aloud.*] Vasantasenā, your words have no place in the dwelling of a courtesan,

Which, as you know, is friend to every youth;
Remember, you are common as the flower
That grows beside the road; in bitter truth,
Your body has its price; your beauty's dower
Is his, who pays the market's current rate:
Then serve the man you love, and him you hate.³¹

And again:

The wisest Brahman and the meanest fool
Bathe in the selfsame pool;
Beneath the peacock, flowering plants bend low,
No less beneath the crow;
The Brahman, warrior, merchant, sail along
With all the vulgar throng.
You are the pool, the flowering plant, the boat;
And on your beauty every man may dote.³²

[13.22 S.

Vasantasenā. Yet true love would be won by virtue, not violence.

Sansthānaka. But, mashter, ever since the shlave-wench went into the park where Kāma's temple shtands, she has been in love with a poor man, with Chārudatta, and she doesn't love me any more. His house is to the left. Look out and don't let her shlip out of our hands.

Courtier. [Aside.] Poor fool, he has said the very thing he should have concealed. So Vasantasenā is in love with Chārudatta? The proverb is right. Pearl suits with pearl. Well, I have had enough of this fool. [Aloud.] Did you say the good merchant's house was to the left, you jackass?

Sansthānaka. Yes. His house is to the left.

Vasantasenā. [Aside.] Oh, wonderful! If his house is really at my left hand, then the scoundrel has helped me in the very act of hurting me, for he has guided me to my love.

Sansthānaka. But mashter, it's pitch dark and it's like hunting for a grain of soot in a pile of shpotted beans. Now you shee Vasantasenā and now you don't.

Courtier. Pitch dark it is indeed.
The sudden darkness seems to steal
The keenness of my sight;
My open eyes, as with a seal,
Are closed by blackest night.³³

And again:
Darkness anoints my body, and the sky
Drops ointment of thick darkness, till mine eye
Is all unprofitable grown to me,
Like service done to them who cheat and lie.³⁴

Sansthānaka. Mashter, I'm looking for Vasantasenā.

Courtier. Is there anything you can trace her by, jackass?

Sansthānaka. Like what, for inshtance?

P. 28.3]

Courtier. Like the tinkling of her jewels, for instance, or the fragrance of her garlands.

Sansthānaka. I hear the smell of her garlands, but my nose is stuffed so full of darkness that I don't see the sound of her jewels very clearly.

Courtier. [To Vasantasenā. *Aside.*] Vasantasenā,
'T is true, the night is dark, O timid maid,
And like the lightning hidden in the cloud,
You are not seen; yet you will be betrayed
By fragrant garlands and by anklets loud.³⁵

Have you heard me, Vasantasenā?

Vasantasenā. [To herself.] Heard and understood. [She removes the ankle-rings, lays aside the garlands, and takes a few steps, feeling her way.] I can feel the wall of the house, and here is a side-entrance. But alas! my fingers tell me that the door is shut.

Chārudatta [who is within the house]. Comrade, my prayer is done. Go now and offer sacrifice to the Mothers.

Maitreya. No, I'm not going.

Chārudatta. Alas!

The poor man's kinsmen do not heed his will;
The friends who loved him once, now stand afar;
His sorrows multiply; his strength is nil;
Behold! his character's bright-shining star
Fades like the waning moon; and deeds of ill
That others do, are counted to him still.³⁶

And again:

No man holds converse with him; none will greet
With due respect the poor man when they meet.
Where rich men hold a feast, if he draw near,
He meets with scornful looks for looks of cheer.

[15.19. S.

Where vulgar throngs are gathered, 't is the same;

His scanty raiment wakes his heartfelt shame.
Five are the deadly sins we knew before;
Alas! I find the sixth is—to be poor.³⁷

And yet again:

Ah, Poverty, I pity thee, that so
To me thou clingest, as thy dearest friend;
When my poor life has met its woeful end,
I sadly wonder, whither thou wilt go.³⁸

Maitreya. [*Betraying his embarrassment.*] Well, comrade, if I must go, at least let Radanikā go with me, to keep me company.

Chārudatta. Radanikā, you are to accompany Maitreya.

Radanikā. Yes, sir.

Maitreya. Mistress Radanikā, do you take the offering and the candle while I open the side-door. [*He does so.*]

Vasantasenā. It seems as if the door took pity on me and opened of itself. I will lose no time, but enter. [*She looks in.*] What? a candle? Oh dear, oh dear! [*She puts it out with her skirt and enters.*]

Chārudatta. What was that, Maitreya?

Maitreya. I opened the side-door and the wind came through all in a lump and blew out the candle. Suppose you go out by the side-door, Radanikā, and I will follow as soon as I have gone into the courtyard and lighted the candle again.[*Exit.*]

Sansthānaka. Mashter! mashter! I'm looking for Vasantasenā.

Courtier. Keep on looking, keep on looking!

Sansthānaka. [*Does so.*] Mashter! mashter! I've caught her! I've caught her!

Courtier. Idiot, you've caught me.

Sansthānaka. You shtand right here, mashter, and shtay where you're put. [*He renews the search and seizes the servant.*] Mashter! Mashter! I've caught her! I've caught her!

P. 31.3]

Servant. Master, you've caught me, your servant.

Sansthānaka. Mashter here, shervant here! Mashter, shervant; shervant, mashter. Now shtay where you're put, both of you. [*He renews the search and seizes Radanikā by the hair.*] Mashter! mashter! Thish time I've caught her! I've caught Vasantasenā!

Through the black night she fled, fled she;
Her garland's shmell betrayed her;
Like Chānakya caught Draupadī,
I caught her hair and shtayed her.³⁹

Courtier.

Ah, proud to be so young, so fair!
Too high thy love must not aspire;
For now thy blossom-fragrant hair,
That merits richest gems and rare,
Serves but to drag thee through the mire.⁴⁰

Sansth.

I've got your head, girl, got it tight,
By the hair, the locks, and the curls, too.
Now shcream, shqueak, shqueal with all your might
"Shiva! Ishvara! Shankara! Shambhu!"⁴¹

Radanikā. [*In terror.*] Oh, sirs, what does this mean?

Courtier. You jackass! It's another voice.

Sansthānaka. Mashter, the wench has changed her voice, the way a cat changes her voice, when she wants shome cream of curdled milk.

Courtier. Changed her voice? Strange! Yet why so strange?

She trod the stage; she learned the arts;
She studied to deceive our hearts;
And now she practices her parts.⁴²

[*Enter Maitreya.*]

Maitreya. Look! In the gentle evening breeze the flame of the candle is fluttering like the heart of a goat that goes to the altar.

[*He approaches and discovers Radanikā.*] Mistress Radanikā!

[17.17. S.

Sansthānaka. Mashter, mashter! A man! a man!

Maitreya. This is right, this is perfectly right, that strangers should force their way into the house, just because Chārudatta is poor.

Radanikā. Oh, Maitreya, see how they insult me.

Maitreya. What! insult you? No, they are insulting us.

Radanikā. Very well. They are insulting you, then.

Maitreya. But they aren't using violence?

Radanikā. Yes, yes!

Maitreya. Really?

Radanikā. Really.

Maitreya. [*Raising his staff angrily.*] No, sir! Man, a dog will show his teeth in his own kennel, and I am a Brahman! My staff is crooked as my fortunes, but it can still split a dry bamboo or a rascal's pate.

Courtier. Have mercy, O great Brahman, have mercy.

Maitreya. [*Discovers the courtier.*] He is not the sinner. [*Discovers Sansthānaka.*] Ah, here is the sinner. Well, you brother-in-law to the king, Sansthānaka, you scoundrel, you coward, this is perfectly proper, isn't it? Chārudatta the good is a poor man now—true, but are not his virtues an ornament to Ujjayinī? And so men break into his house and insult his servants!

Insult not him, laid low by poverty;
For none are counted poor by mighty fate:
Yet he who falls from virtue's high estate,
Though he be rich, no man is poor as he.⁴³

Courtier. [*Betraying his embarrassment.*] Have mercy, O great Brahman, have mercy. We intended no insolence; we merely mistook this lady for another. For We sought an amorous maiden,

Maitreya. What! this one?

Courtier. Heaven forbid!

One whose youth
Is in the guidance of her own sweet will;
She disappeared: unconscious of the truth,
We did what seems a purposed deed of ill.⁴⁴
I pray you, accept this all-in-all of humblest supplication. [*He drops his sword, folds his hands, and falls at Maitreya's feet.*]

P. 35.4]

Maitreya. Good man, rise, rise. When I reviled you, I did not know you. Now I know you and I ask your pardon.

Courtier. It is I who should ask pardon. I will rise on one condition.

Maitreya. And that is—

Courtier. That you will not tell Chārudatta what has happened here.

Maitreya. I will be silent.

Courtier.

Brahman, this gracious act of thine

I bow my neck to bear;

For never could this sword of mine

With virtue's steel compare.⁴⁵

Sansthānaka. [*Indignantly.*] But mashter, what makes you fold your hands sho helplessly and fall at the feet of thish manikin?

Courtier. I was afraid.

Sansthānaka. What were *you* afraid of?

Courtier. Of Chārudatta's virtues.

Sansthānaka. Virtues? He? You can go into his house and not find a thing to eat.

Courtier. No, no.

His loving-kindness unto such as we

Has brought him low at last;

From him could no man learn what insults be,

Or e'er his wealth was past.

This well-filled pool, that in its summer day
Gave others drink, itself is dried away.⁴⁶

Sansthānaka. [Impatiently.] Who is the shon of a shlawe-wench anyway?

Brave Shvetaketu is he, Pāndu's child?
Or Rādhā's shon, the ten-necked ogre wild?
Or Indradatta? or again, is he
Shon of brave Rāma and of fair Kuntī?
Or Dharmaputra? Ashvatthāman bold?
Perhaps Jatāyu's shelf, that vulture old?⁴⁷

[19.19. S.

Courtier. Fool! I will tell you who Chārudatta is.

A tree of life to them whose sorrows grow,
Beneath its fruit of virtue bending low;
Father to good men; virtue's touchstone he;
The mirror of the learned; and the sea
Where all the tides of character unite;
A righteous man, whom pride could never blight;
A treasure-house, with human virtues stored;
Courtesy's essence, honor's precious hoard.
He doth to life its fullest meaning give,
So good is he; we others breathe, not live.⁴⁸
Let us be gone.

Sansthānaka. Without Vasantasenā?

Courtier. Vasantasenā has disappeared.

Sansthānaka. How?

Courtier.

Like sick men's strength, or like the blind man's sight,
Like the fool's judgment, like the sluggard's might,
Like thoughtless scoundrels' store of wisdom's light,
Like love, when foemen fan our slumbering wrath,
So did *she* vanish, when you crossed her path.⁴⁹

Sansthānaka. I'm not going without Vasantasenā.

Courtier. And did you never hear this?

To hold a horse, you need a rein;
To hold an elephant, a chain;
To hold a woman, use a heart;
And if you haven't one, depart.⁵⁰

Sansthānaka. If you're going, go along. I'm not going.

Courtier. Very well. I will go.*[Exit.]*

P. 38.2]

Sansthānaka. Mashter's gone, sure enough. *[To Maitreya.]*
Well, you man with the head that looks like a caret, you
manikin, take a sheat, take a sheat.

Maitreya. We have already been invited to take a seat.

Sansthānaka. By whom?

Maitreya. By destiny.

Sansthānaka. Shtand up, then, shtand up!

Maitreya. We shall.

Sansthānaka. When?

Maitreya. When fate is kind again.

Sansthānaka. Weep, then, weep!

Maitreya. We have wept.

Sansthānaka. Who made you?

Maitreya. Poverty.

Sansthānaka. Laugh, then, laugh!

Maitreya. Laugh we shall.

Sansthānaka. When?

Maitreya. When Chārudatta is happy once more.

Sansthānaka. You manikin, give poor little Chārudatta thish
messhage from me. "Thish wench with golden ornaments and
golden jewels, thish female shtage-manager looking after the
rehearsal of a new play, thish Vasantasenā—she has been in
love with you ever shince she went into the park where Kāma's
temple shtands. And when we tried to conciliate her by force,
she went into your houshe. Now if you shend her away
yourshelf and hand her over to me, if you reshtore her at once,
without any lawshuit in court, then I'll be friends with you

forever. But if you don't reshtore her, there will be a fight to the death." Remember:

Shmear a pumpkin-shtalk with cow-dung;
Keep your vegetables dried;
Cook your rice in winter evenings;
And be sure your meat is fried.
Then let 'em shtand, and they will not
Bothershomely shmell and rot.⁵¹

[21.17. S.]

Tell it to him prettily, tell it to him craftily. Tell it to him sho that I can hear it as I roosht in the dove-cote on the top of my own palace. If you shay it different, I'll chew your head like an apple caught in the crack of a door.

Maitreya. Very well. I shall tell him.

Sansthānaka. [Aside.] Tell me, shervant. Is mashter really gone?

Servant. Yes, sir.

Sansthānaka. Then we will go as quickly as we can.

Servant. Then take your sword, master.

Sansthānaka. You can keep it.

Servant. Here it is, master. Take your sword, master.

Sansthānaka. [Taking it by the wrong end.]

My shword, red as a radish shkin,
Ne'er finds the time to molder;
Shee how it shleeps its sheath within!
I put it on my shoulder.
While curs and bitches yelp at me, I roam,
Like a hunted jackal, home.⁵²

[*Sansthānaka and the servant walk about, then exeunt.*]

Maitreya. Mistress Radanikā, you must not tell good Chārudatta of this outrage. I am sure you would only add to the poor man's sorrows.

Radanikā. Good Maitreya, you know Radanikā. Her lips are sealed.

Maitreya. So be it.

Chārudatta. [To *Vasantasenā*.] Radanikā, Rohasena likes the fresh air, but he will be cold in the evening chill. Pray bring him into the house, and cover him with this mantle. [*He gives her the mantle.*]

P. 49.19]

Vasantasenā. [To *herself*.] See! He thinks I am his servant. [*She takes the mantle and perceives its perfume. Ardently to herself.*] Oh, beautiful! The mantle is fragrant with jasmine. His youthful days are not wholly indifferent to the pleasures of the world. [*She wraps it about her, without letting Chārudatta see.*]

Chārudatta. Come, Radanikā, take Rohasena and enter the heart of the house.

Vasantasenā. [To *herself*.] Ah me unhappy, that have little part or lot in your heart!

Chārudatta. Come, Radanikā, will you not even answer? Alas!

When man once sees that miserable day,
When fate almighty sweeps his wealth away,
Then ancient friendships will no longer hold,
Then all his former bosom-friends grow cold.⁵³

Maitreya. [Drawing near to *Radanikā*.] Sir, here is Radanikā.

Chārudatta. Here is Radanikā? Who then is this—

This unknown lady, by my robe
Thus clinging, desecrated,

Vasantasenā. [To *herself*.] Say rather “consecrated.”

Chārudatta. Until she seems the crescent moon.
With clouds of autumn mated?⁵⁴

But no! I may not gaze upon another’s wife.

Maitreya. Oh, you need not fear that you are looking at another man’s wife. This is Vasantasenā, who has been in love with you ever since she saw you in the garden where Kāma’s temple stands.

Chārudatta. What! this is Vasantasenā? [*Aside.*]

My love for whom—my fortune spent—

My wretched self in twain has rent.
Like coward's anger, inward bent.⁵⁵

[23. 19. S.

Maitreya. My friend, that brother-in-law of the king says—
Chārudatta. Well?

Maitreya. “This wench with golden ornaments and golden jewels, this female stage-manager looking after the rehearsal of a new play, this Vasantasenā—she has been in love with you ever since she went into the park where Kāma’s temple stands. And when we tried to conciliate her by force, she went into your house.”

Vasantasenā. [*To herself.*] “Tried to conciliate me by force”—truly, I am honored by these words.

Maitreya. “Now if you send her away yourself and hand her over to me, if you restore her at once, without any lawsuit in court, then I’ll be friends with you forever. Otherwise, there will be a fight to the death.”

Chārudatta. [*Contemptuously.*] He is a fool. [*To himself.*] How is this maiden worthy of the worship that we pay a goddess! For now

Although I bade her enter, yet she seeks
To spare my poverty, nor enters here;
Though men are known to her, yet all she speaks
Contains no word to wound a modest ear.⁵⁶

[*Aloud.*] Mistress Vasantasenā, I have unwittingly made myself guilty of an offense; for I greeted as a servant one whom I did not recognize. I bend my neck to ask your pardon.

Vasantasenā. It is I who have offended by this unseemly intrusion. I bow my head to seek your forgiveness.

Maitreya. Yes, with your pretty bows you two have knocked your heads together, till they look like a couple of rice-fields. I also bow my head like a camel colt’s knee and beseech you both to stand up. [*He does so, then rises.*]

Chārudatta. Very well, let us no longer trouble ourselves with conventions.

Vasantasenā. [*To herself.*] What a delightfully clever hint! But it would hardly be proper to spend the night, considering how I came hither. Well, I will at least say this much. [*Aloud.*] If I am to receive thus much of your favor, sir, I should be glad to leave these jewels in your house. It was for the sake of the jewels that those scoundrels pursued me.

P. 45.14]

Chārudatta. This house is not worthy of the trust.

Vasantasenā. You mistake, sir! It is to men that treasures are entrusted, not to houses.

Chārudatta. Maitreya, will you receive the jewels?

Vasantasenā. I am much indebted to you. [*She hands him the jewels.*]

Maitreya. [*Receiving them.*] Heaven bless you, madam.

Chārudatta. Fool! They are only entrusted to us.

Maitreya. [*Aside.*] Then the thieves may take them, for all I care.

Chārudatta. In a very short time—

Maitreya. What she has entrusted to us, belongs to us.

Chārudatta. I shall restore them.

Vasantasenā. I should be grateful, sir, if this gentleman would accompany me home.

Chārudatta. Maitreya, pray accompany our guest.

Maitreya. She walks as gracefully as a female swan, and you are the gay flamingo to accompany her. But I am only a poor Brahman, and wherever I go, the people will fall upon me just as dogs will snap at a victim dragged to the cross-roads.

Chārudatta. Very well. I will accompany her myself. Let the torches be lighted, to ensure our safety on the highway.

Maitreya. Vardhamānaka, light the torches.

Vardhamānaka. [*Aside to Maitreya.*] What! light torches without oil?

Maitreya. [*Aside to Chārudatta.*] These torches of ours are like

courtezans who despise their poor lovers. They won't light up unless you feed them.

[25.23. S.

Chārudatta. Enough, Maitreya! We need no torches. See, we have a lamp upon the king's highway.

Attended by her starry servants all,
And pale to see as a loving maiden's cheeks,
Rises before our eyes the moon's bright ball,
Whose pure beams on the high-piled darkness fall
Like streaming milk that dried-up marshes seeks.⁵⁷

[*His voice betraying his passion.*] Mistress Vasantasenā, we have reached your home. Pray enter. [*Vasantasenā gazes ardently at him, then exit.*] Comrade, Vasantasenā is gone. Come, let us go home.

All creatures from the highway take their flight;
The watchmen pace their rounds before our sight;
To forestall treachery, is just and right,
For many sins find shelter in the night.⁵⁸

[*He walks about.*] And you shall guard this golden casket by night, and Vardhamānaka by day.

Maitreya. Very well. [*Exeunt*]

9. The Little Clay Cart - Act II

Act, the Second

THE SHAMPOOER WHO GAMBLED

[Enter a maid.]

Maid.

I am sent with a message to my mistress by her mother. I must go in and find my mistress. *[She walks about and looks around her.]* There is my mistress. She is painting a picture, and putting her whole heart into it. I must go and speak to her.

[Then appear the love-lorn Vasantasenā, seated, and Madanikā.]

Vasantasenā. Well, girl, and then—

Madanikā. But mistress, you were not speaking of anything. What do you mean?

Vasantasenā. Why, what did I say?

Madanikā. You said, “and then”—

Vasantasenā. *[Puckering her brows.]* Oh, yes. So I did.

Maid. *[Approaching.]* Mistress, your mother sends word that you should bathe and then offer worship to the gods.

Vasantasenā. You may tell my mother that I shall not take the ceremonial bath to-day. A Brahman must offer worship in my place.

Maid. Yes, mistress.*[Exit.]*

Madanikā. My dear mistress, it is love, not naughtiness, that asks the question—but what does this mean?

Vasantasenā. Tell me, Madanikā. How do I seem to you?

Madanikā. My mistress is so absent-minded that I know her heart is filled with longing for somebody.

Vasantasenā. Well guessed. My Madanikā is quick to fathom another's heart.

Madanikā. I am very, very glad. Yes, Kāma is indeed mighty, and his great festival is welcome when one is young. But tell me, mistress, is it a king, or a king's favorite, whom you worship?

[28.1. S.]

Vasantasenā. Girl, I wish to love, not to worship.

Madanikā. Is it a Brahman that excites your passion, some youth distinguished for very particular learning?

Vasantasenā. A Brahman I should have to reverence.

Madanikā. Or is it some young merchant, grown enormously wealthy from visiting many cities?

Vasantasenā. A merchant, girl, must go to other countries and leave you behind, no matter how much you love him. And the separation makes you very sad.

Madanikā. It isn't a king, nor a favorite, nor a Brahman, nor a merchant. Who is it then that the princess loves?

Vasantasenā. Girl! Girl! You went with me to the park where Kāma's temple stands?

Madanikā. Yes, mistress.

Vasantasenā. And yet you ask, as if you were a perfect stranger.

Madanikā. Now I know. Is it the man who comforted you when you asked to be protected?

Vasantasenā. Well, what was his name?

Madanikā. Why, he lives in the merchants' quarter.

Vasantasenā. But I asked you for his name.

Madanikā. His name, mistress, is a good omen in itself. His name is Chārudatta.

Vasantasenā. [Joyfully.] Good, Madanikā, good. You have guessed it.

Madanikā. [Aside.] So much for that. [Aloud.] Mistress, they say he is poor.

Vasantasenā. That is the very reason why I love him. For a

courtesan who sets her heart on a poor man is blameless in the eyes of the world.

P. 59.14]

Madanikā. But mistress, do the butterflies visit the mango-tree when its blossoms have fallen?

Vasantasenā. That is just why we call *that* sort of a girl a butterfly.

Madanikā. Well, mistress, if you love him, why don't you go and visit him at once?

Vasantasenā. Girl, if I should visit him at once, then, because he can't make any return—no, I don't mean that, but it would be hard to see him.

Madanikā. Is that the reason why you left your jewels with him?

Vasantasenā. You have guessed it.

A voice behind the scenes. Oh, sir, a shampooer owes me ten gold-pieces, and he got away from us. Hold him, hold him! [*To the fleeing shampooer*.] Stop, stop! I see you from here. [*Enter hurriedly a frightened shampooer*.]

Shampooer. Oh, confound this gambling business!

Freed from its tether, the ace—

I might better say “ass”—how it kicks me!

And the cast of the dice called the “spear”

Proves true to its name; for it sticks me.]

The keeper's whole attention

Was busy with the score;

So it took no great invention

To vanish through the door.

But I cannot stand forever

In the unprotected street.

Is there no one to deliver?

I would fall before his feet.²

While the keeper and the gambler are looking somewhere else for me, I'll just walk backwards into this empty temple and turn goddess. [*He makes all sorts of gestures, takes his place, and waits.*]

[*Enter Māthura and the gambler.*]

[30.1. S.

Māthura. Oh, sir, a shampooer owes me ten gold-pieces, and he got away from us. Hold him, hold him! Stop, stop! I see you from here.

Gambler.

You may run to hell, if they'll take you in;
With Indra, the god, you may stay:
For there's never a god can save your skin.
While Māthura wants his pay.³

Māthura.

Oh, whither flee you, nimble rambler.
You that cheat an honest gambler?
You that shake with fear and shiver.
All a-tremble, all a-quiver;
You that cannot trip enough.
On the level ground and rough;
You that stain your social station,
Family, and reputation!⁴

Gambler. [*Examining the footprints.*] Here he goes. And here the tracks are lost.

Māthura. [*Gazes at the footprints. Reflectively.*] Look! The feet are turned around. And the temple hasn't any image. [*After a moment's thought.*] That rogue of a shampooer has gone into the temple with his feet turned around.

Gambler. Let's follow him.

Māthura. All right. [*They enter the temple and take a good look, then make signs to each other.*]

Gambler. What! a wooden image?

Māthura. Of course not. It's stone. [*He shakes it with all his might, then makes signs.*] What do we care? Come, let's have a game. [*He starts to gamble as hard as he can.*]

Shampooer. [*Trying with all his might to repress the gambling fever. Aside.*] Oh, oh!

Oh, the rattle of dice is a charming thing,
When you haven't a copper left;
It works like a drum on the heart of a king,
Of all his realm bereft.⁵

For gamblers leap down a mountain steep—
I know I shall not play.
Yet the rattle of dice is as sweet as the peep
Of nightingales in May.⁶

Gambler. My turn, my turn!

P. 56.10]

Māthura. Not much! it's my turn.

Shampooer. [*Coming up quickly from behind.*] Isn't it my turn?

Gambler. We've got our man.

Māthura. [*Seizing him.*] You jail-bird, you're caught. Pay me my ten gold-pieces.

Shampooer. I'll pay you this very day.

Māthura. Pay me this very minute!

Shampooer. I'll pay you. Only have mercy!

Māthura. Come, will you pay me now?

Shampooer. My head is getting dizzy. [*He falls to the ground. The others beat him with all their might.*]

Māthura. There [*drawing the gamblers ring*] you're bound by the gamblers' ring.

Shampooer. [*Rises. Despairingly.*] What! bound by the gamblers' ring? Confound it! That is a limit which we gamblers can't pass. Where can I get the money to pay him?

Māthura. Well then, you must give surety.

Shampooer. I have an idea. [*He nudges the gambler.*] I'll give you half, if you'll forgive me the other half.

Gambler. All right.

Shampooer. [*To Māthura.*] I'll give you surety for a half. You might forgive me the other half.

Māthura. All right. Where's the harm?

Shampooer. [*Aloud.*] You forgave me a half, sir?

[31.24. S.]

Māthura. Yes.

Shampooer. [*To the gambler.*] And you forgave me a half?

Gambler. Yes.

Shampooer. Then I think I'll be going.

Māthura. Pay me my ten gold-pieces! Where are you going?

Shampooer. Look at this, gentlemen, look at this! Here I just gave surety to one of them for a half, and the other forgave me a half. And even after that he is dunning me, poor helpless me!

Māthura. [*Seizing him.*] My name is Māthura, the clever swindler, and you're not going to swindle me this time. Pay up, jail-bird, every bit of my money, and this minute, too.

Shampooer. How can I pay?

Māthura. Sell your father and pay.

Shampooer. Where can I get a father?

Māthura. Sell your mother and pay.

Shampooer. Where can I get a mother?

Māthura. Sell yourself and pay.

Shampooer. Have mercy! Lead me to the king's highway.

Māthura. Go ahead.

Shampooer. If it must be. [*He walks about.*] Gentlemen, will you buy me for ten gold-pieces from this gambling-master? [*He sees a passer-by and calls out.*] What is that? You wish to know what I can do? I will be your house-servant. What! he has gone without even answering. Well, here's another. I'll speak to him. [*He repeats his offer.*] What! this one too takes no notice of me. He is gone. Confound it! I've had hard luck ever since Chārudatta lost his fortune.

Māthura. Will you pay?

Shampooer. How can I pay? [*He falls down. Māthura drags him about.*] Good gentlemen, save me, save me!
[*Enter Darduraka.*]

P. 61.5]

Darduraka. Yes, gambling is a kingdom without a throne.
You do not mind defeat at all;
Great are the sums you spend and win;
While kingly revenues roll in,
Rich men, like slaves, before you fall.⁷

And again:
You earn your coin by gambling,
Your friends and wife by gambling,
Your gifts and food by gambling;
Your last cent goes by gambling.⁸

And again:
My cash was taken by the trey;
The deuce then took my health away;
The ace then set me on the street;
The four completed my defeat.⁹

[*He looks before him.*] Here comes Māthura, our sometime gambling-master. Well, as I can't escape, I think I'll put on my veil. [*He makes any number of gestures with his cloak, then examines it.*]

This cloth is sadly indigent in thread;
This lovely cloth lets in a lot of light;
This cloth's protective power is nearly fled;
This cloth is pretty when it's rolled up tight.¹⁰

Yet after all, what more could a poor saint do? For you see,
One foot I've planted in the sky,
The other on the ground must lie.

The elevation's rather high,
But the sun stands it. Why can't I?11

Māthura. Pay, pay!

Shampooer. How can I pay? [*Māthura drags him about.*]

Darduraka. Well, well, what is this I see? [*He addresses a bystander.*] What did you say, sir? "This shampooer is being maltreated by the gambling-master, and no one will save him"? I'll save him myself. [*He presses forward.*] Stand back, stand back!

[33.25. S.

[*He takes a look.*] Well, if this isn't that swindler Māthura. And here is the poor saintly shampooer; a saint to be sure,

Who does not hang with bended head
Rigid till set of sun,
Who does not rub his back with sand
Till boils begin to run,
Whose shins dogs may not browse upon,
As they pass him in their rambling.
Why should this tall and dainty man
Be so in love with gambling?12

Well, I must pacify Māthura. [*He approaches.*] How do you do, Māthura? [*Māthura returns the greeting.*]

Darduraka. What does this mean?

Māthura. He owes me ten gold-pieces.

Darduraka. A mere bagatelle!

Māthura. [*Pulling the rolled-up cloak from under Darduraka's arm.*] Look, gentlemen, look! The man in the ragged cloak calls ten gold-pieces a mere bagatelle.

Darduraka. My good fool, don't I risk ten gold-pieces on a cast of the dice? Suppose a man has money—is that any reason why he should put it in his bosom and show it? But you,

You'll lose your caste, you'll lose your soul,
For ten gold-pieces that he stole,

To kill a man that's sound and whole,
With five good senses in him.¹³

Māthura. Ten gold-pieces may be a mere bagatelle to you, sir.
To me they are a fortune.

Darduraka. Well then, listen to me. Just give him ten more,
and let him go to gambling again.

Māthura. And what then?

Darduraka. If he wins, he will pay you.

P. 63.12]

Māthura. And if he doesn't win?

Darduraka. Then he won't pay you.

Māthura. This is no time for nonsense. If you say that, you
can give him the money yourself. My name is Māthura. I'm
a swindler and I play a crooked game, and I'm not afraid of
anybody. You are an immoral scoundrel.

Darduraka. Who did you say was immoral?

Māthura. You're immoral.

Darduraka. Your father is immoral. [*He gives the shampooer
a sign to escape.*]

Māthura. You cur! That is just the way that you gamble.

Darduraka. That is the way I gamble?

Māthura. Come, shampooer, pay me my ten gold-pieces.

Shampooer. I'll pay you this very day. I'll pay at once.
[*Māthura drags him about.*]

Darduraka. Fool! You may maltreat him when I am away, but
not before my eyes.

[*Māthura seizes the shampooer and hits him on the nose.
The shampooer bleeds, faints, and falls flat. Darduraka
approaches and interferes. Māthura strikes Darduraka, and
Darduraka strikes back.*]

Māthura. Oh, oh, you accursèd hound! But I'll pay you for this.

Darduraka. My good fool, I was walking peaceably along the
street, and you struck me. If you strike me to-morrow in court,
then you will open your eyes.

Māthura. Yes, I'll open my eyes.

Darduraka. How will you open your eyes?

Māthura. [*Opening his eyes wide.*] This is the way I'll open my eyes.

[*Darduraka throws dust in Māthura's eyes, and gives the shampooer a sign to escape. Māthura shuts his eyes and falls down. The shampooer escapes.*]

[35.20. S.]

Darduraka. [*Aside.*] I have made an enemy of the influential gambling-master Māthura. I had better not stay here. Besides, my good friend Sharvilaka told me that a young herdsman named Aryaka has been designated by a soothsayer as our future king. Now everybody in my condition is running after him. I think I will join myself to him.[*Exit.*]

Shampooer. [*Trembles as he walks away and looks about him.*] Here is a house where somebody has left the side-door open. I will go in. [*He enters and perceives Vasantasenā.*] Madam, I throw myself upon your protection.

Vasantasenā. He who throws himself upon my protection shall be safe. Close the door, girl.

[*The maid does so.*]

Vasantasenā. What do you fear?

Shampooer. A creditor, madam.

Vasantasenā. You may open the door now, girl.

Shampooer. [*To himself.*] Ah! Her reasons for not fearing a creditor are in proportion to her innocence. The proverb is right:

The man who knows his strength and bears a load
Proportioned to that strength, not more nor less,
Is safe from stumbling and from sore distress,
Although he wander on a dreary road.¹⁴

That means me.

Māthura. [*Wiping his eyes. To the gambler.*] Pay, pay!

Gambler. While we were quarreling with Darduraka, sir, the man escaped.

Māthura. I broke that shampooer's nose for him with my fist
Come on! Let's trace him by the blood. [*They do so.*]

Gambler. He went into Vasantasenā's house, sir.

Māthura. Then that is the end of the gold-pieces.

Gambler. Let's go to court and lodge a complaint.

P. 67.1]

Māthura. The swindler would leave the house and escape.
No, we must besiege him and so capture him.

[*Vasantasenā gives Madanikā a sign.*]

Madanikā. Whence are you, sir? or who are you, sir? or whose son are you, sir? or what is your business, sir? or what are you afraid of?

Shampooer. Listen, madam. My birthplace is Pātaliputra, madam. I am the son of a householder. I practice the trade of a shampooer.

Vasantasenā. It is a very dainty art, sir, which you have mastered.

Shampooer. Madam, as an art I mastered it. It has now become a mere trade.

Madanikā. Your answers are most disconsolate, sir. Pray continue.

Shampooer. Yes, madam. When I was at home, I used to hear travelers tell tales, and I wanted to see new countries, and so I came here. And when I had come here to Ujjayinī, I became the servant of a noble gentleman. Such a handsome, courteous gentleman! When he gave money away, he did not boast; when he was injured, he forgot it. To cut a long story short: he was so courteous that he regarded his own person as the possession of others, and had compassion on all who sought his protection.

Madanikā. Who may it be that adorns Ujjayinī with the

virtues which he has stolen from the object of my mistress' desires?

Vasantasenā. Good, girl, good! I had the same thought in mind.

Madanikā. But to continue, sir—

Shampooer. Madam, he was so compassionate and so generous that now—

Vasantasenā. His riches have vanished?

Shampooer. I didn't say it. How did you guess it, madam?

Vasantasenā. What was there to guess? Virtue and money seldom keep company. In the pools from which men cannot drink there is so much the more water.

Madanikā. But sir, what is his name?

[37.23. S.]

Shampooer. Madam, who does not know the name of this moon of the whole world? He lives in the merchants' quarter. He whose name is worthy of all honor is named Chārudatta.

Vasantasenā. [*Joyfully rising from her seat.*] Sir, this house is your own. Give him a seat, girl, and take this fan. The gentleman is weary. [*Madanikā does as she is bid.*]

Shampooer. [*Aside.*] What! so much honor because I mentioned Chārudatta's name? Heaven bless you, Chārudatta! You are the only man in the world who really lives. All others merely breathe. [*He falls at Vasantasenā's feet.*] Enough, madam, enough. Pray be seated, madam.

Vasantasenā. [*Seating herself.*] Where is he who is so richly your creditor, sir?

Shamp.

The good man's wealth consists in kindly deeds;
All other wealth is vain and quickly flies.
The man who honors not his neighbor's needs,
Does that man know what honor signifies?¹⁵

Vasantasenā. But to continue—

Shampooer. So I became a servant in his employ. And when

his wealth was reduced to his virtue, I began to live by gambling. But fate was cruel, and I lost ten gold-pieces.

Māthura. I am ruined! I am robbed!

Shampooer. There are the gambling-master and the gambler, looking for me. You have heard my story, madam. The rest is your affair.

Vasantasenā. Madanikā, the birds fly everywhither when the tree is shaken in which they have their nests. Go, girl, and give the gambling-master and the gambler this bracelet. And tell them that this gentleman sends it. [*She removes a bracelet from her arm, and gives it to Madanikā.*]

Madanikā. [*Receiving the bracelet.*] Yes, mistress. [*She goes out.*]

P. 71.2]

Māthura. I am ruined! I am robbed!

Madanikā. Inasmuch as these two are looking up to heaven, and sighing, and chattering, and fastening their eyes on the door, I conclude that they must be the gambling-master and the gambler. [*Approaching.*] I salute you, sir.

Māthura. May happiness be yours.

Madanikā. Sir, which of you is the gambling-master?

Māth.

O maiden, fair but something less than shy,
With red lip wounded in love's ardent play,
On whom is bent that sweet, coquettish eye?
For whom that lisp that steals the heart away?16

I haven't got any money. You'll have to look somewhere else.

Madanikā. You are certainly no gambler, if you talk that way. Is there any one who owes you money?

Māthura. There is. He owes ten gold-pieces. What of him?

Madanikā. In his behalf my mistress sends you this bracelet. No, no! He sends it himself.

Māthura. [*Seizing it joyfully.*] Well, well, you may tell the noble

youth that his account is squared. Let him come and seek delight again in gambling.[*Exeunt Māthura and the gambler.*

Madanikā. [*Returning to Vasantasenā.*] Mistress, the gambling-master and the gambler have gone away well-pleased.

Vasantasenā. Go, sir, and comfort your kinsfolk.

Shampooer. Ah, madam, if it may be, these hands would gladly practice their art in your service.

Vasantasenā. But sir, he for whose sake you mastered the art, who first received your service, he should have your service still.

Shampooer. [*Aside.*] A very pretty way to decline my services. How shall I repay her kindness? [*Aloud.*] Madam, thus dishonored as a gambler, I shall become a Buddhist monk. And so, madam, treasure these words in your memory: "He was a shampooer, a gambler, a Buddhist monk."

[40.1. S.

Vasantasenā. Sir, you must not act too precipitately.

Shampooer. Madam, my mind is made up. [*He walks about.*]

I gambled, and in gambling I did fall,
Till every one beheld me with dismay.
Now I shall show my honest face to all,
And walk abroad upon the king's highway.¹⁷

[*Tumultuous cries behind the scenes.*]

Shampooer. [*Listening.*] What is this? What is this?
[*Addressing some one behind the scenes.*] What did you say?
"Post-breaker, Vasantasenā's rogue elephant, is at liberty!"
Hurrah! I must go and see the lady's best elephant. No, no!
What have I to do with these things? I must hold to my resolution.[*Exit.*

[*Then enter hastily Karnapūraka, highly delighted, wearing a gorgeous mantle.*]

Karnapūraka. Where is she? Where is my mistress?

Madanikā. Insolent! What can it be that so excites you? You do not see your mistress before your very eyes.

Karnapūraka. [*Perceiving Vasantasenā.*] Mistress, my service to you.

Vasantasenā. Karnapūraka, your face is beaming. What is it?

Karnapūraka. [*Proudly.*] Oh, mistress! You missed it! You didn't see Karnapūraka's heroism to-day!

Vasantasenā. What, Karnapūraka, what?

Karnapūraka. Listen. Post-breaker, my mistress' rogue elephant, broke the stake he was tied to, killed his keeper, and ran into the street, making a terrible commotion. You should have heard the people shriek,

Take care of the babies, as quick as you can.
And climb up a roof or a tree!
The elephant rogue wants the blood of a man.
Escape! Run away! Can't you see?18

P. 74.14]

And:

How they lose their ankle-rings!
Girdles, set with gems and things,
Break away from fastenings!
As they stumble, trip, and blunder,
See the bracelets snap asunder,
Each a tangled, pearly wonder!19

And that rogue of an elephant dives with his trunk and his feet and his tusks into the city of Ujjayinī, as if it were a lotus-pond in full flower. At last he comes upon a Buddhist monk. And while the man's staff and his water-jar and his begging-bowl fly every which way, he drizzles water over him and gets him between his tusks. The people see him and begin to shriek again, crying "Oh, oh, the monk is killed!"

Vasantasenā. [Anxiously.] Oh, what carelessness, what carelessness!

Karnapūraka. Don't be frightened. Just listen, mistress. Then, with a big piece of the broken chain dangling about him, he picked him up, picked up the monk between his tusks, and just then Karnapūraka saw him, / saw him, no, no! the slave who grows fat on my mistress' rice-cakes saw him, stumbled with his left foot over a gambler's score, grabbed up an iron pole out of a shop, and challenged the mad elephant—

Vasantasenā. Go on! Go on!

Karnap.

I hit him—in a fit of passion, too—

He really looked like some great mountain peak.

And from between those tusks of his I drew

The sacred hermit meek.²⁰

Vasantasenā. Splendid, splendid! But go on!

Karnapūraka. Then, mistress, all Ujjayinī tipped over to one side, like a ship loaded unevenly, and you could hear nothing but “Hurrah, hurrah for Karnapūraka!” Then, mistress, a man touched the places where he ought to have ornaments, and, finding that he hadn't any, looked up, heaved a long sigh, and threw this mantle over me.

[41.19. S.]

Vasantasenā. Find out, Karnapūraka, whether the mantle is perfumed with jasmine or not.

Karnapūraka. Mistress, the elephant perfume is so strong that I can't tell for sure.

Vasantasenā. Then look at the name.

Karnapūraka. Here is the name. You may read it, mistress.
[He hands her the mantle.]

Vasantasenā. [Reads.] Chārudatta. [She seizes the mantle eagerly and wraps it about her.]

Madanikā. The mantle is very becoming to her, Karnapūraka.

Karnapūraka. Oh, yes, the mantle is becoming enough.

Vasantasenā. Here is your reward, Karnapūraka. [*She gives him a gem.*]

Karnapūraka. [*Taking it and bowing low.*] Now the mantle is most wonderfully becoming.

Vasantasenā. Karnapūraka, where is Chārudatta now?

Karnapūraka. He started to go home along this very street.

Vasantasenā. Come, girl! Let us go to the upper balcony and see Chārudatta.

[*Exeunt*]

10. The Little Clay Cart - ACT III

Act, the Third

THE HOLE IN THE WALL

[Enter Chārudatta's servant, Vardhamānaka.]

Vardh.

A master, kindly and benevolent,
His servants love, however poor he be.
The purse-proud, with a will on harshness bent,
Pays service in the coin of cruelty.¹

And again:

A bullock greedy for a feast of corn
You never can prevent;
A wife who wants her lord to wear a horn
You never can prevent;
A man who loves to gamble night and morn
You never can prevent;
And blemishes that with a man are born
You never can prevent.²

It is some time since Chārudatta went to the concert. It is past midnight, and still he does not come. I think I will go into the outer hall and take a nap. *[He does so.]*

[Enter Chārudatta and Maitreya.]

Chārudatta. How beautifully Rebhila sang! The lute is indeed a pearl, a pearl not of the ocean.

Gently the anxious lover's heart befriending,
Consoling when true lovers may not meet,
To love-lorn souls the dearest comforts sending,
It adds to sweetest love its more of sweet.³

Maitreya. Well then, let's go into the house.

Chārudatta. But how wonderfully Master Rebhila sang!

[44.1. S

Maitreya. There are just two things that always make me laugh. One is a woman talking Sanskrit, and the other is a man who tries to sing soft and low. Now when a woman talks Sanskrit, she is like a heifer with a new rope through her nose; all you hear is "soo, soo, soo." And when a man tries to sing soft and low, he reminds me of an old priest muttering texts, while the flowers in his chaplet dry up. No, I don't like it!

Chārudatta. My friend, Master Rebhila sang most wonderfully this evening. And still you are not satisfied.

The notes of love, peace, sweetness, could I trace,
The note that thrills, the note of passion too,
The note of woman's loveliness and grace—
Ah, my poor words add nothing, nothing new!
But as the notes in sweetest cadence rang,
I thought it was my hidden love who sang.⁴

The melody of song, the stricken strings
In undertone that half-unconscious clings,
More clearly sounding when the passions rise,
But ever sweeter as the music dies.
Words that strong passion fain would say again,
Yet checks their second utterance—in vain;
For music sweet as this lives on, until
I walk as hearing sweetest music still.⁵

Maitreya. But see, my friend! The very dogs are sound asleep

in the shops that look out on the market. Let us go home. [*He looks before him.*] Look, look! The blessed moon seems to give place to darkness, as she descends from her palace in heaven.

Chārudatta. True.

The moon gives place to darkness as she dips
Behind the western mountain; and the tips
Of her uplifted horns alone appear,
Like two sharp-pointed tusks uplifted clear,
Where bathes an elephant in waters cool,
Who shows naught else above the jungle pool.⁶

P. 89.1]

Maitreya. Well, here is our house. Vardhamānaka, Vardhamānaka, open the door!

Vardhamānaka. I hear Maitreya's voice. Chārudatta has returned. I must open the door for him. [*He does so.*] Master, I salute you. Maitreya, I salute you too. The couch is ready. Pray be seated. [*Chārudatta and Maitreya enter and seat themselves.*]

Maitreya. Vardhamānaka, call Radanikā to wash our feet.

Chārudatta. [*Compassionately.*] She sleeps. Do not wake her.

Vardhamānaka. I will bring the water, Maitreya, and you may wash Chārudatta's feet.

Maitreya. [*Angrily.*] Look, man. He acts like the son of a slave that he is, for he is bringing water. But he makes me wash your feet, and I am a Brahman.

Chārudatta. Good Maitreya, do you bring the water, and Vardhamānaka shall wash my feet.

Vardhamānaka. Yes, Maitreya. Do you bring the water. [*Maitreya does so. Vardhamānaka washes Chārudatta's feet, then moves away.*]

Chārudatta. Let water be brought for the Brahman's feet.

Maitreya. What good does water do my feet? I shall have to roll in the dirt again, like a beaten ass.

Vardhamānaka. Maitreya, you are a Brahman.

Maitreya. Yes, like a slow-worm among all the other snakes, so am I a Brahman among all the other Brahmins.

Vardhamānaka. Maitreya, I will wash your feet after all. [*He does so.*] Maitreya, this golden casket I was to keep by day, you by night. Take it. [*He gives it to Maitreya, then exit.*]

Maitreya. [*Receiving the casket.*] The thing is here still. Isn't there a single thief in Ujjayinī to steal the wretch that robs me of my sleep? Listen. I am going to take it into the inner court.

[46.1. S.

Chārud.

Such lax attention we can ill afford.

If we are trusted by a courtesan,

Then, Brahman, prove yourself an honest man,

And guard it safely, till it be restored.⁷

[*He nods, repeating the stanza "The melody of song, the stricken strings:"*]

Maitreya. Are you going to sleep?

Chārudatta. Yes, so it seems.

For conquering sleep, descending on mine eyes,
First smites the brow with unresisted blow;
Unseen, elusive, like old age, she tries
To gather strength by weakening her foe.⁸

Maitreya. Then let's go to sleep. [*He does so.*]

[*Enter Sharvilaka.*]

Sharv.

I made an entrance for my body's round
By force of art and arms, a path to deeds!
I skinned my sides by crawling on the ground,
Like a snake that sloughs the skin no longer sound:
And now I go where my profession leads.⁹

[*He gazes at the sky. Joyfully.*] See! The blessed moon is setting.
For well I know,

My trade would fain from watchmen's eyes be shrouded;

Valiant, I force the dwelling of another.

But see, the stars in deepest dark are clouded,

And the night shields me like a careful mother.¹⁰

I made a breach in the orchard wall and entered. And now I must force my way into the inner court as well.

Yes, let men call it vulgar, if they will,
The trade that thrives while sleeps the sleepyhead;
Yes, knavery, not bravery, call it still,
To overreach confiding folk a-bed.

P. 86.9]

Far better blame and hissing, fairly won.
Than the pay of genuflecting underlings;
This antique path was trod by Drona's son,
Who slew the sleeping, unsuspecting kings.¹¹

But where shall I make the breach?

Where is the spot which falling drops decayed?
For each betraying sound is deadened there.
No yawning breach should in the walls be made,
So treatises on robbery declare.
Where does the palace crumble? Where the place
That niter-eaten bricks false soundness wear?
Where shall I 'scape the sight of woman's face?
Fulfilment of my wishes waits me there.¹²

[*He feels the wall.*] Here is a spot weakened by constant sun and sprinkling and eaten by saltpeter rot. And here is a pile of dirt thrown up by a mouse. Now heaven be praised! My venture prospers. This is the first sign of success for Skanda's sons. Now first of all, how shall I make the breach? The blessed Bearer of the Golden Lance has prescribed four varieties of breach, thus: if the bricks are baked, pull them out; if they are unbaked, cut them; if they are made of earth, wet them; if they are made of wood, split them. Here we have baked bricks; ergo, pull out the bricks.

Now what shall be the shape I give the breach?

A "lotus," "cistern," "crescent moon," or "sun"?
"Oblong," or "cross," or "bulging pot"? for each
The treatises permit. Which one? which one?
And where shall I display my sovereign skill,
That in the morning men may wonder still?¹³

In this wall of baked bricks, the "bulging pot" would be effective. I will make that.

[47.16. S.

At other walls that I have pierced by night,
And at my less successful ventures too,
The crowd of neighbors gazed by morning light,
Assigning praise or blame, as was my due.¹⁴

Praise to the boon-conferring god, to Skanda of immortal youth! Praise to him, the Bearer of the Golden Lance, the Brahman's god, the pious! Praise to him, the Child of the Sun! Praise to him, the teacher of magic, whose first pupil I am! For he found pleasure in me and gave me magic ointment, With which so I anointed be,
No watchman's eye my form shall see;
And edged sword that falls on me
From cruel wounds shall leave me free.¹⁵

[*He anoints himself.*] Alas, I have forgotten my measuring line.
[*Reflecting.*] Aha! This sacred cord shall be my measuring line. Yes, the sacred cord is a great blessing to a Brahman, especially to one like me. For, you see,
With this he measures, ere he pierce a wall,
And picks the lock, when jewels are at stake.
It serves as key to bolted door and hall,
As tourniquet for bite of worm and snake.¹⁶

The measuring is done. I begin my task. [*He does so, then takes a look.*] My breach lacks but a single brick. Alas, I am bitten by a

snake. [*He binds his finger with the sacred cord, and manifests the workings of poison.*] I have applied the remedy, and now I am restored. [*He continues his work, then gazes.*] Ah, there burns a candle. See!

Though jealous darkness hems it round,
The golden-yellow candle from its place
Shines through the breach upon the ground,
Like a streak of gold upon the touchstone's face.¹⁷

P. 87.9]

[*He returns to his work.*] The breach is finished. Good! I enter. But no, I will not enter yet. I will shove a dummy in. [*He does so.*] Ah, no one is there. Praise be to Skanda! [*He enters and looks about.*] See! Two men asleep. Come, for my own protection I will open the door. But the house is old and the door squeaks. I must look for water. Now where might water be? [*He looks about, finds water, and sprinkles the door. Anxiously.*] I hope it will not fall upon the floor and make a noise. Come, this is the way. [*He puts his back against the door and opens it cautiously.*] Good! So much for that. Now I must discover whether these two are feigning sleep, or whether they are asleep in the fullest meaning of the term. [*He tries to terrify them, and notes the effect.*] Yes, they must be asleep in the fullest meaning of the term. For see!

Their breath first calmly rises, ere it sink;
Its regularity all fear defies.
Unmoving in their socket-holes, the eyes
Are tightly closed, and never seem to wink.
The limbs relaxed, at ease the bodies lie,
I see their feet beyond the bedstead peep,
The lighted candle vexes not the eye;
It would, if they were only feigning sleep.¹⁸

[*He looks about him.*] What! a drum? And here is a flute. And here, a snare-drum. And here, a lute. And reed-pipes. And

yonder, manuscripts. Is this the house of a dancing-master? But no! When I entered, I was convinced that this was a palatial residence. Now then, is this man poor in the fullest meaning of the term, or, from fear of the king or of thieves, does he keep his property buried? Well, my own property is buried, too. But I will scatter the seeds that betray subterranean gold. [*He does so.*] The scattered seeds nowhere swell up. Ah, he is poor in the fullest meaning of the term. Good! I go.

Maitreya. [*Talking in his sleep.*] Look, man. I see something like a hole in the wall. I see something like a thief. You had better take this golden casket.

[49.7. S

Sharvilaka. I wonder if the man has discovered that I have entered, and is showing off his poverty in order to make fun of me. Shall I kill him, or is the poor devil talking in his sleep? [*He takes a look.*] But see! This thing wrapped in a ragged bath-clout, now that I inspect it by the light of my candle, is in truth a jewel-casket. Suppose I take it. But no! It is hardly proper to rob a man of good birth, who is as poor as I am. I go.

Maitreya. My friend, by the wishes of cows and Brahmans I conjure you to take this golden casket.

Sharvilaka. One may not disregard the sacred wish of a cow and the wish of a Brahman. I will take it. But look! There burns the candle. I keep about me a moth for the express purpose of extinguishing candles. I will let him enter the flame. This is his place and hour. May this moth which I here release, depart to flutter above the flame in varying circles. The breeze from the insect's wings has translated the flame into accursed darkness. Or shall I not rather curse the darkness brought by me upon my Brahmanic family? For my father was a man who knew the four Vedas, who would not accept a gift; and I, Sharvilaka, his son, and a Brahman, I am committing a crime for the sake of that courtesan girl Madanikā. Now I will grant the Brahman's wish. [*He reaches out for the casket.*]

Maitreya. How cold your fingers are, man!

Sharvilaka. What carelessness! My fingers are cold from touching water. Well, I will put my hand in my armpit [*He warms his left hand and takes the casket.*]

Maitreya. Have you got it?

Sharvilaka. I could not refuse a Brahman's request. I have it.

P. 80.9]

Maitreya. Now I shall sleep as peacefully as a merchant who has sold his wares.

Sharvilaka. O great Brahman, sleep a hundred years! Alas that a Brahman family should thus be plunged in darkness for the sake of Madanikā, a courtesan! Or better, I myself am thus plunged in darkness.

A curse on poverty, I say!

'T is stranger to the manly will;

This act that shuns the light of day

I curse indeed, but do it still.¹⁹

Well then, I must go to Vasantasenā's house to buy Madanikā's freedom. [*He walks about and looks around him.*]

Ah, I think I hear footsteps. I hope they are not those of policemen. Never mind. I will pretend to be a pillar, and wait. But after all, do policemen exist for me, for Sharvilaka? Why, I am

A cat for crawling, and a deer for flight,

A hawk for rending, and a dog for sight

To judge the strength of men that wake or sleep,

A snake, when 't is advisable to creep,

Illusion's self, to seem a saint or rogue,

Goddess of Speech in understanding brogue;

A light in blackest night, in holes a lizard I can be,

A horse on terra firma, and a ship upon the sea.²⁰

And again:

Quick as a snake, and steady as a hill;

In flight the prince of birds can show no greater skill;

In searching on the ground I am as keen as any hare,
In strength I am a lion, and a wolf to rend and tear.²¹

Radanikā. [Entering.] Dear me! Vardhamānaka went to sleep
in the outer court, and now he is not there. Well, I will call
Maitreya. [She walks about.]

[51.1. S.]

Sharvilaka. [Prepares to strike down *Radanikā*, but first
takes a look.] What! a woman? Good! I go.[Exit.]

Radanikā. [Recoiling in terror.] Oh, oh, a thief has cut a hole
in the wall of our house and is escaping, I must go and wake
Maitreya. [She approaches *Maitreya*.] Oh, Maitreya, get up, get
up! A thief has cut a hole in the wall of our house and has
escaped.

Maitreya. [Rising.] What do you mean, wench? "A hole in the
wall has cut a thief and has escaped"?

Radanikā. Poor fool! Stop your joking. Don't you see it?

Maitreya. What do you mean, wench? "It looks as if a second
door had been thrown open"? Get up, friend Chārudatta, get
up! A thief has made a hole in the wall of our house and has
escaped.

Chārudatta. Yes, yes! A truce to your jests!

Maitreya. But it isn't a jest. Look!

Chārudatta. Where?

Maitreya. Why, here.

Chārudatta. [Gazing.] What a very remarkable hole!

The bricks are drawn away below, above;
The top is narrow, but the center wide;
As if the great house-heart had burst with pride,
Fearing lest the unworthy share its love.²²

To think that science should be expended on a task like this!

Maitreya. My friend, this hole must have been made by one

of two men; either by a stranger, or else for practice by a student of the science of robbery. For what man here in Ujjayinī does not know how much wealth there is in our house?

Chārud.

Stranger he must have been who made the breach,
His customary harvest in my house to reap;
He has not learned that vanished riches teach
A calm, untroubled sleep.
He saw the sometime greatness of my home
And forced an entrance; for his heart did leap
With short-lived hope; now he must elsewhere roam,
And over broken hopes must sorely weep.²³

Just think of the poor fellow telling his friends: "I entered the house of a merchant's son, and found—nothing."

P. 92.4]

Maitreya. Do you mean to say that you pity the rascally robber? Thinks he—"Here's a great house. Here's the place to carry off a jewel-casket or a gold-casket." [*He remembers the casket. Despondently. Aside.*] Where is that golden casket? [*He remembers the events of the night. Aloud.*] Look, man! You are always saying "Maitreya is a fool, Maitreya is no scholar." But I certainly acted wisely in handing over that golden casket to you. If I hadn't, the son of a slave would have carried it off.

Chārudatta. A truce to your jests!

Maitreya. Just because I'm a fool, do you suppose I don't even know the place and time for a jest?

Chārudatta. But when did this happen?

Maitreya. Why, when I told you that your fingers were cold.

Chārudatta. It might have been. [*He searches about. Joyfully.*] My friend, I have something pleasant to tell you.

Maitreya. What? Wasn't it stolen?

Chārudatta. Yes.

Maitreya. What is the pleasant news, then?

Chārudatta. The fact that he did not go away disappointed.

Maitreya. But it was only entrusted to our care.

Chārudatta. What! entrusted to our care? [*He swoons.*]

Maitreya. Come to yourself, man. Is the fact that a thief stole what was entrusted to you, any reason why you should swoon?

53.5. S.]

Chārudatta. [*Coming to himself.*] Ah, my friend,

Who will believe the truth?

Suspicion now is sure.

This world will show no ruth

To the inglorious poor.²⁴

Alas! If envious fate before

Has wooed my wealth alone.

Why should she seek my store

Of virtue as her own?²⁵

Maitreya. I intend to deny the whole thing. Who gave anybody anything? who received anything from anybody? who was a witness?

Chārudatta. And shall I tell a falsehood now?

No! I will beg until I earn

The wherewithal my debt to pay.

Ignoble falsehood I will spurn.

That steals the character away.²⁶

Radanikā. I will go and tell his good wife. [*She goes out, returning with Chārudatta's wife.*]

Wife. [*Anxiously.*] Oh! Is it true that my lord is uninjured, and Maitreya too?

Radanikā. It is true, mistress. But the gems which belong to the courtesan have been stolen. [*Chārudatta's wife swoons.*] O my good mistress! Come to yourself!

Wife. [*Recovering.*] Girl, how can you say that my lord is uninjured? Better that he were injured in body than in character. For now the people of Ujjayinī will say that my lord committed this crime because of his poverty. [*She looks up and*

sighs.] Ah, mighty Fate! The destinies of the poor, uncertain as the water-drops which fall upon a lotus-leaf, seem to thee but playthings. There remains to me this one necklace, which I brought with me from my mother's house. But my lord would be too proud to accept it. Girl, call Maitreya hither.

P. 95.7]

Radanikā. Yes, mistress. [*She approaches Maitreya.*]

Maitreya, my lady summons you.

Maitreya. Where is she?

Radanikā. Here. Come!

Maitreya. [*Approaching.*] Heaven bless you!

Wife. I salute you, sir. Sir, will you look straight in front of you?

Maitreya. Madam, here stands a man who looks straight in front of him.

Wife. Sir, you must accept this.

Maitreya. Why?

Wife. I have observed the Ceremony of the Gems. And on this occasion one must make as great a present as one may to a Brahman. This I have not done, therefore pray accept this necklace.

Maitreya. [*Receiving the necklace.*] Heaven bless you! I will go and tell my friend.

Wife. You must not do it in such a way as to make me blush, Maitreya.[*Exit.*]

Maitreya. [*In astonishment.*] What generosity!

Chārudatta. How Maitreya lingers! I trust his grief is not leading him to do what he ought not. Maitreya, Maitreya!

Maitreya. [*Approaching.*] Here I am. Take that. [*He displays the necklace.*]

Chārudatta. What is this?

Maitreya. Why, that is the reward you get for marrying such a wife.

Chārudatta. What! my wife takes pity on me? Alas, now am I poor indeed!

When fate so robs him of his all,
That on her pity he must call,
The man to woman's state doth fall,
The woman is the man.²⁷

But no, I am not poor. For I have a wife
Whose love outlasts my wealthy day;
In thee a friend through good and ill;
And truth that naught could take away:
Ah! this the poor man lacketh still.²⁸

[55.9. S.]

Maitreya, take the necklace and go to Vasantasenā. Tell her in my name that we have gambled away the golden casket, forgetting that it was not our own, that we trust she will accept this necklace in its place.

Maitreya. But you must not give away this necklace, the pride of the four seas, for that cheap thing that was stolen before we had a bite or a drink out of it.

Chārudatta. Not so, my friend.

She showed her trust in leaving us her treasure;
The price of confidence has no less measure.²⁹

Friend, I conjure you by this gesture, not to return until you have delivered it into her hands. Vardhamānaka, do you speedily

Fill up the opening with the selfsame bricks;
Thus will I thwart the process of the law,
For the blemish of so great a scandal sticks.³⁰

And, friend Maitreya, you must show your pride by not speaking too despondently.

Maitreya. How can a poor man help speaking despondently?

Chārudatta. Poor I am not, my friend. For I have a wife
Whose love outlasts my wealthy day;
In thee a friend through good and ill;

And truth that naught could take away:

Ah, this the poor man lacketh still.(28)

Go then, and after performing rites of purification, I will offer my morning prayer.

[Exeunt]

11. The Little Clay Cart - Act IV

Act, the Fourth

MADANIKĀ AND SHARVILAKA

[Enter a maid.]

Maid.

I am entrusted with a message for my mistress by her mother. Here is my mistress. She is gazing at a picture and is talking with Madanikā. I will go to her. *[She walks about. Then enter Vasantasenā as described, and Madanikā.]*

Vasantasenā. Madanikā girl, is this portrait really like Chārudatta?

Madanikā. Very like.

Vasantasenā. How do you know?

Madanikā. Because my mistress' eyes are fastened so lovingly upon it.

Vasantasenā. Madanikā girl, do you say this because courtesan courtesy demands it?

Madanikā. But mistress, is the courtesy of a girl who lives in a courtesan's house, necessarily false?

Vasantasenā. Girl, courtesans meet so many kinds of men that they do learn a false courtesy.

Madanikā. But when the eyes of my mistress find such delight in a thing, and her heart too, what need is there to ask the reason?

Vasantasenā. But I should not like to have my friends laugh at me.

Madanikā. You need not be afraid. Women understand women.

Maid. [*Approaching.*] Mistress, your mother sends word that a covered cart is waiting at the side-door, and that you are to take a drive.

Vasantasenā. Tell me, is it Chārudatta who invites me?

Maid. Mistress, the man who sent ornaments worth ten thousand gold-pieces with the cart—

[58.6. S.]

Vasantasenā. Is who?

Maid. Is the king's brother-in-law, Sansthānaka.

Vasantasenā. [*Indignantly.*] Go! and never come again on such an errand.

Maid. Do not be angry, mistress. I was only sent with the message.

Vasantasenā. But it is the message which makes me angry.

Maid. But what shall I tell your mother?

Vasantasenā. Tell my mother never to send me another such message, unless she wishes to kill me.

Maid. As you will. [*Exit.*][*Enter Sharvilaka.*]

Sharv.

Blame for my sin I laid upon the night;
I conquered sleep and watchmen of the king;
But darkness wanes, and in the sun's clear light
My light is like the moon's—a faded thing.¹

And again:

Whoever cast at me a passing look,
Or neared me, anxious, as they quickly ran,
All such my laden soul for foes mistook;
For sin it was wherein man's fear began.²

Well, it was for Madanikā's sake that I did the deed of sin.

I paid no heed to any one who talked with serving-men;
The houses ruled by women-folk—these I avoided most;
And when policemen seemed to have me almost in their ken,
I stood stock-still and acted just exactly like a post.

A hundred such manoeuvres did I constantly essay,
And by such means succeeded in turning night to day.³

[He walks about.]

Vasantasenā. Girl, lay this picture on my sofa and come back at once with a fan.

Madanikā. Yes, mistress. *[Exit with the picture.]*

Sharvilaka. This is Vasantasenā's house. I will enter. *[He does so.]*

P. 101.11]

I wonder where I can find Madanikā. *[Enter Madanikā with the fan. Sharvilaka discovers her.]* Ah, it is Madanikā
Surpassing Madana himself in charm,
She seems the bride of Love, in human guise;
Even while my heart the flames of passion harm,
She brings a sandal coolness to my eyes.⁴

Madanikā!

Madanikā. *[Discovers Sharvilaka.]* Oh, oh, oh, Sharvilaka! I am so glad, Sharvilaka. Where have you been?

Sharvilaka. I will tell you. *[They gaze at each other passionately.]*

Vasantasenā. How Madanikā lingers! I wonder where she is. *[She looks through a bull's-eye window.]* Why, there she stands, talking with a man. Her loving glance does not waver, and she gazes as if she would drink him in. I imagine he must be the man who wishes to make her free. Well, let her stay, let her stay. Never interrupt anybody's happiness. I will not call her.

Madanikā. Tell me, Sharvilaka. *[Sharvilaka looks about him uneasily.]* What is it, Sharvilaka? You seem uneasy.

Sharvilaka. I will tell you a secret. Are we alone?

Madanikā. Of course we are.

Vasantasenā. What! a deep secret? I will not listen.

Sharvilaka. Tell me, Madanikā. Will Vasantasenā take a price for your freedom?

Vasantasenā. The conversation has to do with me? Then I will hide behind this window and listen.

Madanikā. I asked my mistress about it, Sharvilaka, and she said that if she could have *her* way, she would free all her servants for nothing. But Sharvilaka, where did you find such a fortune that you can think of buying my freedom from my mistress?

Sharvilaka.

A victim to my pauper plight,
And your sweet love to win,
For you, my timid maid, last night
I did the deed of sin.⁵

[60.16. S.

Vasantasenā. His face is tranquil. It would be troubled, if he had sinned.

Madanikā. Oh, Sharvilaka! For a mere nothing—for a woman—you have risked both things!

Sharvilaka. What things?

Madanikā. Your life and your character.

Sharvilaka. My foolish girl, fortune favors the brave.

Madanikā. Oh, Sharvilaka! Your character was without a stain. You didn't do anything very bad, did you, when for my sake you did the deed of sin?

Sharv.

The gems that magnify a woman's charm,
As flowers the creeping plant, I do not harm.
I do not rob the Brahman of his pelf,
Nor seize the sacrificial gold myself.
I do not steal the baby from the nurse,
Simply because I need to fill my purse.
Even as a thief, I strive with main and might
For just distinction 'twixt the wrong and right.⁶

And so you may tell Vasantasenā this:

These ornaments were made for you to don,
Or so it seems to me;
But as you love me, never put them on
Where other folks may see.⁷

Madanikā. But Sharvilaka, ornaments that nobody may see, and a courtesan—the two things do not hang together. Give me the jewels. I want to see them.

Sharvilaka. Here they are. [*He gives them to her with some uneasiness.*]

Madanikā. [*Examining the jewels.*] It seems to me I have seen these before. Tell me. Where did you get them?

P. 104.15]

Sharvilaka. What does that matter to you, Madanikā? Take them.

Madanikā. [*Angrily.*] If you can't trust me, why do you wish to buy my freedom?

Sharvilaka. Well, this morning I heard in the merchants' quarter that the merchant Chārudatta—

[*Vasantasenā and Madanikā swoon.*]

Sharvilaka. Madanikā! Come to yourself! Why is it that now
Your figure seems to melt in limp despair,
Your eyes are wildly rolling here and there?
That when I come, sweet girl, to make you free,
You fall to trembling, not to pitying me?⁸

Madanikā. [*Coming to herself.*] O you reckless man! When you did what you ought not to have done for my sake, you didn't kill anybody or hurt anybody in that house?

Sharvilaka. Madanikā, Sharvilaka does not strike a terrified man or a man asleep. I did not kill anybody nor hurt anybody.

Madanikā. Really?

Sharvilaka. Really.

Vasantasenā. [*Recovering consciousness.*] Ah, I breathe again.

Madanikā. Thank heaven!

Sharvilaka. [*Jealously.*] What does this “Thank heaven” mean, Madanikā?

I sinned for you, when love had made me pine,
Although my house was good since time began;
Love took my virtue, but my pride is mine.
You call me friend and love another man?9

[*Meaningly.*]

A noble youth is like a goodly tree;
His wealth, the fruit so fair;
The courtesan is like a bird; for she
Pecks him and leaves him bare.¹⁰
Love is a fire, whose flame is lust,
Whose fuel is gallantry,
Wherein our youth and riches must
Thus sacrificèd be.¹¹

[62.16. S.]

Vasantasenā. [*With a smile.*] His excitement is a little out of place.

Sharvilaka. Yes!

Those men are fools, it seems to me,
Who trust to women or to gold;
For gold and girls, 'tis plain to see.
Are false as virgin snakes and cold.¹²
Love not a woman; if you ever do,
She mocks at you, and plays the gay deceiver:
Yet if she loves you, you may love her too;
But if she doesn't, leave her.¹³

Too true it is that
A courtesan will laugh and cry for gold;
She trusts you not, but waits your trustful hour.
If virtue and a name are yours, then hold!
Avoid her as you would a graveyard flower.¹⁴

And again:

As fickle as the billows of the sea,
Glowing no longer than the evening sky,
A woman takes your gold, then leaves you free;
You're worthless, like cosmetics, when you're dry.¹⁵

Yes, women are indeed fickle.
One man perhaps may hold her heart in trust,
She lures another with coquettish eyes,
Sports with another in unseemly lust,
Another yet her body satisfies.¹⁶

As some one has well said:
On mountain-tops no lotuses are grown;
The horse's yoke no ass will ever bear;
Rice never springs from seeds of barley sown;
A courtesan is not an honest fair.¹⁷

Accursèd Chārudatta, you shall not live! [*He takes a few steps.*]

P. 107.11]

Madanikā. [*Seizing the hem of his garment.*] O you foolish man! Your anger is so ridiculous.

Sharvilaka. Ridiculous? how so?

Madanikā. Because these jewels belong to my mistress.

Sharvilaka. And what then?

Madanikā. And she left them with that gentleman.

Sharvilaka. What for?

Madanikā. [*Whispers.*] That's why.

Sharvilaka. [*Sheepishly.*] Confound it!

The sun was hot one summer day;
I sought the shadow, there to stay;
Poor fool! the kindly branch to pay,
I stole its sheltering leaves away.¹⁸

Vasantasenā. How sorry he seems. Surely, he did this thing in ignorance.

Sharvilaka. What is to be done now, Madanikā?

Madanikā. Your own wit should tell you that.

Sharvilaka. No. For you must remember,
Nature herself gives women wit;

Men learn from books a little bit.¹⁹

Madanikā. Sharvilaka, if you will take my advice, restore the
jewels to that righteous man.

Sharvilaka. But Madanikā, what if he should prosecute me?

Madanikā. No cruel heat comes from the moon.

Vasantasenā. Good, Madanikā, good!

Sharvilaka. Madanikā,

For what I did, I feel no grief nor fear:

Why tell me of this good man's virtues high?

Shame for my baseness touches me more near;

What can this king do to such rogues as I?²⁰

Nevertheless, your suggestion is inconsistent with prudence.
You must discover some other plan.

[64.16. S.]

Madanikā. Yes, there is another plan.

Vasantasenā. I wonder what it will be.

Madanikā. Pretend to be a servant of that gentleman, and
give the jewels to my mistress.

Sharvilaka. And what then?

Madanikā. Then you are no thief, Chārudatta has discharged
his obligation, and my mistress has her jewels.

Sharvilaka. But isn't this course too reckless?

Madanikā. I tell you, give them to her. Any other course is too
reckless.

Vasantasenā. Good, Madanikā, good! Spoken like a free
woman.

Sharvilaka.

Risen at last is wisdom's light.

Because I followed after you;

When clouds obscure the moon by night,

'Tis hard to find a guide so true.²¹

Madanikā. Then you must wait here a moment in Kāma's shrine, while I tell my mistress that you have come.

Sharvilaka. I will.

Madanikā. [*Approaches Vasantasenā.*] Mistress, a Brahman has come from Chārudatta to see you.

Vasantasenā. But girl, how do you know that he comes from Chārudatta?

Madanikā. Should I not know my own, mistress?

Vasantasenā. [*Shaking her head and smiling. Aside.*] Splendid! [*Aloud.*] Bid him enter.

Madanikā. Yes, mistress. [*Approaching Sharvilaka.*] Enter, Sharvilaka.

Sharvilaka. [*Approaches. With some embarrassment.*] My greetings to you.

P. 110.8]

Vasantasenā. I salute you, sir. Pray be seated.

Sharvilaka. The merchant sends this message: "My house is so old that it is hard to keep this casket safe. Pray take it back." [*He gives it to Madanikā, and starts to leave.*]

Vasantasenā. Sir, will you undertake a return commission of mine?

Sharvilaka. [*Aside.*] Who will carry it? [*Aloud.*] And this commission is—

Vasantasenā. You will be good enough to accept Madanikā.

Sharvilaka. Madam, I do not quite understand.

Vasantasenā. But I do.

Sharvilaka. How so?

Vasantasenā. Chārudatta told me that I was to give Madanikā to the man who should return these jewels. You are therefore to understand that he makes you a present of her.

Sharvilaka. [*Aside.*] Ah, she sees through me. [*Aloud.*] Good, Chārudatta, good!

On virtue only set your heart's desire;

The righteous poor attain to heights whereto
The wicked wealthy never may aspire.²²

And again:

On virtue let the human heart be set;
To virtue nothing serves as check or let
The moon, attaining unattainable, is led
By virtue to her seat on Shiva's head.²³

Vasantasenā. Is my driver there? [*Enter a servant with a bullock-cart.*]

Servant. Mistress, the cart is ready.

Vasantasenā. Madanikā girl, you must show me a happy face. You are free. Enter the bullock-cart. But do not forget me.

Madanikā. [*Weeping.*] My mistress drives me away. [*She falls at her feet.*]

Vasantasenā. You are now the one to whom honor should be paid. Go then, enter the cart. But do not forget me.

[66.17. S.]

Sharvilaka. Heaven bless you! and you, Madanikā,
Turn upon her a happy face,
And hail with bended head the grace
That gives you now the name of wife.
As a veil to keep you safe through life.²⁴

[*He enters the bullock-cart with Madanikā, and starts away.*]

A voice behind the scenes. Men! Men! We have the following orders from the chief of police: "A soothsayer has declared that a young herdsman named Aryaka is to become king. Trusting to this prophecy, and alarmed thereat, King Pālaka has taken him from his hamlet, and thrown him into strict confinement. Therefore be watchful, and every man at his post."

Sharvilaka. [*Listening.*] What! King Pālaka has imprisoned my good friend Aryaka? And here I am, a married man. Confound it! But no,
Two things alone—his friend, his wife—
Deserve man's love below;

A hundred brides may forfeit life
Ere he should suffer so.²⁵

Good! I will get out [*He does so.*]

Madanikā. [*Folding her hands. Tearfully.*] My lord, if you must, at least bring me first to your parents.

Sharvilaka. Yes, my love. I will. I had the same thought in mind. [*To the servant.*] My good fellow, do you know the house of the merchant Rebhila?

Servant. Certainly.

Sharvilaka. Bring my wife thither.

Servant. Yes, sir.

Madanikā. If you desire it, dear. But dear, you must be very careful.*[Exit.*

P. 113.6]

Sharvilaka. Now as for me,
I'll rouse my kin, the kitchen cabinet.
Those high in fame by strength of good right arm,
And those who with the king's contempt have met,
And royal slaves, to save my friend from harm:
Like old Yaugandharāyana
For the good king Udayana.²⁶

And again:

My friend has causeless been confined
By wicked foes of timid kind;
I fly, I fly to free him soon,
Like the eclipse-oppressed moon.*[Exit.]* 27

Maid. [*Entering.*] Mistress, I congratulate you. A Brahman has come with a message from Chārudatta.

Vasantasenā. Ah, this is a joyful day. Show him every mark of respect, girl, and have him conducted hither by one of the pages.

Maid. Yes, mistress.*[Exit.*

[Enter Maitreya with a page.]

Maitreya. Well! Rāvana, the king of the demons, travels with his chariot that they call the “Blossom.” He earned it by his penances. Now I am a Brahman, and though I never performed any penances, I travel with another sort of a blossom—a woman of the town.

Maid. Sir, will you inspect our gateway.

Maitreya. [*Gazes admiringly.*] It has just been sprinkled and cleaned and received a coat of green. The threshold of it is pretty as a picture with the offerings of all sorts of fragrant flowers. It stretches up its head as if it wanted to peep into the sky. It is adorned with strings of jasmine garlands that hang down and toss about like the trunk of the heavenly elephant. It shines with its high ivory portal. It is lovely with any number of holiday banners that gleam red as great rubies and wave their coquettish fingers as they flutter in the breeze and seem to invite me to enter. Both sides are decorated with holiday water-jars of crystal, which are charming with their bright-green mango twigs, and are set at the foot of the pillars that sustain the portal. The doors are of gold, thickly set with diamonds as hard to pierce as a giant’s breast. It actually wearies a poor devil’s envy. Yes, Vasantasenā’s house-door is a beautiful thing. Really, it forcibly challenges the attention of a man who doesn’t care about such things.

[68.16. S.]

Maid. Come, sir, and enter the first court.

Maitreya. [*Enters and looks about.*] Well! Here in the first court are rows of balconies brilliant as the moon, or as sea-shells, or as lotus-stalks; whitened by handfuls of powder strewn over them; gleaming with golden stairways inlaid with all sorts of gems: they seem to gaze down on Ujjayinī with their round faces, the crystal windows, from which strings of pearls are dangling. The porter sits there and snoozes as comfortably as a professor. The crows which they tempt with rice-gruel

and curdled milk will not eat the offering, because they can't distinguish it from the mortar. Show me the way, madam.

Maid. Come, sir, and enter the second court.

Maitreya. [*Enters and looks about.*] Well! Here in the second court the cart-bullocks are tied. They grow fat on mouthfuls of grass and pulse-stalks which are brought them, right and left, by everybody. Their horns are smeared with oil. And here is another, a buffalo, snorting like a gentleman insulted. And here is a ram having his neck rubbed, like a prize-fighter after the fight. And here are others, horses having their manes put in shape. And here in a stall is another, a monkey, tied fast like a thief. [*He looks in another direction.*] And here is an elephant, taking from his drivers a cake of rice and drippings and oil. Show me the way, madam.

Maid. Come, sir, and enter the third court.

Maitreya. [*Enters and looks about.*] Well! Here in the third court are these seats, prepared for young gentlemen to sit on. A half-read book is lying on the gaming-table. And the table itself has its own dice, made out of gems. And here, again, are courtezans and old hangers-on at court, past masters in the war and peace of love, wandering about and holding in their fingers pictures painted in many colors. Show me the way, madam.

P. 117.4]

Maid. Come, sir, and enter the fourth court.

Maitreya. [*Enters and looks about.*] Well! Here in the fourth court the drums that maiden fingers beat are booming like the thunder; the cymbals are falling, as the stars fall from heaven when their merit is exhausted; the pipe is discoursing music as sweet as the humming of bees. And here, again, is a lute that somebody is holding on his lap like a girl who is excited by jealousy and love, and he is stroking it with his fingers. And here, again, are courtesan girls that sing as charmingly as honey-drunken bees, and they are made to dance and recite

a drama with love in it. And water-coolers are hanging in the windows so as to catch the breeze. Show me the way, madam.

Maid. Come, sir, and enter the fifth court.

Maitreya. [*Enters and looks about.*] Well! Here in the fifth court the overpowering smell of asafetida and oil is attractive enough to make a poor devil's mouth water. The kitchen is kept hot all the time, and the gusts of steam, laden with all sorts of good smells, seem like sighs issuing from its mouth-like doors. The smell of the preparation of all kinds of foods and sauces makes me smack my lips. And here, again, is a butcher's boy washing a mess of chitterlings as if it were an old loin-cloth. The cook is preparing every kind of food. Sweetmeats are being constructed, cakes are being baked. [*To himself.*] I wonder if I am to get a chance to wash my feet and an invitation to eat what I can hold. [*He looks in another direction.*] There are courtezans and bastard pages, adorned with any number of jewels, just like Gandharvas and Apsarases. Really, this house is heaven. Tell me, who are you bastards anyway?

[70.13. S.

Pages. Why, we are bastard pages—

Petted in a stranger's court.

Fed on stranger's food,

Stranger's money makes us sport—

Not so very good.

Stranger women gave us birth.

Stranger men begot;

Baby elephants in mirth,

We're a bastard lot.²⁸

Maitreya. Show me the way, madam.

Maid. Come, sir, and enter the sixth court.

Maitreya. [*Enters and looks about.*] Well! Here in the sixth court they are working in gold and jewels. The arches set with sapphires look as if they were the home of the rainbow. The jewelers are testing the lapis lazuli, the pearls, the corals, the topazes, the sapphires, the cat's-eyes, the rubies, the emeralds,

and all the other kinds of gems. Rubies are being set in gold. Golden ornaments are being fashioned. Pearls are being strung on a red cord. Pieces of lapis lazuli are being cleverly polished. Shells are being pierced. Corals are being ground. Wet bundles of saffron are being dried. Musk is being moistened. Sandalwood is being ground to make sandal-water. Perfumes are being compounded. Betel-leaves and camphor are being given to courtezans and their lovers. Coquettish glances are being exchanged. Laughter is going on. Wine is being drunk incessantly with sounds of glee. Here are men-servants, here are maid-servants, and here are men who forget child and wife and money. When the courtezans, who have drunk the wine from the liquor-jars, give them the mitten, they—drink. Show me the way, madam.

P. 121.5]

Maid. Come, sir, and enter the seventh court.

Maitreya. [*Enters and looks about.*] Well! Here in the seventh court the mated doves are sitting comfortably in their snug dovecotes, billing and cooing and nothing else, and perfectly happy. And there is a parrot in a cage, chanting like a Brahman with a bellyful of curdled milk and rice. And here, again, is a talking thrush, chattering like a housemaid who spreads herself because somebody noticed her. A cuckoo, her throat still happy from tasting all sorts of fruit-syrups, is cooing like a procuress. Rows of cages are hanging from pegs. Quails are being egged on to fight. Partridges are being made to talk. Caged pigeons are being provoked. A tame peacock that looks as if he was adorned with all sorts of gems is dancing happily about, and as he flaps his wings, he seems to be fanning the roof which is distressed by the rays of the sun. [*He looks in another direction.*] Here are pairs of flamingos like moonbeams rolled into a ball, that wander about after pretty girls, as if they wanted to learn how to walk gracefully. And here, again, are tame cranes, walking around like ancient eunuchs. Well, well!

This courtesan keeps a regular menagerie of birds. Really, the courtesan's house seems to me like Indra's heaven. Show me the way, madam.

Maid. Come, sir, and enter the eighth court.

Maitreya. [*Enters and looks about.*] Madam, who is this in the silk cloak, adorned with such astonishingly tautologous ornaments, who wanders about, stumbling and stretching his limbs?

Maid. Sir, this is my mistress' brother.

Maitreya. What sort of ascetic exercises does a man have to perform, in order to be born as Vasantasenā's brother? But no, He may be shiny, may be greasy, And perfumed may he be. And yet I warn you to go easy; He's a graveyard champak-tree.²⁹

[*He looks in another direction.*] But madam, who is that in the expansive garment, sitting on the throne? She has shoes on her greasy feet.

[72.9. S.

Maid. Sir, that is my mistress' mother.

Maitreya. Lord! What an extensive belly the dirty old witch has got! I suppose they couldn't put that superb portal on the house till after they had brought the idol in?

Maid. Rascal! You must not make fun of our mother so. She is pining away under a quartan ague.

Maitreya. [*Bursts out laughing.*] O thou blessed quartan ague! Look thou upon a Brahman, even upon me, with this thy favor!

Maid. Rascal! May death strike you.

Maitreya. [*Bursts out laughing.*] Why, wench, a pot-belly like that is better dead.

Drinking brandy, rum, and wine,
Mother fell extremely ill.

If mother now should peak and pine,
A jackal-pack would have its fill.³⁰

Well, I have seen Vasantasenā's palace with its many incidents and its eight courts, and really, it seems as if I had seen the triple heaven in a nut-shell. I haven't the eloquence to praise it. Is this the house of a courtesan, or a piece of Kubera's palace? Where's your mistress?

Maid. She is here in the orchard. Enter, sir.

Maitreya. [*Enters and looks about.*] Well! What a beautiful orchard! There are any number of trees planted here, and they are covered with the most wonderful flowers. Silken swings are hung under the thick-set trees, just big enough for a girl to sit in. The golden jasmine, the shephālikā, the white jasmine, the jessamine, the navamallikā, the amaranth, the spring creeper, and all the other flowers have fallen of themselves, and really, it makes Indra's heaven look dingy. [*He looks in another direction.*] And the pond here looks like the morning twilight, for the lilies and red lotuses are as splendid as the rising sun. And again:

The ashoka-tree, whose twigs so merry
And crimson flowers have just appeared,
Seems like a battling mercenary,
With clotting crimson gore besmeared.³¹

Good! Now where's your mistress?

P. 126.7]

Maid. If you would stop star-gazing, sir, you would see her.

Maitreya. [*Perceives Vasantasenā and approaches.*] Heaven bless you!

Vasantasenā. [*Speaking in Sanskrit.* Ah, Maitreya! [*Rising.*] You are very welcome. Here is a seat. Pray be seated.

Maitreya. When you are seated, madam. [*They both seat themselves.*]

Vasantasenā. Is the merchant's son well?

Maitreya. Well, madam.

Vasantasenā. Tell me, good Maitreya,
Do friends, like birds, yet seek a shelter free
Beneath the modest boughs of this fair tree,
Whose leaves are virtues, confidence its root,
Its blossoms honor, good its precious fruit?32

Maitreya. [*Aside.*] A good description by a naughty woman.
[*Aloud.*] They do, indeed.

Vasantasenā. Tell me, what is the purpose of your coming?

Maitreya. Listen, madam. The excellent Chārudatta folds his
hands and requests—

Vasantasenā. [*Folding her hands.*] And commands—

Maitreya. He says he imagined that that golden casket was
his own and gambled it away. And nobody knows where the
gambling-master has gone, for he is employed in the king's
business.

[74.9. S.

Maid. Mistress, I congratulate you. The gentleman has turned
gambler.

Vasantasenā. [*Aside.*] It was stolen by a thief, and he is so
proud that he says he gambled it away. I love him for that.

Maitreya. He requests that you will therefore be good
enough to accept in its place this necklace of pearls.

Vasantasenā. [*Aside.*] Shall I show him the jewels?
[*Reflecting.*] No, not yet.

Maitreya. Why don't you take this necklace?

Vasantasenā. [*Laughs and looks at her friend.*] Why should I
not take the necklace, Maitreya? [*She takes it and lays it away.*
Aside.] How is it possible that drops of honey fall from the
mango-tree, even after its blossoms are gone? [*Aloud.*] Sir, pray
tell the worthy gambler Chārudatta in my name that I shall pay
him a visit this evening.

Maitreya. [*Aside.*] What else does she expect to get out of a
visit to our house? [*Aloud.*] Madam, I will tell him—[*Aside*] to
have nothing more to do with this courtesan.[*Exit.*

Vasantasenā. Take these jewels, girl. Let us go and bring cheer to Chārudatta.

Maid. But mistress, see! An untimely storm is gathering.

Vasant.

The clouds may come, the rain may fall forever,
The night may blacken in the sky above;
For this I care not, nor I will not waver;
My heart is journeying to him I love.³³

Take the necklace, girl, and come quickly.

[*Exeunt*]

12. The Little Clay Cart - Act V

Act, the Fifth

THE STORM

[The love-lorn Chārudatta appears, seated.]

Chārudatta. [Looks up.]

An untimely storm is gathering. For see!
The peacocks gaze and lift their fans on high;
The swans forget their purpose to depart;
The untimely storm afflicts the blackened sky,
And the wistful lover's heart.¹

And again:

The wet bull's belly wears no deeper dye;
In flashing lightning's golden mantle clad,
While cranes, his buglers, make the heaven glad,
The cloud, a second Vishnu, mounts the sky.²

And yet again:

As dark as Vishnu's form, with circling cranes
To trumpet him, instead of bugle strains,
And garmented in lightning's silken robe.
Approaches now the harbinger of rains.³
When lightning's lamp is lit, the silver river
Impetuous falls from out the cloudy womb;
Like severed lace from heaven-cloaking gloom,
It gleams an instant, then is gone forever.⁴
Like shoaling fishes, or like dolphins shy,
Or like to swans, toward heaven's vault that fly,

Like paired flamingos, male and mate together,
Like mighty pinnacles that tower on high.
In thousand forms the tumbling clouds embrace,
Though torn by winds, they gather, interlace,
And paint the ample canvas of the sky.⁵
The sky is black as Dhritarāshtra's face;
Proud as the champion of Kuru's race.
The haughty peacock shrills his joy abroad;
The cuckoo, in Yudhishtira's sad case,
Is forced to wander if he would not die;
The swans must leave their forest-homes and fly,
Like Pāndu's sons, to seek an unknown place.⁶

[*Reflecting.*] It is long since Maitreya went to visit Vasantasenā.
And even yet
he does not come.[*Enter Maitreya.*]

[76.20. S.]

Maitreya. Confound the courtesan's avarice and her incivility!
To think of her making so short a story of it! Over and over
she repeats something about the affection she feels, and then
without more ado she pockets the necklace. She is rich enough
so that she might at least have said: "Good Maitreya, rest a little.
You must not go until you have had a cup to drink." Confound
the courtesan! I hope I 'll never set eyes on her again. [*Wearily.*]
The proverb is right. "It is hard to find a lotus-plant without
a root, a merchant who never cheats, a goldsmith who never
steals, a village-gathering without a fight, and a courtesan
without avarice." Well, I 'll find my friend and persuade him to
have nothing more to do with this courtesan. [*He walks about
until he discovers Chārudatta.*] Ah, my good friend is sitting in
the orchard. I 'll go to him. [*Approaching.*] Heaven bless you!
May happiness be yours.

Chārudatta. [*Looking up.*] Ah, my friend Maitreya has
returned. You are very welcome, my friend. Pray be seated.

Maitreya. Thank you.

Chārudatta. Tell me of your errand, my friend.

Maitreya. My errand went all wrong.

P. 132.8]

Chārudatta. What! did she not accept the necklace?

Maitreya. How could we expect such a piece of luck? She put her lotus-tender hands to her brow, and took it.

Chārudatta. Then why do you say “went wrong”?

Maitreya. Why not, when we lost a necklace that was the pride of the four seas for a cheap golden casket, that was stolen before we had a bite or a drink out of it?

Chārudatta. Not so, my friend.

She showed her trust in leaving us her treasure;
The price of confidence has no less measure.⁷

Maitreya. Now look here! I have a second grievance. She tipped her friend the wink, covered her face with the hem of her dress, and laughed at me. And so, Brahman though I am, I hereby fall on my face before you and beg you not to have anything more to do with this courtesan. That sort of society does any amount of damage. A courtesan is like a pebble in your shoe. It hurts before you get rid of it. And one thing more, my friend. A courtesan, an elephant, a scribe, a mendicant friar, a swindler, and an ass—where these dwell, not even rogues are born.

Chārudatta. Oh, my friend, a truce to all your detraction! My poverty of itself prevents me. For consider:

The horse would gladly hasten here and there,
But his legs fail him, for his breath departs.
So men’s vain wishes wander everywhere,
Then, weary grown, return into their hearts.⁸

Then too, my friend:

If wealth is thine, the maid is thine,
For maids are won by gold;

[*Aside.* And not by virtue cold. *Aloud.*]

But wealth is now no longer mine,
And her I may not hold.⁹

[78.23. S.]

Maitreya. [*Looks down. Aside.*] From the way he looks up and sighs, I conclude that my effort to distract him has simply increased his longing. The proverb is right. "You can't reason with a lover." [*Aloud.*] Well, she told me to tell you that she would have to come here this evening. I suppose she isn't satisfied with the necklace and is coming to look for something else.

Chārudatta. Let her come, my friend. She shall not depart unsatisfied.

[*Enter Kumbhīlaka.*]

Kumbhīlaka. Listen, good people.
The more it rains in sheets,
The more my skin gets wet;
The more the cold wind beats,
The more I shake and fret.¹⁰

[*He bursts out laughing.*]

I make the sweet flute speak from seven holes,
I make the loud lute speak on seven strings;
In singing, I essay the donkey's rôles:
No god can match my music when he sings.¹¹

My mistress Vasantasenā said to me "Kumbhīlaka, go and tell Chārudatta that I am coming." So here I am, on my way to Chārudatta's house. [*He walks about, and, as he enters, discovers Chārudatta.*] Here is Chārudatta in the orchard. And here is that wretched jackanapes, too. Well, I'll go up to them. What! the orchard-gate is shut? Good! I'll give this jackanapes a hint. [*He throws lumps of mud.*]

Maitreya. Well! Who is this pelting me with mud, as if I were an apple-tree inside of a fence?

Chārudatta. Doubtless the pigeons that play on the roof of the garden-house.

Maitreya. Wait a minute, you confounded pigeon! With this stick I'll bring you down from the roof to the ground, like an over-ripe mango. [*He raises his stick and starts to run.*]

P. 136.8]

Chārudatta. [*Holding him back by the sacred cord.*] Sit down, my friend. What do you mean? Leave the poor pigeon alone with his mate.

Kumbhīlaka. What! he sees the pigeon and doesn't see me? Good! I'll hit him again with another lump of mud. [*He does so.*]

Maitreya. [*Looks about him.*] What! Kumbhīlaka? I'll be with you in a minute. [*He approaches and opens the gate.*] Well, Kumbhīlaka, come in. I'm glad to see you.

Kumbhīlaka. [*Enters.*] I salute you, sir.

Maitreya. Where do you come from, man, in this rain and darkness?

Kumbhīlaka. You see, she's here.

Maitreya. Who's she? Who's here?

Kumbhīlaka. She. See? She.

Maitreya. Look here, you son of a slave! What makes you sigh like a half-starved old beggar in a famine, with your "shesheshe"?

Kumbhīlaka. And what makes you hoot like an owl with your "whowhowho"?

Maitreya. All right. Tell me.

Kumbhīlaka. [*Aside.*] Suppose I say it this way. [*Aloud.*] I'll give you a riddle, man.

Maitreya. And I'll give you the answer with my foot on your bald spot.

Kumbhīlaka. Not till you've guessed it. In what season do the mango-trees blossom?

Maitreya. In summer, you jackass.

Kumbhīlaka. [*Laughing.*] Wrong!

Maitreya. [*Aside.*] What shall I say now? [*Reflecting.*] Good!

I'll go and ask Chārudatta. [*Aloud.*] Just wait a moment. [*Approaching Chārudatta.*] My friend, I just wanted to ask you in what season the mango-trees blossom.

[81.3. S.]

Chārudatta. You fool, in spring, in *vasanta*.

Maitreya. [*Returns to Kumbhīlaka.*] You fool, in spring, in *vasanta*.

Kumbhīlaka. Now I 'll give you another. Who guards thriving villages?

Maitreya. Why, the guard.

Kumbhīlaka. [*Laughing.*] Wrong!

Maitreya. Well, I'm stuck. [*Reflecting.*] Good! I'll ask Chārudatta again. [*He returns and puts the question to Chārudatta.*]

Chārudatta. The army, my friend, the *senā*.

Maitreya. [*Comes back to Kumbhīlaka.*] The army, you jackass, the *senā*.

Kumbhīlaka. Now put the two together and say 'em fast.

Maitreya. *Senā-vasanta*.

Kumbhīlaka. Say it turned around.

Maitreya. [*Turns around.*] *Senā-vasanta*.

Kumbhīlaka. You fool! you jackanapes! Turn the parts of the thing around!

Maitreya. [*Turns his feet around.*] *Senā-vasanta*.

Kumbhīlaka. You fool! Turn the parts of the word around!

Maitreya. [*After reflection.*] *Vasanta-senā*.

Kumbhīlaka. She's here.

Maitreya. Then I must tell Chārudatta. [*Approaching.*] Well, Chārudatta, your creditor is here.

Chārudatta. How should a creditor come into my family?

Maitreya. Not in the family perhaps, but at the door. *Vasantasenā* is here.

Chārudatta. Why do you deceive me, my friend?

Maitreya. If you can't trust me, then ask Kumbhīlaka here. Kumbhīlaka, you jackass, come here.

P. 140.4]

Kumbhīlaka. [*Approaching.*] I salute you, sir.

Chārudatta. You are welcome, my good fellow. Tell me, is Vasantasenā really here?

Kumbhīlaka. Yes, she's here. Vasantasenā is here.

Chārudatta. [*Joyfully.*] My good fellow, I have never let the bearer of welcome news go unrewarded. Take this as your recompense. [*He gives him his mantle.*]

Kumbhīlaka. [*Takes it and bows. Gleefully.*] I'll tell my mistress.

[*Exit.*]

Maitreya. Do you see why she comes in a storm like this?

Chārudatta. I do not quite understand, my friend.

Maitreya. I know. She has an idea that the pearl necklace is cheap, and the golden casket expensive. She isn't satisfied, and she has come to look for something more.

Chārudatta. [*Aside.*] She shall not depart unsatisfied.

[*Then enter the love-lorn Vasantasenā, in a splendid garment, fit for a woman who goes to meet her lover, a maid with an umbrella, and the courtier.*]

Courtier. [*Referring to Vasantasenā.*]

Lakshmī without the lotus-flower is she,
Loveliest arrow of god Kāma's bow,
The sweetest blossom on love's magic tree.
See how she moves, so gracefully and slow!
In passion's hour she still loves modesty;
In her, good wives their dearest sorrow know.
When passion's drama shall enacted be.
When on love's stage appears the passing show,
A host of wanderers shall bend them low.
Glad to be slaves in such captivity.¹²

[82.94. S.

See, Vasantasenā, see!

The clouds hang drooping to the mountain peaks,
Like a maiden's heart, that distant lover seeks:
The peacocks startle, when the thunder booms,
And fan the heaven with all their jeweled plumes.¹³

And again:

Mud-stained, and pelted by the streaming rain,
To drink the falling drops the frogs are fain;
Full-throated peacocks love's shrill passion show,
And nīpa flowers like brilliant candles glow;
Unfaithful clouds obscure the hostage moon,
Like knaves, unworthy of so dear a boon;
Like some poor maid of better breeding bare,
The impatient lightning rests not anywhere.¹⁴

Vasantasenā. Sir, what you say is most true. For
The night, an angry rival, bars my way;
Her thunders fain would check and hinder me:
"Fond fool! with him I love thou shalt not stay,
'T is I, 't is I, he loves," she seems to say,
"Nor from my swelling bosom shall he flee."¹⁵

Courtier. Yes, yes. That is right. Scold the night.

Vasantasenā. And yet, sir, why scold one who is so ignorant
of woman's nature! For you must remember:
The clouds may rain, may thunder ne'er so bold,
May flash the lightning from the sky above;
That woman little recks of heat or cold,
Who journeys to her love.¹⁶

Courtier. But see, Vasantasenā! Another cloud,
Sped by the fickle fury of the air—
A flood of arrows in his rushing streams,

His drum, the roaring thunder's mighty blare,
His banner, living lightning's awful gleams—
Rages within the sky, and shows him bold
'Mid beams that to the moon allegiance owe,
Like a hero-king within the hostile hold
Of his unwarlike foe.¹⁷

P. 142.9]

Vasantasenā. True, true. And more than this:
As dark as elephants, these clouds alone
Fall like a cruel dart—
With streaks of lightning and with white birds strewn—
To wound my wretched heart.
But, oh, why should the heron, bird of doom,
With that perfidious sound
Of "Rain! Rain! Rain!"—grim summons to the tomb
For her who spends her lonely hours in gloom—
Strew salt upon the wound?¹⁸

Courtier. Very true, *Vasantasenā*. And yet again:
It seems as if the sky would take the guise
Of some fierce elephant to service bred;
The lightning like a waving streamer flies,
And white cranes serve to deck his mighty head.¹⁹

Vasantasenā. But look, sir, look!
Clouds, black as wet tamāla-leaves, the ball
Of heaven hide from our sight;
Rain-smitten homes of ants decay and fall
Like beasts that arrows smite;
Like golden lamps within a lordly hall
Wander the lightnings bright;
As when men steal the wife of some base thrall,
Clouds rob the moon of light.²⁰

Courtier. See, Vasantasenā, see!
Clouds, harnessed in the lightning's gleams,
Like charging elephants dash by;
At Indra's bidding, pour their streams,
Until with silver cords it seems
That earth is linked with sky.²¹

[84.14. S.

And look yonder!
As herds of buffaloes the clouds are black;
The winds deny them ease;
They fly on lightning wings and little lack
Of seeming troubled seas.
Smitten with falling drops, the fragrant sod,
Upon whose bosom greenest grasses nod,
Seems pierced with pearls, each pearl an arrowy rod.²²

Vasantasenā. And here is yet another cloud.
The peacock's shrill-voiced cry
Implores it to draw nigh;
And ardent cranes on high
Embrace it lovingly.
The wistful swans espy
The lotus-sweeter sky;
The darkest colors lie
On heaven clingingly.²³

Courtier. True. For see!
A thousand lotuses that bloom by night,
A thousand blooming when the day is bright,
Nor close nor ope their eyes to heaven's sight;
There is no night nor day.
The face of heaven, thus shrouded in the night,
Is only for a single instant bright,
When momentary lightning gives us sight;

Else is it dark alway.
Now sleeps the world as still as in the night
Within the house of rain where naught is bright,
Where hosts of swollen clouds seem to our sight
One covering veil of gray.²⁴

P. 143.20]

Vasantasenā. True. And see!
The stars are lost like mercies given
To men of evil heart;
Like lonely-parted wives, the heaven
Sees all her charms depart.
And, molten in the cruel heat
Of Indra's bolt, it seems
As if the sky fell at our feet
In liquid, flowing streams.²⁵

And yet again:
The clouds first darkly rise, then darkly fall,
Send forth their floods of rain, and thunder all;
Assuming postures strange and manifold,
Like men but newly blest with wealth untold.²⁶

Courtier. True.
The heaven is radiant with the lightning's glare;
Its laughter is the cry of myriad cranes;
Its voice, the bolts that whistle through the air;
Its dance, that bow whose arrows are the rains.
It staggers at the winds, and seems to smoke
With clouds, which form its black and snaky cloak.²⁷

Vasantasenā. O shameless, shameless sky!
To thunder thus, while I
To him I love draw nigh.
Why do thy thunders frighten me and pain?
Why am I seized upon by hands of rain?²⁸

O Indra, mighty Indra!
Did I then give thee of my love before,
That now thy clouds like mighty lions roar?
Ah no! Thou shouldst not send thy streaming rain,
To fill my journey to my love with pain.²⁹

[83.23. S.

Remember:

For Ahalyā's sweet sake thou once didst lie;
Thou knowest lover's pain.
As thou didst suffer then, now suffer I;
O cruel, cease thy rain.³⁰

And yet:

Thunder and rain and lighten hundredfold
Forth from thy sky above;
The woman canst thou not delay nor hold
Who journeys to her love.³¹
Let thunders roar, for men were cruel ever;
But oh, thou maiden lightning! didst thou never
Know pains that maidens know?³²

Courtier. But mistress, do not scold the lightning. She is your friend,

This golden cord that trembles on the breast
Of great Airāvata; upon the crest
Of rocky hills this banner all ablaze;
This lamp in Indra's palace; but most blest
As telling where your most beloved stays.³³

Vasantasenā. And here, sir, is his house.

Courtier. You know all the arts, and need no instruction now.
Yet love bids me prattle. When you enter here, you must not
show yourself too angry.
Where anger is, there love is not;

Or no! except for anger hot,
There is no love.
Be angry! make him angry then!
Be kind! and make him kind again—
The man you love.³⁴

P. 145.17]

So much for that. Who is there? Let Chārudatta know, that
While clouds look beautiful, and in the hour
Fragrant with nīpa and kadamba flower,
She comes to see her lover, very wet.
With dripping locks, but pleased and loving yet.
Though lightning and though thunder terrifies,
She comes to see you; 't is for you she sighs.
The mud still soils the anklets on her feet,
But in a moment she will have them sweet.³⁵

Chārudatta. [*Listening.*] My friend, pray discover what this means.

Maitreya. Yes, sir. [*He approaches Vasantasenā. Respectfully.*] Heaven bless you!

Vasantasenā. I salute you, sir. I am very glad to see you. [*To the courtier.*] Sir, the maid with the umbrella is at your service.

Courtier. [*Aside.*] A very clever way to get rid of me. [*Aloud.*] Thank you. And mistress Vasantasenā,
Pride and tricks and lies and fraud
Are in your face;
False playground of the lustful god,
Such is your face;
The wench's stock in trade, in fine,
Epitome of joys divine,
I mean, your face—
For sale! the price is courtesy.
I trust you'll find a man to buy
Your face.*[Exit.]* 36

Vasantasenā. Good Maitreya, where is your gambler?

Maitreya. [*Aside.*] “Gambler”? Ah, she’s paying a compliment to my friend. [*Aloud.*] Madam, here he is in the dry orchard.

Vasantasenā. But sir, what do you call a dry orchard?

Maitreya. Madam, it’s a place where there’s nothing to eat or drink, [*Vasantasenā smiles.*] Pray enter, madam.

Vasantasenā. [*Aside to her maid.*] What shall I say when I enter?

[87.17. S.

Maid. “Gambler, what luck this evening?”

Vasantasenā. Shall I dare to say it?

Maid. When the time comes, it will say itself.

Maitreya. Enter, madam.

Vasantasenā. [*Enters, approaches Chārudatta, and strikes him with the flowers which she holds.*] Well, gambler, what luck this evening?

Chārudatta. [*Discovers her.*] Ah, Vasantasenā is here. [*He rises joyfully.*] Oh, my beloved,
My evenings pass in watching ever,
My nights from sighs are never free;
This evening cannot else than sever—
In bringing you—my grief and me.³⁷

You are very, very welcome. Here is a seat. Pray be seated.

Maitreya. Here is a seat. Be seated, madam. [*Vasantasenā sits, then the others.*]

Chārudatta. But see, my friend,
The dripping flower that decks her ear, droops down,
And one sweet breast
Anointed is, like a prince who wears the crown,
With ointment blest.³⁸

My friend, Vasantasenā’s garments are wet. Let other, and most beautiful, garments be brought.

Maitreya. Yes, sir.

Maid. Good Maitreya, do you stay here. I will wait upon my mistress. [*She does so.*]

Maitreya. [*Aside to Chārudatta.*] My friend, I'd just like to ask the lady a question.

Chārudatta. Then do so.

Maitreya. [*Aloud.*] Madam, what made you come here, when it is so stormy and dark that you can't see the moon?

Maid. Mistress, the Brahman is very plain-spoken.

P. 148.17]

Vasantasenā. You might better call him clever.

Maid. My mistress came to ask how much that pearl necklace is worth.

Maitreya. [*Aside to Chārudatta.*] There! I told you so. She thinks the pearl necklace is cheap, and the golden casket is expensive. She isn't satisfied. She has come to look for something more.

Maid. For my mistress imagined that it was her own, and gambled it away. And nobody knows where the gambling-master has gone, for he is employed in the king's business.

Maitreya. Madam, you are simply repeating what somebody said before.

Maid. While we are looking for him, pray take this golden casket. [*She displays the casket. Maitreya hesitates.*] Sir, you examine it very closely. Did you ever see it before?

Maitreya. No, madam, but the skilful workmanship captivates the eye.

Maid. Your eyes deceive you, sir. This *is* the golden casket.

Maitreya. [*Joyfully.*] Well, my friend, here is the golden casket, the very one that thieves stole from our house.

Chārudatta. My friend,
The artifice we tried before,
Her stolen treasure to restore,
Is practised now on us. But no,
I cannot think 't is really so.³⁹

Maitreya. But it is so. I swear it on my Brahmanhood.

Chārudatta. This is welcome news.

Maitreya. [*Aside to Chārudatta.*] I'm going to ask where they found it.

Chārudatta. I see no harm in that.

Maitreya. [*Whispers in the maid's ear.*] There!

Maid. [*Whispers in Maitreya's ear.*] So there!

[89.19. S.]

Chārudatta. What is it? and why are we left out?

Maitreya. [*Whispers in Chārudatta's ear.*] So there!

Chārudatta. My good girl, is this really the same golden casket?

Maid. Yes, sir, the very same.

Chārudatta. My good girl, I have never let the bearer of welcome news go unrewarded. Take this ring as your recompense. [*He looks at his finger, notices that the ring is gone, and betrays his embarrassment.*]

Vasantasenā. [*To herself.*] I love you for that.

Chārudatta. [*Aside to Maitreya.*] Alas,
When in this world a man has lost his all,
Why should he set his heart on longer life?
His angers and his favors fruitless fall,
His purposes and powers are all at strife.⁴⁰
Like wingless birds, dry pools, or withered trees,
Like fangless snakes—the poor are like to these.⁴¹
Like man-deserted houses, blasted trees,
Like empty wells—the poor are like to these.
For them no pleasant hours serve happy ends;
They are forgotten of their sometime friends.⁴²

Maitreya. But you must not grieve thus beyond reason. [*He bursts out laughing. Aloud.*] Madam, please give me back my bath-clout.

Vasantasenā. Chārudatta, it was not right that you should show your distrust of me by sending me this pearl necklace.

Chārudatta. [With an embarrassed smile.] But remember,
Vasantasenā,
Who will believe the truth?
Suspicion now is sure.
This world will show no ruth
To the inglorious poor.⁴³

P. 152.4]

Maitreya. Tell me, girl, are you going to sleep here to-night?

Maid. [Laughing.] But good Maitreya, you show yourself most remarkably plain-spoken now.

Maitreya. See, my friend, the rain enters again in great streams, as if it wanted to drive people away when they are sitting comfortably together.

Chārudatta. You are quite right.
The falling waters pierce the cloud,
As lotus-shoots the soil;
And tears the face of heaven shroud,
Who weeps the moon's vain toil.⁴⁴

And again:

In streams as pure as thoughts to good men given,
But merciless as darts that Arjun hurls,
And black as Baladeva's cloak, the heaven
Seems to pour out all Indra's hoarded pearls.⁴⁵

See, my beloved, see!
The heaven is painted with the blackest dye,
And fanned by cool and fragrant evening airs;
Red lightning, glad in union, clasps the sky
With voluntary arms, and shows on high
The love that maiden heart to lover bears.⁴⁶

[*Vasantasenā betrays her passion, and throws her arms about Chārudatta. Chārudatta feels her touch, and embraces her.*]

Chārudatta.

More grimly yet, O thunder, boom;
For by thy grace and power
My love-distracted limbs now bloom
Like the kadamba flower.
Her dear touch all my being thrills,
And love my inmost spirit fills.⁴⁷

Maitreya. Confound you, storm! You are no gentleman, to
frighten the lady with the lightning.

[91.20. S.

Chārudatta. Do not rebuke the storm, my friend.
Let ceaseless rain a hundred years endure,
The lightning quiver, and the thunder peal;
For what I deemed impossible is sure:
Her dear-loved arms about my neck I feel.⁴⁸

And oh, my friend,
He only knows what riches are,
Whose love comes to him from afar,
Whose arms that dearest form enfold,
While yet with rain 't is wet and cold.⁴⁹

Vasantasenā, my beloved,
The masonry is shaken; and so old
The awning, that 't will not much longer hold.
Heavy with water is the painted wall,
From which dissolving bits of mortar fall.⁵⁰

[*He looks up.*] The rainbow! See, my beloved, see!
See how they yawn, the cloudy jaws of heaven,
As by a tongue, by forkèd lightning riven;
And to the sky great Indra's fiery bow
In lieu of high-uplifted arms is given.⁵¹

Come, let us seek a shelter. [*He rises and walks about.*]
On palm-trees shrill,

On thickets still,
On boulders dashing,
On waters splashing,
Like a lute that, smitten, sings,
The rainy music rings.⁵²

[*Exeunt*]

13. The Little Clay Cart - Act VI

Act, the Sixth

THE SWAPPING OF THE BULLOCK-CARTS

[Enter a maid.]

Maid.

Isn't my mistress awake yet? Well, I must go in and wake her. *[She walks about. Vasantasenā appears, dressed, but still asleep. The maid discovers her.]* It is time to get up, mistress. The morning is here.

Vasantasenā. [Awakening.] What! is the night over? is it morning?

Maid. For us it is morning. But for my mistress it appears to be night still.

Vasantasenā. But girl, where is your gambler?

Maid. Mistress, after giving Vardhamānaka his orders, Chārudatta went to the old garden Pushpakaranda.

Vasantasenā. What orders?

Maid. To have the bullock-cart ready before daylight; for, he said, Vasantasenā was to come—

Vasantasenā. Where, girl?

Maid. Where Chārudatta is.

Vasantasenā. [Embraces the maid.] I did not have a good look at him in the evening. But to-day I shall see him face to face. Tell me, girl. Have I found my way into the inner court?

Maid. You have found your way not only into the inner court, but into the heart of every one who lives here.

Vasantasenā. Tell me, are Chārudatta's servants vexed?

Maid. They will be.

Vasantasenā. When?

Maid. When my mistress goes away.

Vasantasenā. But not so much as I shall be. [*Persuasively.*] Here, girl, take this pearl necklace. You must go and give it to my lady sister, his good wife. And give her this message: "Worthy Chārudatta's virtues have won me, made me his slave, and therefore your slave also. And so I hope that these pearls may adorn your neck."

[94.3. S.]

Maid. But mistress, Chārudatta will be angry with you.

Vasantasenā. Go. He will not be angry.

Maid. [*Takes the necklace.*] Yes, mistress. [*She goes out, then returns.*] Mistress, his lady wife says that her lord made you a present of it, and it would not be right for her to accept it. And further, that you are to know that her lord and husband is her most excellent adornment.

[*Enter Radanikā, with Chārudatta's little son.*]

Radanikā. Come, dear, let's play with your little cart.

Rohasena. [*Peevishly.*] I don't like this little clay cart, Radanikā. Give me your gold cart.

Radanikā. [*Sighing wearily.*] How should we have anything to do with gold now, my child? When your papa is rich again, then you shall have a gold cart to play with. But I'll amuse him by taking him to see Vasantasenā. [*She approaches Vasantasenā.*] Mistress, my service to you.

Vasantasenā. I am glad to see you, Radanikā. But whose little boy is this? He wears no ornaments, yet his dear little face makes my heart happy.

Radanikā. This is Chārudatta's son, Rohasena.

Vasantasenā. [*Stretches out her arms.*] Come, my boy, and put your little arms around me. [*She takes him on her lap.*] He looks just like his father.

Radanikā. More than looks like him, he *is* like him. At least I think so. His father is perfectly devoted to him.

Vasantasenā. But what is he crying about?

Radanikā. He used to play with a gold cart that belongs to the son of a neighbor. But that was taken away, and when he asked for it, I made him this little clay cart. But when I gave it to him, he said "I don't like this little clay cart, Radanikā. Give me my gold cart."

P. 158.10]

Vasantasenā. Oh, dear! To think that this little fellow has to suffer because others are wealthy. Ah, mighty Fate! the destinies of men, uncertain as the water-drops which fall upon a lotus-leaf, seem to thee but playthings! [*Tearfully.*] Don't cry, my child. You shall have a gold cart to play with.

Rohasena. Who is she, Radanikā?

Vasantasenā. A slave of your father's, won by his virtues.

Radanikā. My child, the lady is your mother.

Rohasena. That's a lie, Radanikā. If the lady is my mother, why does she wear those pretty ornaments?

Vasantasenā. My child, your innocent lips can say terrible things. [*She removes her ornaments. Weeping.*] Now I am your mother. You shall take these ornaments and have a gold cart made for you.

Rohasena. Go away! I won't take them. You're crying.

Vasantasenā. [*Wiping away her tears.*] I'll not cry, dear. There! go and play. [*She fills the clay cart with her jewels.*] There, dear, you must have a little gold cart made for you.

[*Exit Radanikā, with Rohasena.*

[*Enter Vardhamānaka, driving a bullock-cart.*]

Vardhamānaka. Radanikā, Radanikā! Tell mistress Vasantasenā that the covered cart is standing ready at the side-door.

Radanikā. [*Entering.*] Mistress, Vardhamānaka is here, and he says that the cart is waiting at the side-door.

Vasantasenā. He must wait a minute, girl, while I get ready.

Rad. Wait a minute, Vardhamānaka, while she gets ready.[*Exit.*

Vardhamānaka. Hello, I've forgotten the cushion. I must go and get it. But the nose-rope makes the bullocks skittish. I suppose I had better take the cart along with me.[*Exit*.

[96.14. S.

Vasantasenā. Bring me my things, girl. I must make myself ready. [*She does so.*]

[*Enter, driving a bullock-cart, Sthāvaraka, servant to Sansthānaka.*]

Sthāvaraka. Sansthānaka, the king's brother-in-law, said to me "Take a bullock-cart, Sthāvaraka, and come as quick as you can to the old garden Pushpakaranda." Well, I'm on my way there. Get up, bullocks, get up! [*He drives about and looks around.*] Why, the road is blocked with villagers' carts. What am I to do now? [*Haughtily.*] Get out of my way, you! Get out of my way! [*He listens.*] What's that? you want to know whose cart this is? This cart belongs to Sansthānaka, the king's brother-in-law. So get out of my way—and this minute, too! [*He looks about.*] Why, here's a man going in the other direction as fast as he can. He is trying to hide like a runaway gambler, and he looks at me as if I were the gambling-master. I wonder who he is. But then, what business is it of mine? I must get there as soon as I can. Get out of my way, you villagers, get out of my way! What's that? you want me to wait a minute and put a shoulder to your wheel? Confound you! A brave man like me, that serves Sansthānaka, the king's brother-in-law, put a shoulder to your wheel? After all, the poor fellow is quite alone. I'll do it. I'll stop my cart at the side-door to Chārudatta's orchard. [*He does so.*] I'm coming! [*Exit.*

Maid. Mistress, I think I hear the sound of wheels. The cart must be here.

Vasantasenā. Come, girl. My heart grows impatient. Go with me to the side-door.

Maid. Follow me, mistress.

Vasantasenā. [*Walks about.*] You have earned a rest, girl.

Maid. Thank you, mistress.[*Exit.*]

Vasantasenā. [*Feels her right eye twitch as she enters the cart.*] Why should my right eye twitch now? But the sight of Chārudatta will smooth away the bad omen.

[*Enter Sthāvaraka.*]

P. 169.8]

Sthāvaraka. I've cleared the carts out of the way, and now I'll go ahead. [*He mounts and drives away. To himself.*] The cart has grown heavy. But I suppose it only seems so, because I got tired helping them with that wheel. Well, I'll go along. Get up, bullocks, get up!

A voice behind the scenes. Police! Police! Every man at his post! The young herdsman has just broken jail, killed the jailer, broken his fetters, escaped, and run away. Catch him! Catch him!

[*Enter, in excited haste, Aryaka, an iron chain on one foot. Covering his face, he walks about.*]

Sthāvaraka. [*To himself.*] There is great excitement in the city. I must get out of the way as fast as I possibly can.[*Exit.*]

Aryaka.

I leave behind me that accursèd sea
Of human woe and human misery,
The prison of the king.
Like elephants that break their chains and flee,
I drag a fettered foot most painfully
In flight and wandering.]

King Pālaka was frightened by a prophecy, took me from the hamlet where I lived, fettered me, and thrust me into a solitary cell, there to await my death. But with the help of my good friend Sharvilaka I escaped. [*He sheds tears.*]

If such my fate, no sin is mine at least,
That he should cage me like a savage beast.
A man may fight with kings, though not with fate—
And yet, can helpless men contend with great?2

Whither shall I go with my wretchedness? [*He looks about.*]
Here is the house of some good man who hasn't locked the
side-door.

The house is old, the door without a lock,
The hinges all awry.
Some man, no doubt, who feels misfortune's shock
As cruelly as I.3

[96.18. S.

I will enter here and wait.

A voice behind the scenes. Get up, bullocks, get up!

Aryaka. [*Listening.*] Ah, a bullock-cart is coming this way.

If this should prove to be a picnic rig,
Its occupants not peevishly inclined;
Some noble lady's waiting carriage trig;
Or rich man's coach, that leaves the town behind—
And if it empty be, fate proving kind,
'T would seem a godsend to my anxious mind.4

[*Enter Vardhamānaka with the bullock-cart.*]

Vardhamānaka. There, I've got the cushion. Radanikā, tell
mistress Vasantasenā that the cart is ready and waiting for her
to get in and drive to the old garden Pushpakaranda.

Aryaka. [*Listening.*] This is a courtesan's cart, going out of the
city. Good, I'll climb in. [*He approaches cautiously.*]

Vardhamānaka. [*Hears him coming.*] Ah, the tinkling of
ankle-rings! The lady is here. Mistress, the nose-rope makes the
bullocks skittish. You had better climb in behind. [*Aryaka does
so.*] The ankle-rings tinkle only when the feet are moving, and
the sound has ceased. Besides, the cart has grown heavy. I am

sure the lady must have climbed in by this time. I'll go ahead.
Get up, bullocks, get up! [*He drives about. Enter Vīraka.*]

Vīraka. Come, come! Jaya, Jayamāna, Chandanaka, Mangala,
Phullabhadra, and the rest of you!
So calm, when the herdsman, slipping his tether,
Breaks jail and the heart of the king together?⁵

Here! You stand at the east gate of the main street, you at
the west, you at the south, you at the north. I'll climb up the
broken wall here with Chandanaka and take a look. Come on,
Chandanaka, come on! This way! [*Enter Chandanaka, in
excitement.*]

P. 166.5]

Chandanaka. Come, come! Vīraka, Vishalya, Bhīmāngada,
Dandakāla, Dandashūra, and the rest of you!
Come quick, my reliables! Work! Now begin!
Lest the old king go out, and a new king come in.⁶
Search gardens, and dives, and the town, and the street,
The market, the hamlet, wherever you meet⁷
With what looks suspicious. Now, Vīraka, say,
Who saved the young herdsman that just broke away?⁸
Who was born when the sun in his eighth mansion stood,
Or the moon in her fourth, or when Jupiter could
Be seen in his sixth, or when Saturn was resting
In his ninth, in her sixth house when Venus was nesting,
Or Mars in his fifth? Who will dare to be giving
The herdsman protection, while I am still living?^{9, 10}

Vīraka. Chandanaka, you mercenary!
I swear on your heart, he's been long out of prison,
For the herdsman escaped ere the sun was half risen.¹¹

Vardhamānaka. Get up, bullocks, get up!

Chandanaka. [*Discovers him.*] Look, man, look!
A covered cart is moving in the middle of the road;
Investigate it, whose it is, and where it takes its load!¹²

Viraka. [*Discovers him.*] Here, driver, stop your cart! Whose cart is this? who is in it? where is it going?

Vardhamānaka. This is Chārudatta's cart. Mistress Vasantasenā is in it. I am taking her to the old garden Pushpakaranda to meet Chārudatta.

Viraka. [*Approaches Chandanaka.*] The driver says it is Chārudatta's cart; that Vasantasenā is in it; that he is taking her to the old garden Pushpakaranda.

Chandanaka. Then let it pass.

Viraka. Without inspection?

[101.3. S.

Chandanaka. Certainly.

Viraka. On whose authority?

Chandanaka. On Chārudatta's.

Viraka. Who is Chārudatta, or who is Vasantasenā, that the cart should pass without inspection?

Chandanaka. Don't you know Chārudatta, man? nor Vasantasenā? If you don't know Chārudatta, nor Vasantasenā, then you don't know the moon in heaven, nor the moonlight. Who does n't know this moon of goodness, virtue's lotus-flower,

This gem of four broad seas, this savior in man's luckless hour?¹³

These two are wholly worshipful, our city's ornaments, Vasantasenā, Chārudatta, sea of excellence.¹⁴

Viraka. Well, well, Chandanaka! Chārudatta? Vasantasenā?

I know them perfectly, as well as I know anything;

But I do not know my father when I 'm serving of my king.¹⁵

Aryaka. [*To himself.*] In a former existence the one must have been my enemy, the other my kinsman. For see!

Their business is the same; their ways

Unlike, and their desire:

Like flames that gladden wedding days,

And flames upon the pyre.¹⁶

Chandanaka. You are a most careful captain whom the king trusts. I am holding the bullocks. Make your inspection.

Vīraka. You too are a corporal whom the king trusts. Make the inspection yourself.

Chandanaka. If I make the inspection, that 's just the same as if you had made it?

Vīraka. If you make the inspection, that 's just the same as if King Pālaka had made it.

P. 171.5]

Chandanaka. Lift the pole, man! [*Vardhamānaka does so.*]

Aryaka. [*To himself.*] Are the policemen about to inspect me? And I have no sword, worse luck! But at least,
Bold Bhīma's spirit I will show;
My arm shall be my sword.
Better a warrior's death than woe
That cells and chains afford.¹⁷

But the time to use force has not yet come. [*Chandanaka enters the cart and looks about.*]

I seek your protection.

Chandanaka. [*Speaking in Sanskrit.*] He who seeks protection shall be safe.

Aryaka.

Whene'er he fight, that man will suffer hurts,
Will be abandoned of his friends and kin,
Becomes a mock forever, who deserts
One seeking aid; 't is an unpardoned sin.¹⁸

Chandanaka. What! the herdsman Aryaka? Like a bird that flees from a hawk, he has fallen into the hand of the fowler. [*Reflecting.*] He is no sinner, this man who seeks my protection and sits in Chārudatta's cart. Besides, he is the friend of good Sharvilaka, who saved my life. On the other hand, there are the

king's orders. What is a man to do in a case like this? Well, what must be, must be. I promised him my protection just now.
He who gives aid to frightened men,
And joys his neighbor's ills to cure,
If he must die, he dies; but then,
His reputation is secure.¹⁹

[*He gets down uneasily.*] I saw the gentleman—[*correcting himself*] I mean, the lady Vasantasenā, and she says “Is it proper, is it gentlemanly, when I am going to visit Chārudatta, to insult me on the highway?”

Viraka. Chandanaka, I have my suspicions.

Chandanaka. Suspensions? How so?

[103.2. S.]

Vir. You gurgled in your craven throat; it seems a trifle shady. You said “I saw the gentleman,” and then “I saw the lady.”²⁰
That's why I'm not satisfied.

Chandanaka. What's the matter with you, man? We southerners don't speak plain. We know a thousand dialects of the barbarians—the Khashas, the Khattis, the Kadas, the Kadatthobilas, the Karnātas, the Karnas, the Prāvaranas, the Drāvidas, the Cholas, the Chīnas, the Barbaras, the Kheras, the Khānas, the Mukhas, the Madhughātas, and all the rest of 'em, and it all depends on the way we feel whether we say “he” or “she,” “gentleman” or “lady.”

Viraka. Can't I have a look, too? It's the king's orders. And the king trusts me.

Chandanaka. I suppose the king doesn't trust me!

Viraka. Is n't it His Majesty's command?

Chandanaka. [*Aside*] If people knew that the good herdsman escaped in Chārudatta's cart, then the king would make Chārudatta suffer for it. What's to be done? [*Reflecting.*] I'll stir up a quarrel the way they do down in the Carnatic. [*Aloud.*] Well, Viraka, I made one inspection myself—my name

is Chandanaka—and you want to do it over again. Who are you?

Viraka. Confound it! Who are you, anyway?

Chandanaka. An honorable and highly respectable person, and you don't remember your own family.

Viraka. [*Angrily.*] Confound you! What is my family?

Chandanaka. Who speaks of such things?

Viraka. Speak!

Chandanaka. I think I'd better not.

I know your family, but I won't say;

'T would not be modest, such things to betray;

What good's a rotten apple anyway?21

Viraka. Speak, speak! [*Chandanaka makes a significant gesture.*] Confound you! What does that mean?

P. 175.1]

Chand.

A broken whetstone in one hand—a thing

That looks like scissors in the other wing—

To trim the scrubby beards that curl and cling,

And you—why, you 're a captain of the king!22

Viraka. Well, Chandanaka, you highly respectable person, you don't remember your own family either.

Chandanaka. Tell me. What is the family I belong to, I, Chandanaka, pure as the moon?

Viraka. Who speaks of such things?

Chandanaka. Speak, speak! [*Viraka makes a significant gesture.*] Confound you! What does that mean?

Viraka. Listen.

Your house is pure; your father is a drum,

Your mother is a kettledrum, you scum!

Your brother is a tambourine—tum, tum!

And you—why, you 're a captain of the king!23

Chandanaka. [*Wrathfully.*] I, Chandanaka, a tanner! You can look at the cart.

Vīraka. You! driver! turn the cart around. I want to look in.

[*Vardhamānaka* does so. *Vīraka* starts to climb in. *Chandanaka* seizes him violently by the hair, throws him down, and kicks him.]

Vīraka. [*Rising. Wrathfully.*] Confound you! I was peaceably going about the king's business, when you seized me violently by the hair and kicked me. So listen! If I don't have you drawn and quartered in the middle of the court-room, my name's not *Vīraka*.

Chandanaka. All right. Go to court or to a hall of justice. What do I care for a puppy like you?

Vīraka. I will.[*Exit.*]

Chandanaka. [*Looks about him.*] Go on, driver, go on! If anybody asks you, just say "The cart has been inspected by Chandanaka and *Vīraka*." Mistress *Vasantasenā*, let me give you a passport. [*He hands Aryaka a sword.*]

[105.11. S.]

Aryaka. [*Takes it. Joyfully to himself.*]

A sword, a sword! My right eye twitches fast.
Now all is well, and I am safe at last.²⁴

Chandanaka. Madam,
As I have given you a passage free,
So may I live within your memory.
To utter this, no selfish thoughts could move;
Ah no, I speak in plenitude of love.²⁵

Aryaka.
Chandanaka is rich in virtues pure;
My friend is he—Fate willed it—true and tried.
I'll not forget *Chandanaka*, be sure,
What time the oracle is justified.²⁶

Chand.

May Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma, Three in One,
Protect thee, and the Moon, and blessed Sun;
Slay all thy foes, as mighty Pārvatī
Slew Shumbha and Nishumbha—fearfully.²⁷

[Exit Vardhamānaka, with the bullock-cart. Chandanaka looks toward the back of the stage.] Aha! As he goes away, my good friend Sharvilaka is following him. Well, I 've made an enemy of Vīraka, the chief constable and the king's favorite; so I think I too had better be following him, with all my sons and brothers.

[Exit.]

14. The Little Clay Cart - Act VIII

Act, the Eighth

THE STRANGLING OF VASANTASENA

[Enter a monk, with a wet garment in his hand.]

Monk.

Ye ignorant, lay by a store of virtue!
Restrain the belly; watch eternally,
Heeding the beat of contemplation's drum,
For else the senses—fearful thieves they be—
Will steal away all virtue's hoarded sum.¹

And further: I have seen that all things are transitory, so that
now I am become the abode of virtues alone.
Who slays the Five Men, and the Female Bane,
By whom protection to the Town is given,
By whom the Outcaste impotent is slain,
He cannot fail to enter into heaven.²
Though head be shorn and face be shorn,
The heart unshorn, why should man shave him?
But he whose inmost heart is shorn
Needs not the shaven head to save him.³

I have dyed this robe of mine yellow. And now I will go into the
garden of the king's brother-in-law, wash it in the pond, and go
away as soon as I can. *[He walks about and washes the robe.]*

A voice behind the scenes. Shtop, you confounded monk,
shtop!

Monk. *[Discovers the speaker. Fearfully.]* Heaven help me!

Here is the king's brother-in-law, Sansthānaka. Just because one monk committed an offense, now, wherever he sees a monk, whether it is the same one or not, he bores a hole in his nose and drives him around like a bullock. Where shall a defenseless man find a defender? But after all, the blessed Lord Buddha is my defender.

[119.90. S.

[Enter the courtier, carrying a sword, and Sansthānaka.]

Sansthānaka. Shtop, you confounded monk, shtop! I'll pound your head like a red radish at a drinking party. *[He strikes him.]*

Courtier. You jackass, you should not strike a monk who wears the yellow robes of renunciation. Why heed him? Look rather upon this garden, which offers itself to pleasure.

To creatures else forlorn, the forest trees
Do works of mercy, granting joy and ease;
Like a sinner's heart, the park unguarded lies,
Like some new-founded realm, an easy prize.⁴

Monk. Heaven bless you! Be merciful, servant of the Blessed One!

Sansthānaka. Did you hear that, shir? He's inshulting me.

Courtier. What does he say?

Sansthānaka. Shays I'm a shervant. What do you take me for? a barber?

Courtier. A servant of the Blessed One he calls you, and this is praise.

Sansthānaka. Praise me shome more, monk!

Monk. You are virtuous! You are a brick!

Sansthānaka. Shee? He shays I'm virtuous. He shays I'm a brick. What do you think I am? a materialistic philosopher? or a watering-trough? or a pot-maker?

Courtier. You jackass, he praises you when he says that you are virtuous, that you are a brick.

Sansthānaka. Well, shir, what did he come here for?

Monk. To wash this robe.

Sansthānaka. Confound the monk! My shishter's husband gave me the finesht garden there is, the garden Pushpakaranda. Dogs and jackals drink the water in thish pond. Now I'm an arishtocrat. I'm a man, and I don't even take a bath. And here you bring your shtinking clothes, all shtained with shtale bean-porridge, and wash 'em! I think one good shtroke will finish you.

P. 187.7]

Courtier. You jackass, I am sure he has not long been a monk.

Sansthānaka. How can you tell, shir?

Courtier. It doesn't take much to tell that, See!

His hair is newly shorn; the brow still white;

The rough cloak has not yet the shoulder scarred;

He wears it awkwardly; it clings not tight;

And here above, the fit is sadly marred.⁵

Monk. True, servant of the Blessèd One. I have been a monk but a short time.

Sansthānaka. Then why haven't you been one all your life?
[*He beats him.*]

Monk. Buddha be praised!

Courtier. Stop beating the poor fellow. Leave him alone. Let him go.

Sansthānaka. Jusht wait a minute, while I take counshel.

Courtier. With whom?

Sansthānaka. With my own heart.

Courtier. Poor fellow! Why didn't he escape?

Sansthānaka. Blessshèd little heart, my little shon and mashter, shall the monk go, or shall the monk shtay? [*To himself.*] Neither go, nor shtay. [*Aloud.*] Well, shir, I took counshel with my heart, and my heart shays—

Courtier. Says what?

Sansthānaka. He shall neither go, nor shtay. He shall neither

breathe up, nor breathe down. He shall fall down right here and die, before you can shay “boo.”

Monk. Buddha be praised! I throw myself upon your protection.

Courtier. Let him go.

[114.24. S.]

Sansthānaka. Well, on one condition.

Courtier. And what is that?

Sansthānaka. He musht shling mud in, without making the water dirty. Or better yet, he musht make the water into a ball, and shling it into the mud.

Courtier. What incredible folly!
The patient earth is burdened by
So many a fool, so many a drone,
Whose thoughts and deeds are all awry—
These trees of flesh, these forms of stone.⁶

[*The monk makes faces at Sansthānaka.*]

Sansthānaka. What does he mean?

Courtier. He praises you.

Sansthānaka. Praise me shome more! Praise me again! [*The monk does so, then exit.*]

Courtier. See how beautiful the garden is, you jackass.
See yonder trees, adorned with fruit and flowers,
O'er which the clinging creepers interlace;
The watchmen guard them with the royal powers;
They seem like men whom loving wives embrace.⁷

Sansthānaka. A good deshcription, shir.
The ground is mottled with a lot of flowers;
The blosshom freight bends down the lofty trees;
And, hanging from the leafy tree-top bowers,
The monkeys bob, like breadfruit in the breeze.⁸

Courtier. Will you be seated on this stone bench, you jackass?

Sansthānaka. I am sheated. [*They seat themselves.*] Do you

know, shir, I remember that Vasantasenā even yet. She is like an inshult. I can't get her out of my mind.

Courtier. [Aside.] He remembers her even after such a repulse. For indeed,

The mean man, whom a woman spurns,
But loves the more;
The wise man's passion gentler burns,
Or passes o'er.⁹

P. 190.16]

Sansthānaka. Shome time has passhed, shir, shince I told my shervant Sthāvaraka to take the bullock-cart and come as quick as he could. And even yet he is not here. I 've been hungry a long time, and at noon a man can't go a-foot. For shee!

The shun is in the middle of the shky,
And hard to look at as an angry ape;
Like Gāndhārī, whose hundred shons did die,
The earth is hard dishtresshed and can't eshcape.¹⁰

Courtier. True.

The cattle all—their cuds let fall—
Lie drowsing in the shade;
In heated pool their lips to cool,
Deer throng the woodland glade;
A prey to heat, the city street
Makes wanderers afraid;
The cart must shun the midday sun,
And thus has been delayed.¹¹

Sansthānaka. Yesshir,
Fasht to my head the heated shun-beam clings;
Birds, flying creatures, alsho wingèd things
Resht in the branches of the trees, while men,
People, and pershons shigh and shigh again;
At home they tarry, in their houses shtay,
To bear the heat and burden of the day.¹²

Well, shir, that shervant is n't here yet. I 'm going to shing shomething to passh the time. [*He sings.*] There, shir, did you hear what I shang?

Courtier. What shall I say? Ah, how melodious!

[116.23. S.]

Sansthānaka. Why *should n't* it be malodorous?

Of nut-grass and cumin I make up a pickle,
Of devil's-dung, ginger, and orris, and treacle;
That's the mixture of perfumes I eagerly eat;
Why should n't my voice be remarkably shweet?13

Well, shir, I 'm jusht going to shing again, [*He does so.*] There, shir, did you hear what I shang?

Courtier. What shall I say? Ah, how melodious!

Sansthānaka. Why *should n't* it be malodorous?

Of the flesh of the cuckoo I make up a chowder,
With devil's-dung added, and black pepper powder;
With oil and with butter I shprinkle the meat:
Why should n't my voice be remarkably shweet?14

But shir, the shervant is n't here yet.

Courtier. Be easy in your mind. He will be here presently.

[*Enter Vasantasenā in the bullock-cart, and Sthāvaraka.*]

Sthāvaraka. I 'm frightened. It is already noon. I hope Sansthānaka, the king's brother-in-law, will not be angry. I must drive faster. Get up, bullocks, get up!

Vasantasenā. Alas! That is not Vardhamānaka's voice. What does it mean? I wonder if Chārudatta was afraid that the bullocks might become weary, and so sent another man with another cart. My right eye twitches. My heart is all a-tremble. There is no one in sight. Everything seems to dance before my eyes.

Sansthānaka. [*Hearing the sound of wheels.*] The cart is here, shir.

Courtier. How do you know?

Sansthānaka. Can't you shee? It shqueaks like an old hog.

Courtier. [*Perceives the cart.*] Quite true. It is here.

Sansthānaka. Sthāvaraka, my little shon, my shlave, are you here?

Sthāvaraka. Yes, sir.

Sansthānaka. Is the cart here?

P. 194.9]

Sthāvaraka. Yes, sir.

Sansthānaka. Are the bullocks here?

Sthāvaraka. Yes, sir.

Sansthānaka. And are you here?

Sthāvaraka. [*Laughing.*] Yes, master, I am here too.

Sansthānaka. Then drive the cart in.

Sthāvaraka. By which road?

Sansthānaka. Right here, where the wall is tumbling down.

Sthāvaraka. Oh, master, the bullocks will be killed. The cart will go to pieces. And I, your servant, shall be killed.

Sansthānaka. I'm the king's brother-in-law, man. If the bullocks are killed, I 'll buy shome more. If the cart goes to pieces, I 'll have another one made. If you are killed, there will be another driver.

Sthāvaraka. Everything will be replaced—except me.

Sansthānaka. Let the whole thing go to pieces. Drive in over the wall.

Sthāvaraka. Then break, cart, break with your driver. There will be another cart. I must go and present myself to my master. [*He drives in.*] What! not broken? Master, here is your cart.

Sansthānaka. The bullocks not shplit in two? and the ropes not killed? and you too not killed?

Sthāvaraka. No, sir.

Sansthānaka. Come, shir. Let's look at the cart. You are my teacher, shir, my very besht teacher. You are a man I reshpect, my intimate friend, a man I delight to honor. Do you enter the cart firsh.

Courtier. Very well. [*He starts to do so.*]

Sansthānaka. Not much! Shtop! Is thish your father's cart, that you should enter it firsht? I own thish cart. I 'll enter it firsht.

Courtier. I only did what you said.

[119.8. S.

Sansthānaka. Even if I do shay sho, you ought to be polite enough to shay "After you, mashter."

Courtier. After you, then.

Sansthānaka. Now I 'll enter. Sthāvaraka, my little shon, my shlave, turn the cart around.

Sthāvaraka. [Does so.] Enter, master.

Sansthānaka. [Enters and looks about, then hastily gets out in terror, and falls on the courtier's neck.] Oh, oh, oh! You're a dead man! There's a witch, or a thief, that's sitting and living in my bullock-cart. If it's a witch, we 'll both be robbed. If it's a thief, we 'll both be eaten alive.

Courtier. Don't be frightened. How could a witch travel in a bullock-cart? I hope that the heat of the midday sun has not blinded you, so that you became the victim of an hallucination when you saw the shadow of Sthāvaraka with the smock on it.

Sansthānaka. Sthāvaraka, my little shon, my shlave, are you alive?

Sthāvaraka. Yes, sir.

Sansthānaka. But shir, there's a woman sitting and living in the bullock-cart. Look and shee!

Courtier. A woman?

Then let us bow our heads at once and go,
Like steers whose eyes the falling raindrops daze;
In public spots my dignity I show;
On high-born dames I hesitate to gaze.¹⁵

Vasantasenā. [In amazement. Aside.] Oh, oh! It is that thorn in my eye, the king's brother-in-law. Alas! the danger is great. Poor woman! My coming hither proves as fruitless as the sowing of a handful of seeds on salty soil. What shall I do now?

Sansthānaka. Thish old shervant is afraid and he won't look into the cart. Will you look into the cart, shir?

Courtier. I see no harm in that. Yes, I will do it.

P. 198.12]

Sansthānaka. Are those things jackals that I shee flying into the air, and are those things crows that walk on all fours? While the witch is chewing him with her eyes, and looking at him with her teeth, I 'll make my eshcape.

Courtier. [*Perceives Vasantasenā. Sadly to himself.*] Is it possible? The gazelle follows the tiger. Alas!

Her mate is lovely as the autumn moon,
Who waits for her upon the sandy dune;
And yet the swan will leave him? and will go
To dance attendance on a common crow?16

[*Aside to Vasantasenā.*] Ah, Vasantasenā! This is neither right, nor worthy of you.

Your pride rejected him before,
Yet now for gold, and for your mother's will

Vasantasenā. No! [*She shakes her head.*]

Courtier.

Your nature knows your pride no more;
You honor him, a common woman still.17

Did I not tell you to "serve the man you love, and him you hate"?

Vasantasenā. I made a mistake in the cart, and thus I came hither. I throw myself upon your protection.

Courtier. Do not fear. Come, I must deceive him. [*He returns to Sansthānaka.*] Jackass, there is indeed a witch who makes her home in the cart.

Sansthānaka. But shir, if a witch is living there, why are n't you robbed? And if it 's a thief, why are n't you eaten alive?

Courtier. Why try to determine that? But if we should go back on foot through the gardens until we came to the city, to Ujjayinī, what harm would that do?

Sansthānaka. And if we did, what then?

[121.7. S.

Courtier. Then we should have some exercise, and should avoid tiring the bullocks.

Sansthānaka. All right. Sthāvaraka, my shlave, drive on. But no! Shtop, shtop! I go on foot before gods and Brahmans? Not much! I 'll go in my cart, sho that people shall shee me a long way off, and shay "There he goes, our mashter, the king's brother-in-law."

Courtier. [Aside.] It is hard to convert poison into medicine. So be it, then. [Aloud.] Jackass, this is Vasantasenā, come to visit you.

Vasantasenā. Heaven forbid!

Sansthānaka. [Gleefully.] Oh, oh! To visit me, an arishtocrat, a man, a regular Vāsudeva?

Courtier. Yes.

Sansthānaka. This is an unheard-of piece of luck. That other time I made her angry, sho now I 'll fall at her feet and beg her pardon.

Courtier. Capital!

Sansthānaka. I 'll fall at her feet myshelf. [He approaches Vasantasenā.] Little mother, mamma dear, lishten to my prayer.

I fold my hands and fall before thy feet—

Thine eyes are large, thy teeth are clean and neat,

Thy finger-nails are ten—forgive thy shlave

What, love-tormented, he offended, shweet.¹⁸

Vasantasenā. [Angrily.] Leave me! Your words are an insult! [She spurns him with her foot.]

Sansthānaka. [Wrathfully.]

Thish head that mother and that mamma kissed,

That never bent to worship god, I wist,

Upon thish head she dared to plant her feet,

Like jackals on the carrion they meet.¹⁹

Sthāvaraka, you shlave, where did you pick her up?

Sthāvaraka. Master, the highway was blocked by villagers' wagons. So I stopped my cart near Chārudatta's orchard, and got out. And while I was helping a villager with his wagon, I suppose she mistook this cart for another, and climbed in.

P. 201.¹⁴]

Sansthānaka. Oho! she mishtook my cart for another? and did n't come to shee me? Get out of my cart, get out! You 're going to visit your poor merchant's shon, are you? Those are my bullocks you 're driving. Get out, get out, you shlave! Get out, get out!

Vasantasenā. Truly, you honor me when you say that I came to see Chārudatta. Now what must be, must be.

Sansthānaka.

These hands of mine, ten-finger-naily,
These hands sho lotush-leafy,
Are itching-anxious, girl, to dally
With you; and in a jiffy
I 'll drag Your Shweetness by the hair
From the cart wherein you ride,
As did Jatāyu Bāli's fair,
The monkey Bāli's bride.²⁰

Courtier.

So virtuous ladies may not be
Insulted thus despitefully;
Nor garden creepers may not be
Robbed of their leaves so cruelly.²¹

Stand up, man. I will help her to alight. Come, Vasantasenā!
[*Vasantasenā alights and stands apart.*]

Sansthānaka. [*Aside.*] The flame of wrath was kindled when she despised my proposition, and now it blazes up because she

kicked me. Sho now I 'll murder her. Good! Thish way. [*Aloud.*]
Well, shir, what do you want?
A cloak with fringes hanging down and all,
Tied with a hundred shtrings? or good ragout,
To make you shmack your greedy lips and call
“Chuhoo, chuhoo, chukku, chuhoo, chuhooo”?²²

Courtier. Well?

Sansthānaka. Do me a favor.

[123.11. S.]

Courtier. Certainly. Anything, unless it be a sin.

Sansthānaka. There's not a shmell of a shin in it, shir. Not a perfume!

Courtier. Speak, then.

Sansthānaka. Murder Vasantasenā.

Courtier. [*Stopping his ears.*]

A tender lady, gem of this our city,
A courtesan whose love was stainless ever—
If I should kill her, sinless, without pity.
What boat would bear me on the gloomy river?²³

Sansthānaka. I'll give you a boat. And beshides, in thish deserted garden, who'll shee you murdering her?

Courtier.

The regions ten, the forest gods, the sky,
The wind, the moon, the sun whose rays are light,
Virtue, my conscience—these I cannot fly,
Nor earth, that witnesses to wrong and right.²⁴

Sansthānaka. Well then, put your cloak over her and murder her.

Courtier. You fool! You scoundrel!

Sansthānaka. The old hog is afraid of a shin. Never mind. I'll pershuade Sthāvaraka, my shlave. Sthāvaraka, my little shon, my shlave, I'll give you golden bracelets.

Sthāvaraka. And I'll wear them.

Sansthānaka. I'll have a golden sheat made for you.

Sthāvaraka. And I'll sit on it.

Sansthānaka. I'll give you all my leavings.

Sthāvaraka. And I'll eat them.

Sansthānaka. I'll make you the chief of all my shervants.

Sthāvaraka. Master, I'll be the chief.

Sansthānaka. You only have to attend to what I shay.

Sthāvaraka. Master, I will do anything, unless it be a sin.

P. 205.12]

Sansthānaka. There's not a shmell of a shin in it.

Sthāvaraka. Then speak, master.

Sansthānaka. Murder Vasantasenā.

Sthāvaraka. Oh, master, be merciful! Unworthy as I am, I brought this worthy lady hither, because she mistook this bullock-cart for another.

Sansthānaka. You shlave, ain't I your mashter?

Sthāvaraka. Master of my body, not of my character. Be merciful, master, be merciful! I am afraid.

Sansthānaka. You're my shlave. Who are you afraid of?

Sthāvaraka. Of the other world, master.

Sansthānaka. Who is thish "other world"?

Sthāvaraka. Master, it is a rewarder of righteousness and sin.

Sansthānaka. What is the reward of righteousness?

Sthāvaraka. To be like my master, with plenty of golden ornaments.

Sansthānaka. What is the reward of shin?

Sthāvaraka. To be like me, eating another man's bread. That is why I will do no sin.

Sansthānaka. Sho you won't murder her? [*He beats him with all his might.*]

Sthāvaraka. You may beat me, master. You may kill me, master. I will do no sin.

A luckless, lifelong slave am I,

A slave I live, a slave I die;

But further woe I will not buy,
I will not, will not sin.²⁵

Vasantasenā. Sir, I throw myself upon your protection.

Courtier. Pardon him, jackass! Well done, Sthāvaraka!
Does this poor, miserable slave
Seek virtue's meed beyond the grave?
And is his lord indifferent?
Then why are not such creatures sent
To instant hell, whose sinful store
Grows great, who know not virtue more?²⁶

[125.14. S.

And again:
Ah, cruel, cruel is our fate,
And enters through the straitest gate;
Since he is slave, and you are lord,
Since he does not enjoy your hoard,
Since you do not obey his word.²⁷

Sansthānaka. [Aside.] The old jackal is afraid of a shin, and the
"lifelong shslave" is afraid of the other world. Who am I afraid of,
I, the king's brother-in-law, an arishtocrat, a man? [Aloud.] Well,
shervant, you "lifelong shslave," you can go. Go to your room and
resht and keep out of my way.

Sthāvaraka. Yes, master. [To *Vasantasenā*.] Madam, I have no
further power.[Exit.

Sansthānaka. [Girds up his loins.] Wait a minute,
Vasantasenā, wait a minute. I want to murder you.

Courtier. You will kill her before my eyes? [He seizes him by
the throat.]

Sansthānaka. [Falls to the ground.] Shir, you 're murdering
your mashter. [He loses consciousness, but recovers.]

I always fed him fat with meat,
And gave him butter too, to eat;
Now for the friend in need I search;

Why does he leave me in the lurch?28

[*After reflection.*] Good! I have an idea. The old jackal gave her a hint by shaking his head at her. Sho I 'll shend him away, and then I 'll murder Vasantasenā. That's the idea. [*Aloud.*] Shir, I was born in a noble family as great as a wine-glass. How could I do that shin I shpoke about? I jusht shaid it to make her love me.

P. 209.3]

Courtier. Why should you boast of this your noble birth?
'T is character that makes the man of worth;
But thorns and weeds grow rank in fertile earth.29

Sansthānaka. She 's ashamed to confessh her love when you 're here. Please go. My shervant Sthāvaraka has gone too after getting a beating. He may be running away. Catch him, shir, and come back with him.

Courtier. [*Aside.*]

Vasantasenā is too proud to own.
While I am near, her love for one so crude;
So now I leave her here with him alone;
Love's confidences long for solitude.30

[*Aloud.*] Very well. I go.

Vasantasenā. [*Seizing the hem of his garment.*] Did I not throw myself upon your protection?

Courtier. Do not fear, Vasantasenā. Jackass, Vasantasenā is a pledge, committed to your hand.

Sansthānaka. All right. Jusht let her be committed to my hand. It 's a pledge that I 'll execute.

Courtier. Are you honest?

Sansthānaka. Honesht.

Courtier. [*Takes a few steps.*] No! If I go, the wretch might kill her. I will conceal myself for a moment, and see what he intends to do. [*He stands apart.*]

Sansthānaka. Good! I 'll murder her. But no! Perhaps thish tricky trickshter, thish Brahman, thish old jackal, has gone and

hidden himself; he might raise a howl like the jackal he is. I 'll
jusht do thish to deceive him. [*He gathers flowers and adorns
himself.*] Vasantasenā, my love, my love! Come!

Courtier. Yes, he has turned lover. Good! I am content. I will
go.[*Exit.*

[127.12. S.

Sansthānaka.

I 'll give you gold, I 'll call you shweet;
My turbaned head adores your feet.
Why not love me, my clean-toothed girl?
Why worship such a pauper churl?31

Vasantasenā. How can you ask? [*She bows her head and
recites the following verses.*]

O base and vile! O wretch! What more?
Why tempt me now with gold and power?
The honey-loving bees adore
The pure and stainless lotus flower.32
Though poverty may strike a good man low,
Peculiar honor waits upon his woe;
And 't is the glory of a courtezan
To set her love upon an honest man.33

And I, who have loved the mango-tree, I cannot cling to the
locust-tree.

Sansthānaka. Wench, you make that poor little Chārudatta
into a mango-tree, and me you call a locusht-tree, not even
an acacia! That 's the way you abuse me, and even yet you
remember Chārudatta.

Vasantasenā. Why should I not remember him who dwells in
my heart?

Sansthānaka. Thish very minute I 'm going to shtrangle "him
who dwells in your heart," and you too. Shtand shtill, you poor-
merchant-man's lover!

Vasantasenā. Oh speak, oh speak again these words that do me honor!

Sansthānaka. Jusht let poor Chārudatta—the shon of a shlave—reshcue you now!

Vasantasenā. He would rescue me, if he saw me.

Sansthānaka.

Is he the king of gods? the royal ape?

Shon of a nymph? or wears a demon's shape?

The kingly deity of wind and rain?

The offshpring of the Pāndu-princes' bane?

A prophet? or a vulture known afar?

A shtatesman? or a beetle? or a shtar?³⁴

P. 212.11]

But even if he was, he could n't reshcue you.

As Sītā in the Bhārata

Was killed by good old Chānakya,

Sho I intend to throttle thee,

As did Jatāyu Draupadī.³⁵

[He raises his arm to strike her.]

Vasantasenā. Mother! where are you? Oh, Chārudatta! my heart's longing is unfulfilled, and now I die! I will scream for help. No! It would bring shame on *Vasantasenā*, should she scream for help. Heaven bless Chārudatta!

Sansthānaka. Does the wench shpeak that rashcal's name even yet? *[He seizes her by the throat.]* Remember him, wench, remember him!

Vasantasenā. Heaven bless Chārudatta!

Sansthānaka. Die, wench! *[He strangles her. Vasantasenā loses consciousness, and falls motionless.]*

Sansthānaka. *[Gleefully.]*

Thish bashketful of shin, thish wench,

Thish foul abode of impudence—

She came to love, she shtayed to blench,

For Death's embrace took every sense.

But why boasht I of valorous arms and shtout?
She shimply died because her breath gave out.
Like Sītā in the Bhārata, she lies.
Ah, mother mine! how prettily she dies.³⁶

[129.4. S.

She would not love me, though I loved the wench;
I shaw the empty garden, set the shnare,
And frightened her, and made the poor girl blench.
My brother! Oh, my father! Thish is where
You misshed the shight of heroism shtout;
Your brother and your shon here blosshomed out
Into a man; like Mother Draupadī,
You were not there, my bravery to shee.³⁷

Good! The old jackal will be here in a minute. I 'll shtep ashide
and wait. [*He does so.*]

[*Enter the courtier, with Sthāvaraka.*]

Courtier. I have persuaded the servant Sthāvaraka to come back, and now I will look for the jackass. [*He walks about and looks around him.*] But see! A tree has fallen by the roadside, and killed a woman in its fall. O cruel! How couldst thou do this deed of shame? And when I see that a woman was slain by thy fatal fall, I too am felled to the earth. Truly, my heart's fear for Vasantasenā was an evil omen. Oh, heaven grant that all may yet be well! [*He approaches Sansthānaka.*] Jackass, I have persuaded your servant Sthāvaraka to return.

Sansthānaka. How do you do, shir? Sthāvaraka, my little shon, my shlave, how do you do?

Sthāvaraka. Well, thank you.

Courtier. Give me my pledge.

Sansthānaka. What pledge?

Courtier. Vasantasenā.

Sansthānaka. She's gone.

Courtier. Where?

Sansthānaka. Right after you.

Courtier. [*Doubtfully.*] No, she did not go in that direction.

Sansthānaka. In what direction did you go?

Courtier. Toward the east.

Sansthānaka. Well, she went south.

Courtier. So did I.

P. 216.2]

Sansthānaka. She went north.

Courtier. This is nonsense. My heart is not satisfied. Speak the truth.

Sansthānaka. I swear by your head, shir, and my own feet. You may be easy in your heart. I murdered her.

Courtier. [*Despairingly.*] You really killed her?

Sansthānaka. If you don't believe my words, then see the first heroic deed of Sansthānaka, the king's brother-in-law. [*He points out the body.*]

Courtier. Alas! Ah, woe is me! [*He falls in a swoon.*]

Sansthānaka. Hee, hee! The gentleman is calm enough now!

Sthāvaraka. Oh, sir! Come to yourself! I am the first murderer, for I brought the bullock-cart hither without looking into it.

Courtier. [*Comes to himself. Mournfully.*] Alas, Vasantasenā! The stream of courtesy is dried away,
And happiness to her own land doth flee,
Sweet gem of gems, that knew love's gentle play,
Love's mart and beauty's! Joy of men like me!
Thy mirth-shored stream, that kind and healing river—
Alas! is perished, lost, and gone forever!³⁸

[*Tearfully.*] Ah, woe is me!

What sin is yet to come, or woe,
Now thou hast done this deed of hate?
Like sin's foul self, hast thou laid low
The sinless goddess of our state.³⁹

[*Aside.*] Ah! Perhaps the wretch means to lay this sin to my charge. I must go hence. [*He walks about. Sansthānaka approaches and holds him back.*] Scoundrel! Touch me not. I have done with you. I go.

Sansthānaka. Aha! Firsht you murder Vasantasenā, then you abuse me, and now where will you run to? And sho a man like me has n't anybody to protect him.

[131.8. S.

Courtier. You are an accursèd scoundrel!

Sansth.

I'll give you countless wealth, a piece of gold,
A copper, and a cap, to have and hold.
And sho the fame of thish great deed shall be
A common property, and shan't touch me.⁴⁰

Courtier. A curse upon you! Yours, and yours only, be the deed.

Sthāvaraka. Heaven avert the omen! [*Sansthānaka bursts out laughing.*]

Courtier.

Be enmity between us! Cease your mirth!
Damned be a friendship that so shames my worth!
Never may I set eyes on one so low!
I fling you off, an unstrung, broken bow.⁴¹

Sansthānaka. Don't be angry. Come, let's go and play in the pond.

Courtier.

Unstained my life, and yet it seems to me
Your friendship stains, and mocks my sinlessness,
You woman-murderer! How could I be
A friend to one whom women ever see
With eyes half-closed in apprehension's stress?⁴²

[*Mournfully.*] Vasantasenā,
When thou, sweet maid, art born again,
Be not a courtezan reborn,

But in a house which sinless men,
And virtuous, and good, adorn.⁴³

Sansthānaka. Firsh you murder Vasantasenā in my old garden Pushpakaranda, and now where will you run to? Come, defend yourself in court before my shishter's husband! [*He holds him back.*]

Courtier. Enough, you accursèd scoundrel! [*He draws his sword.*]

Sansthānaka. [*Recoiling in terror.*] Shcared, are you? Go along, then.

Courtier. [*Aside.*] It would be folly to remain here. Well, I will go and join myself to Sharvilaka, Chandanaka, and the rest.*[Exit.*

P. 219.5]

Sansthānaka. Go to hell. Well, my little shon Sthāvaraka, what kind of a thing is thish that I 've done?

Sthāvaraka. Master, you have committed a terrible crime.

Sansthānaka. Shlave! What do you mean by talking about a crime? Well, I 'll do it thish way. [*He takes various ornaments from his person.*] Take these gems. I give 'em to you. Whenever I want to wear them, I 'll take them back again, but the resht of the time they are yours.

Sthāvaraka. They should be worn only by my master. What have I to do with such things?

Sansthānaka. Go along! Take these bullocks, and wait in the tower of my palace until I come.

Sthāvaraka. Yes, master.*[Exit.*

Sansthānaka. The gentleman has made himself invisible. He wanted to save himself. And the shlave I 'll put in irons in the palace tower, and keep him there. And sho the shecret will be shafe. I 'll go along, but firsh I 'll take a look at her. Is she dead, or shall I murder her again? [*He looks at Vasantasenā.*] Dead as a doornail! Good! I 'll cover her with thish cloak. No,

it has my name on it. Shome honesht man might recognize it. Well, here are shome dry leaves that the wind has blown into a heap. I 'll cover her with them. [*He does so, then pauses to reflect.*] Good! I 'll do it thish way. I 'll go to court at once, and there I 'll lodge a complaint. I 'll shay that the merchant Chārudatta enticed Vasantasenā into my old garden Pushpakaranda, and killed her for her money.

Yesh, Chārudatta musht be shlaughtered now,
And I 'll invent the plan, forgetting pity;
The shacrificing of a sinless cow
Is cruel in the kindesht-hearted city.⁴⁴

Now I 'm ready to go. [*He starts to go away, but perceives something that frightens him.*] Goodnessh gracioush me! Wherever I go, thish damned monk comes with his yellow robes. I bored a hole in his nose once and drove him around, and he hates me. Perhaps he'll shee me, and will tell people that I murdered her. How shall I eshcape? [*He looks about.*] Aha! I 'll jump over the wall where it is half fallen down, and eshcape that way.

[133.8. S.

I run, I run, I go,
In heaven, on earth below,
In hell, and in Ceylon,
Hanūmat's peaks upon—
Like Indra's self, I go.[*Exit.*] 45

[*Enter hurriedly the Buddhist monk, ex-shampooer.*]

Monk. I 've washed these rags of mine. Shall I let them dry on a branch? no, the monkeys would steal them. On the ground? the dust would make them dirty again. Well then, where shall I spread them out to dry? [*He looks about.*] Ah, here is a pile of dry leaves which the wind has blown into a heap. I 'll spread them out on that. [*He does so.*] Buddha be praised! [*He sits down.*] Now I will repeat a hymn of the faith.

Who slays the Five Men, and the Female Bane,

By whom protection to the Town is given,
By whom the Outcaste impotent is slain,
He cannot fail to enter into heaven.(2)

After all, what have I to do with heaven, before I have paid my debt to Vasantasenā, my sister in Buddha? She bought my freedom for ten gold-pieces from the gamblers, and since that day I regard myself as her property. [*He looks about.*] What was that? a sigh that arose from the leaves? It cannot be.

The heated breezes heat the leaves,
The wetted garment wets the leaves,
And so, I guess, the scattered leaves
Curl up like any other leaves.⁴⁶

[*Vasantasenā begins to recover consciousness, and stretches out her hand.*]

P. 222.12]

Monk. Ah, there appears a woman's hand, adorned with beautiful gems. What! a second hand? [*He examines it with the greatest care.*] It seems to me, I recognize this hand. Yes, there is no doubt about it. Surely, this is the hand that saved me. But I must see for myself. [*He uncovers the body, looks at it, and recognizes it.*] It is my sister in Buddha. [*Vasantasenā pants for water.*] Ah, she seeks water, and the pond is far away. What shall I do? An idea! I will hold this robe over her and let it drip upon her. [*He does so. Vasantasenā recovers consciousness, and raises herself. The monk fans her with his garment.*]

Vasantasenā. Who are you, sir?

Monk. Has my sister in Buddha forgotten him whose freedom she bought for ten gold-pieces?

Vasantasenā. I seem to remember, but not just as you say. It were better that I had slept never to waken.

Monk. What happened here, sister in Buddha?

Vasantasenā. [*Despairingly.*] Nothing but what is fitting—for a courtesan.

Monk. Sister in Buddha, support yourself by this creeper that

clings to the tree, and rise to your feet [*He bends down the creeper. Vasantasenā takes it in her hand, and rises.*]

Monk. In yonder monastery dwells one who is my sister in the faith. There shall my sister in Buddha be restored before she returns home. You must walk very slowly, sister. [*He walks about and looks around him.*] Make way, good people, make way! This is a young lady, and I am a monk, yet my conduct is above reproach.

The man whose hands, whose lips are free from greed,
Who curbs his senses, he is man indeed.
He little recks, if kingdoms fall or stand;
For heaven is in the hollow of his hand.⁴⁷

[*Exeunt.*]

15. The Little Clay Cart - Act IX

Act, the Ninth

THE TRIAL

[*Enter a beadle.*]

Beadle.

The magistrates said to me “Come, beadle, go to the court-room, and make ready the seats.” So now I am on my way to set the court-room in order. [*He walks about and looks around him.*] Here is the court-room, I will enter. [*He enters, sweeps, and puts a seat in its place.*] There! I have tidied up the court-room and put the seats in readiness, and now I will go and tell the magistrates. [*He walks about and looks around him.*] But see! Here comes that arrant knave, the king’s brother-in-law. I will go away without attracting his attention. [*He stands apart. Enter Sansthānaka, in gorgeous raiment.*]

Sansth.

I bathed where water runs and flows and purls;
I shat within a garden, park, and grove
With women, and with females, and with girls,
Whose lovely limbs with grace angelic move.¹
My hair is shometimes done up tight, you shee;
In locks, or curls, it hangs my forehead o’er;
Shometimes ‘t is matted, shometimes hanging free;
And then again, I wear a pompadour.
I am a wonder, I’m a wondrous thing.
And the husband of my shishter is the king.²

And beshides, I ‘ve found a big hole, like a worm that has

crawled into the knot of a lotush-root, and is looking for a hole to creep out at. Now who was I going to accuse of this wicked deed? [*He recalls something.*] Oh, yesh! I remember. I was going to accuse poor Chārudatta of this wicked deed. Beshides, he's poor. They 'll believe anything about him. Good! I 'll go to the court-room and lodge a public complaint against Chārudatta, how he shtrangled Vasantasenā and murdered her. Sho now I 'm on my way to the court-room. [*He walks about and looks around him.*] Here is the court-room. I 'll go in. [*He enters and looks about.*] Well, here are the sheats, all arranged. While I 'm waiting for the magishtrates, I 'll jusht sit down a minute on the grass. [*He does so.*]

P. 226.10]

Beadle. [*Walks about in another direction, and looks before him.*] Here come the magistrates. I will go to them. [*He does so.*]

[*Enter the judge, accompanied by a gild-warden, a clerk, and others.*]

Judge. Gild-warden and clerk!

Gild-warden and Clerk. We await your bidding.

Judge. A trial depends to such an extent upon others that the task of the magistrates—the reading of another's thoughts—is most difficult.

Men often speak of deeds that no man saw,
Matters beyond the province of the law;
Passion so rules the parties that their lies,
Hide their offenses from judicial eyes;
This side and that exaggerate a thing,
Until at last it implicates the king;
To sum it up: false blame is easy won,
A true judge little praised, or praised by none.³

And again:

Men often point to sins that no man saw,
And in their anger scorn the patient law;
In court-rooms even the righteous with their lies

Hide their offenses from judicial eyes;
And those who did the deed are lost to view,
Who sinned with plaintiff and defendant too;
To sum it up: false blame is easy won,
A true judge little praised, or praised by none.⁴

For the judge must be
Learnèd, and skilled in tracing fraud's sly path,
And eloquent, insensible to wrath;
To friend, foe, kinsman showing equal grace,
Reserving judgment till he know the case;
Untouched by avarice, in virtue sound.
The weak he must defend, the knave confound;
An open door to truth, his heart must cling
To others' interests, yet shun each thing
That might awake the anger of the king.⁵

[137.94. S.

Gild-warden and Clerk. And do men speak of defects in your virtue? If so, then they speak of darkness in the moonlight.

Judge. My good beadle, conduct me to the court-room.

Beadle. Follow me, Your Honor. [*They walk about.*] Here is the court-room. May the magistrates be pleased to enter. [*All enter.*]

Judge. My good beadle, do you go outside and learn who desires to present a case.

Beadle. Yes, sir. [*He goes out.*] Gentlemen, the magistrates ask if there is any here who desires to present a case.

Sansthānaka. [*Gleefully.*] The magistrates are here. [*He struts about.*] I desire to present a case, I, an arishtocrat, a man, a Vāsudeva, the royal brother-in-law, the brother-in-law of the king.

Beadle. [*In alarm.*] Goodness! The king's brother-in-law is the first who desires to present a case. Well! Wait a moment, sir. I will inform the magistrates at once. [*He approaches the*

magistrates.] Gentlemen, here is the king's brother-in-law who has come to court, desiring to present a case.

Judge. What! the king's brother-in-law is the first who desires to present a case? Like an eclipse at sunrise, this betokens the ruin of some great man. Beadle, the court will doubtless be very busy to-day. Go forth, my good man, and say "Leave us for to-day. Your suit cannot be considered."

Beadle. Yes, Your Honor. [*He goes out, and approaches Sansthānaka.*] Sir, the magistrates send word that you are to leave them for to-day; that your suit cannot be considered.

P. 229.13]

Sansthānaka. [*Wrathfully.*] Confound it! Why can't my shuit be conshidered? If it is n't conshidered, then I 'll tell my brother-in-law, King Pālaka, my shishter's husband, and I 'll tell my shishter and my mother too, and I 'll have thish judge removed, and another judge appointed. [*He starts to go away.*]

Beadle. Oh, sir! Brother-in-law of the king! Wait a moment. I will inform the magistrates at once. [*He returns to the Judge.*] The brother-in-law of the king is angry, and says—[*He repeats Sansthānaka's words.*]

Judge. This fool might do anything. My good man, tell him to come hither, that his suit will be considered.

Beadle. [*Approaching Sansthānaka.*] Sir, the magistrates send word that you are to come in, that your suit will be considered. Pray enter, sir.

Sansthānaka. Firsht they shay it won't be conshidered, then they shay it will be conshidered. The magishtrates are shcared. Whatever I shay, I 'll make 'em believe it. Good! I 'll enter. [*He enters and approaches the magistrates.*] I am feeling very well, thank you. Whether you feel well or not—that depends on me.

Judge. [*Aside.*] Well, well! We seem to have a highly cultivated plaintiff. [*Aloud.*] Pray be seated.

Sansthānaka. Well! Thish floor belongs to me. I 'll sit down wherever I like. [*To the gild-warden.*] I'll sit here. [*To the beadle.*]

Why should n't I sit here? [*He lays his hand on the Judge's head.*] I 'll sit here. [*He sits down on the floor.*]

Judge. You desire to present a case?

Sansthānaka. Of course.

Judge. Then state the case.

Sansthānaka. I 'll whisper it. I was born in the great family of a man as glorious as a wine-glass.

My father's father of the king—in law;

The king, he is my daddy's son-in-law;

And I am brother to the king—in law;

And the husband of my shishter is the king.⁶

[140.1. S.]

Judge. All this we know.

Why should you boast of this your noble birth?

'T is character that makes the man of worth;

But thorns and weeds grow rank in fertile earth.⁷

State your case.

Sansthānaka. I will, but even if I was guilty, he wouldn't do anything to me. Well, my shishter's husband liked me, and gave me the besht garden there is, the old garden Pushpakaranda, to play in and look after. And there I go every day to look at it, to keep it dry, to keep it clean, to keep it blossoming, to keep it trimmed. But fate decreed that I shaw—or rather, I didn't *shee*—the proshtrate body of a woman.

Judge. Do you know who the unfortunate woman was?

Sansthānaka. Hello, magistrates! Why shouldn't I know? A woman like that! the pearl of the city! adorned with a hundred golden ornaments! Shomebody's unworthy shon enticed her into the old garden Pushpakaranda when it was empty, and for a mere trifle—for her money!—shtrangled Vasantasenā and killed her. But *I* didn't—[*He breaks off, and puts his hand over his mouth.*]

Judge. What carelessness on the part of the city police! Gild-warden and clerk, write down the words “I didn’t,” as the first article in the case.

Clerk. Yes, sir. [*He does so.*] Sir, it is written.

Sansthānaka. [*Aside.*] Goodnessh! Now I’ve ruined myself, like a man that shwallows a cake of rice and milk in a hurry. Well, I’ll get out of it thish way. [*Aloud.*] Well, well, magishtrates! I was jusht remarking that I didn’t shee it happen. What are you making thish hullabaloo about? [*He wipes out the written words with his foot.*]

P. 233.3]

Judge. How do you know that she was strangled—and for her money?

Sansthānaka. Hello! Why shouldn’t I think sho, when her neck was shwollen and bare, and the places where you wear jewels did n’t have any gold on them?

Gild-warden and Clerk. That seems plausible.

Sansthānaka. [*Aside.*] Thank heaven! I breathe again. Hooray!

Gild-warden and Clerk. Upon whom does the conduct of this case depend?

Judge. The case has a twofold aspect.

Gild-warden and Clerk. How so?

Judge. We have to consider the allegations, then the facts. Now the investigation of the allegations depends upon plaintiff and defendant. But the investigation of the facts must be carried out by the wisdom of the judge.

Gild-warden and Clerk. Then the conduct of the case depends upon the presence of Vasantasenā’s mother?

Judge. Precisely. My good beadle, summon Vasantasenā’s mother, without, however, giving her cause for anxiety.

Beadle. Yes, Your Honor. [*He goes out, and returns with the mother of the courtezan.*] Follow me, madam.

Mother. My daughter went to the house of a friend to enjoy her youth. But now comes this gentleman—long life to him!—and says “Come! The judge summons you.” I find myself

quite bewildered. My heart is palpitating. Sir, will you conduct me to the court-room?

Beadle. Follow me, madam. [*They walk about.*] Here is the court-room. Pray enter, madam. [*They enter.*]

Mother. [*Approaching.*] Happiness be yours, most worthy gentlemen.

Judge. My good woman, you are very welcome. Pray be seated.

[141.24. S.]

Mother. Thank you. [*She seats herself.*]

Sansthānaka. [*Abusively.*] You 're here, are you, you old bawd?

Judge. Tell me. Are you Vasantasenā's mother?

Mother. I am.

Judge. Whither has Vasantasenā gone at this moment?

Mother. To the house of a friend.

Judge. What is the name of her friend?

Mother. [*Aside.*] Dear me! Really, this is very embarrassing. [*Aloud.*] Any one else might ask me this, but not a judge.

Judge. Pray do not be embarrassed. The conduct of the case puts the question.

Gild-warden and Clerk. The conduct of the case puts the question. You incur no fault. Speak.

Mother. What! the conduct of the case? If that is so, then listen, worthy gentlemen. There lives in the merchants' quarter the grandson of the merchant Vinayadatta, the son of Sāgaradatta, a man whose name is a good omen in itself—that name is Chārudatta. In his house my daughter enjoys her youth.

Sansthānaka. Did you hear that? Write those words down. My contention is with Chārudatta.

Gild-warden and Clerk. It is no sin for Chārudatta to be her friend.

Judge. The conduct of this case demands the presence of Chārudatta.

Gild-warden and Clerk. Exactly.

Judge. Dhanadatta, write as the first article in the case “Vasantasenā went to the house of Chārudatta.” But must we summon the worthy Chārudatta also? No, the conduct of the case summons him. Go, my good beadle, summon Chārudatta,—but gently, without haste, without giving him cause for anxiety, respectfully, as it were incidentally,—with the words “The judge wishes to see you.”

P. 236.11]

Beadle. Yes, Your Honor. [*He goes out, then returns with Chārudatta.*] Follow me, sir.

Chārudatta. [*Thoughtfully.*]

My character and kin are known
Unto the king who rules our state;
And in this summons there is shown
A doubt begotten of my wretched fate.⁸

[*Reflectively. Aside.*]

Ah! Were there those, the man to recognize
Who met me on the road, from bondage freed?
Or did the king, who sees through cunning spies,
Learn that my cart was lent him in his need?
Why should I else be forced to tread the street,
Like one accused of crime, my judge to meet?⁹

But why consider thus? I must go to the court-room. My good beadle, conduct me to the court.

Beadle. Follow me, sir. [*They walk about.*]

Chārudatta. [*Apprehensively.*] And what means this?
Hear how the gloomy raven hoarsely croaks;
The slaves of justice summon me again;
My left eye twitches; these repeated strokes
Of threatened evil frighten me and pain.¹⁰

Beadle. Follow me, sir, gently and without haste.

Chārudatta. [*Walks about and looks before him.*]

Upon the withered tree, a crow
Turns to the sun;
His left eye falls on me. Ah, woe!
My doubt is done.¹¹

[*He looks in another direction.*] But see! a snake!
His eye is fixed upon me; and his back
Flashes like antimony's lustrous black;
His long tongue quivers; four white fangs appear;
His belly swells and coils. He slumbered here,
This prince of serpents, till I crossed his path,
And now he darts upon me in his wrath.¹²

[143.21. S.

And more than this:
I slip, although the ground has felt no rain;
My left eye, and my left arm throb again;
Another bird is screaming overhead;
All bodes a cruel death, and hope is fled.¹³

Surely, the gods will grant that all may yet be well.

Beadle. Follow me, sir. Here is the court-room. Pray enter.

Chārudatta. [*Enters and looks about.*] How wonderfully
splendid is the court-room. For it seems an ocean,
Whose waters are the king's advisers, deep
In thought; as waves and shells it seems to keep
The attorneys; and as sharks and crocodiles
It has its spies that stand in waiting files;
Its elephants and horses represent
The cruel ocean-fish on murder bent;
As if with herons of the sea, it shines
With screaming pettifoggers' numerous lines;
While in the guise of serpents, scribes are creeping
Upon its statecraft-trodden shore: the court
The likeness of an ocean still is keeping,

To which all harmful-cruel beasts resort.¹⁴

Come! [*As he enters, he strikes his head against the door. Reflectively.*] Alas! This also?

My left eye throbs; a raven cries;

A serpent coils athwart my path.

My safety now with heaven lies.¹⁵

But I must enter. [*He does so.*]

P. 238.¹⁶]

Judge. This is Chārudatta.

A countenance like his, with clear-cut nose,

Whose great, wide-opened eye frank candor shows,

Is not the home of wantonness;

With elephants, with horses, and with kine,

The outer form is inner habit's sign;

With men no less.¹⁶

Chārudatta. My greetings to the officers of justice. Officials, I salute you.

Judge. [*Betraying his agitation.*] You are very welcome, sir. My good beadle, give the gentleman a seat.

Beadle. [*Brings a seat.*] Here is a seat. Pray be seated, sir. [*Chārudatta seats himself.*]

Sansthānaka. [*Angrily.*] You're here, are you, you woman-murderer? Well! Thish is a fine trial, thish is a jusht trial, where they give a sheat to thish woman-murderer. [*Haughtily.*] But it's all right. They can give it to him.

Judge. Chārudatta, have you any attachment, or affection, or friendship, with this lady's daughter?

Chārudatta. What lady?

Judge. This lady. [*He indicates Vasantasenā's mother.*]

Chārudatta. [*Rising.*] Madam, I salute you.

Mother. Long life to you, my son! [*Aside.*] So this is Chārudatta. My daughter's youth is in good hands.

Judge. Sir, is the courtesan your friend? [*Chārudatta betrays his embarrassment.*]

Sansthānaka.

He tries to hide the deed he did;
He lies, from shame or fear;
He murdered her, of her got rid
For gold, and thinks the deed is hid;
Not sho his mashter here.¹⁷

[145.18. S.

Gild-warden and Clerk. Speak, Chārudatta. Do not be ashamed. This is a lawsuit.

Chārudatta. [*In embarrassment.*] Officials, how can I testify that a courtesan is my friend? But at worst, it is youth that bears the blame, not character.

Judge.

The case is hard; then banish shame,
Though it oppress your heart;
Speak truth with fortitude, and aim
To set deceit apart.¹⁸

Do not be embarrassed. The conduct of the case puts the question.

Chārudatta. Officer, with whom have I a lawsuit?

Sansthānaka. [*Arrogantly.*] With me!

Chārudatta. A lawsuit with you is unendurable!

Sansthānaka. Well, well, woman-murderer! You murder a woman like Vasantasenā who used to wear a hundred gems, and now you try deceitful deceivings to hide it!

Chārudatta. You are a fool.

Judge. Enough of him, good Chārudatta. Speak the truth. Is the courtesan your friend?

Chārudatta. She is.

Judge. Sir, where is Vasantasenā?

Chārudatta. She has gone home.

Gild-warden and Clerk. How did she go? When did she go?
Who accompanied her?

Chārudatta. [Aside.] Shall I say that she went unobserved?

Gild-warden and Clerk. Speak, sir.

Chārudatta. She went home. What more shall I say?

Sansthānaka. She was enticed into my old garden
Pushpakaranda, and was shtrangled for her money. Now will
you shay that she went home?

Chārudatta. Man, you are crazy.

The very clouds of heaven wet not you;
Your lips are like the blue-jay's wing-tip worn,
Yes, full as fickle with their speech untrue,
And like the winter lotus lustre-lorn.¹⁹

P. 241.19]

Judge. [Aside.]

Take the Himalayan hills within your hand,
And swim from ocean strand to ocean strand,
And hold within your grasp the fleeting wind:
Then may you think that Chārudatta sinned.²⁰

[*Aloud.*] This is the noble Chārudatta. How could he commit
this crime? [*He repeats the verse* "A countenance like his:"

Sansthānaka. Why thish partiality in a lawshuit?

Judge. Away, you fool!

Illiterate, you gloss the Sacred Law,
And still your tongue uninjured find?
The midday sun with steadfast eye you saw,
And are not straightway stricken blind?
You thrust your hand into the blazing fire,
And draw it forth, unscathed and sound?
Drag Chārudatta's virtue in the mire,
Nor sink beneath this yawning ground?²¹

How could the noble Chārudatta commit a crime?
Of all the riches of the mighty sea

Only the swelling waters now are left,
Because, without consideration, he—
For others' good—himself of all has reft.
And should this high-souled man, this store-house where
All gems of virtue gather and unite,
For lucre's sake, so foul a trespass dare
That in it even his foe could not delight?²²

Mother. You scoundrel! When the golden casket that was left with him as a pledge was stolen by thieves at night, he gave in place of it a pearl necklace that was the pride of the four seas. And he should now, for a mere trifle—for her money!—do this sin? Oh, my child, come back to me, my daughter! [*She weeps.*]

[147.16. S.

Judge. Noble Chārudatta, did she go on foot, or in a bullock-cart?

Chārudatta. I did not see her when she went. Therefore I do not know whether she went on foot, or in a bullock-cart.

[*Enter Viraka, in anger.*]

Vīraka.

My anger was so prodded to the quick,
By that dishonoring, insulting kick,
And so I brooded, till at last the night
Unwilling yielded to the dawning light.²³

So now I will go to the court-room. [*He enters.*] May happiness be the lot of these honorable gentlemen.

Judge. Ah, it is Vīraka, the captain of the guard. Vīraka, what is the purpose of your coming?

Vīraka. Well! I was looking for Aryaka, in all the excitement about his escape from prison. I had my suspicions about a covered bullock-cart that was coming, and wanted to look in. "You 've made one inspection, man, I must make another," said

I, and then I was kicked by the highly respectable Chandanaka. You have heard the matter, gentlemen. The rest is your affair.

Judge. My good man, do you know to whom the bullock-cart belonged?

Vīraka. To this gentleman here, Chārudatta. And the driver said that Vasantasenā was in it, and was on her way to have a good time in the old garden Pushpakaranda.

Sansthānaka. Listen to that, too!

Judge.

This moon, alas, though spotless-bright,
Is now eclipsed, and robbed of light;
The bank is fallen; the waves appear
Befouled, that once were bright and clear.²⁴

P. 244.8]

Vīraka, we will investigate your case here later. Mount the horse that stands before the court-room door, go to the garden Pushpakaranda, and see whether a woman has perished there or not.

Vīraka. Yes, sir. [*He goes out, then returns.*] I have been there. And I saw the body of a woman, torn by wild beasts.

Gild-warden and Clerk. How do you know that it was the body of a woman?

Vīraka. That I perceived from the traces of hair and arms and hands and feet.

Judge. Alas for the difficulties which are caused by the actions of men!

The more one may apply his skill,
The harder is the matter still;
Plain are indeed the law's demands,
Yet judgment insecurely stands
As some poor cow on shifting sands.²⁵

Chārudatta. [*Aside.*]

As bees, when flowers begin to blow,
Gather to sip the honey, so

When man is marked by adverse fate,
Misfortunes enter every gate.²⁶

Judge. Noble Chārudatta, speak truth!

Chārudatta.

A mean and jealous creature, passion-blind,
Sets all his soul, some fatal means to find
To slay the man he envies; shall his lies
By evil nature prompted, win the prize?
No! he is unregarded by the wise.²⁷

And more than this:

The creeper's beauty would I never blight,
Nor pluck its flowers; should I not be afraid
To seize her hair so lovely-long, and bright
As wings of bees, and slay a weeping maid?²⁸

[149.15. S.

Sansthānaka. Hello, magishtrates! How can you inveshtigate
the cashe with such partiality? Why, even now you let thish
shcoundrel Chārudatta shtay on his sheat.

Judge. My good beadle, so be it [*The beadle follows
Sansthānaka's suggestion.*]

Chārudatta. Consider, magistrates, consider what you are
doing! [*He leaves his seat, and sits on the floor.*]

Sansthānaka. [*Dancing about gleefully. Aside.*] Fine! The
shin that I did falls on another man's head. Sho I 'll sit where
Chārudatta was. [*He does so.*] Look at me, Chārudatta, and
confessh that you murdered her.

Chārudatta. Magistrates!

A mean and jealous creature, passion-blind,
Sets all his soul, some fatal means to find
To slay the man he envies; shall his lies,
By evil nature prompted, win the prize?
No! he is unregarded by the wise.⁽²⁷⁾

[*Sighing. Aside.*]

My friend Maitreya! Oh, this cruel blow!

My wife, thou issue of a spotless strain!

My Rohasena! Here am I, laid low

By sternest fate; and thou, thou dost not know

That all thy childish games are played in vain.

Thou playest, heedless of another's pain!²⁹

But Maitreya I sent to Vasantasenā, that he might bring me tidings of her, and might restore the jewels which she gave my child, to buy him a toy cart. Why then does he linger?

[*Enter Maitreya with the gems.*]

P. 246.19]

Maitreya. Chārudatta bade me go to Vasantasenā, to return her jewels, and he said to me: "Maitreya, Vasantasenā adorned my dear Rohasena with her own jewels, and sent him thus to his mother. It was fitting that she should give him the jewels, but not that we should receive them. Therefore restore them to her." So now I will go to Vasantasenā's house. [*He walks about and looks around, then speaks to a person behind the scenes.*] Ah, it is Master Rebhila. Oh, Master Rebhila, why do you seem so exceedingly troubled? [*He listens.*] What! do you mean to say that my dear friend Chārudatta has been summoned to court? That can hardly be an insignificant matter. [*He reflects.*] I will go to Vasantasenā's house later, but now I will go to the court-room. [*He walks about and looks around.*] Here is the court-room. I will go in at once. [*He enters.*] May happiness be the lot of the magistrates. Where is my friend?

Judge. Here.

Maitreya. My friend, I wish you happiness.

Chārudatta. It will be mine.

Maitreya. And peace.

Chārudatta. That too will be mine.

Maitreya. My friend, why do you seem so exceedingly troubled? And why were you summoned?

Chārudatta. My friend,
A scoundrel I, who bear the blame,
Nor seek in heaven to be blest;
A maid—or goddess—’t is the same—
But *he* will say the rest.³⁰

Maitreya. What? what?

Chārudatta. [*Whispers.*] That is it.

Maitreya. Who says that?

Chārudatta. [*Indicating Sansthānaka.*] This poor fellow is the instrument that fate uses to accuse me.

[131.12. S.]

Maitreya. [*Aside to Chārudatta.*] Why don't you simply say that she went home?

Chārudatta. Though I say it, it is not believed, so unfortunate is my condition.

Maitreya. But gentlemen! He adorned the city of Ujjayinī with mansions, cloisters, parks, temples, pools, and fountains, and he should be mad enough to commit such a crime—and for a mere trifle? [*Wrathfully.*] You offspring of a loose wench, you brother-in-law of the king, Sansthānaka, you libertine, you slanderer, you buffoon, you gilded monkey, say it before me! This friend of mine does n't even draw a flowering jasmine creeper to himself, to gather the blossoms, for fear that a twig might perhaps be injured. How should he commit a crime like this, which heaven and earth call accursèd? Just wait, you son of a bawd! Wait till I split your head into a hundred pieces with this staff of mine, as crooked as your heart.

Sansthānaka. [*Angrily.*] Lishten to that, gentlemen! I have a quarrel, or a lawshuit, with Chārudatta. What right has a man with a pate that looks like a caret, to shplit my head into a hundred pieces? Not much! You confounded rashcal! [*Maitreya*

raises his staff and repeats his words. Sansthānaka rises angrily and strikes him. Maitreya strikes back. During the scuffle the jewels fall from Maitreya's girdle.]

Sansthānaka. [Picks up the jewels and examines them. Excitedly.] Look, gentlemen, look! These are the poor girl's jewels! *[Pointing to Chārudatta.]* For a trifle like this he murdered her, and killed her too. *[The magistrates all bow their heads.]*

Chārudatta. [Aside to Maitreya.]
'T is thus my fate would vent its gall,
That at this moment they should fall,
These gems—and with them, I.³¹

Maitreya. But why don't you simply tell the truth?

P. 250.1]

Chārudatta. My friend,
The king perceives with blinded eye,
Nor on the truth that eye will bend;
Though telling all, I cannot fly
A wretched and inglorious end.³²

Judge. Alas! Alas!
With Mars strives Jupiter, and dies;
Beside them both there seems to rise
A comet-planet in the skies.³³

Gild-warden and Clerk. [Looking at the casket. To Vasantasenā's mother.] Madam, pray examine this golden casket attentively, to see whether it be the same or not.

Mother. [Examining the casket.] It is similar, but not the same.

Sansthānaka. Oh, you old bawd! You confess it with your eyes, and deny it with your lips.

Mother. Away, you scoundrel!

Gild-warden and Clerk. Speak carefully. Is it the same or not?

Mother. Sir, the craftsman's skill captivates the eye. But it is not the same.

Judge. My good woman, do you know these jewels?

Mother. No, I said. No! I don't recognize them; but perhaps they were made by the same craftsman.

Judge. Gild-warden, see!

Gems often seem alike in many ways,
When the artist's mind on form and beauty plays;
For craftsmen imitate what they have seen,
And skilful hands remake what once has been.³⁴

Gild-warden and Clerk. Do these jewels belong to Chārudatta?

Chārudatta. Never!

Gild-warden and Clerk. To whom then?

[153.12. S.]

Chārudatta. To this lady's daughter.

Gild-warden and Clerk. How did she lose them?

Chārudatta. She lost them. Yes, so much is true.

Gild-warden and Clerk. Chārudatta, speak the truth in this matter. For you must remember,
Truth brings well-being in its train;
Through speaking truth, no evils rise;
Truth, precious syllable!—Refrain
From hiding truth in lies.³⁵

Chārudatta. The jewels, the jewels! I do not know. But I do know that they were taken from my house.

Sansthānaka. First you take her into the garden and murder her. And now you hide it by tricky trickiness.

Judge. Noble Chārudatta, speak the truth!

Merciless lashes wait to smite
This moment on thy tender flesh;
And we—we can but think it right.³⁶

Chārudatta.

Of sinless sires I boast my birth,
And sin in me was never found;
Yet if suspicion taints my worth,
What boots it though my heart be sound?³⁷

[*Aside.*] And yet I know not what to do with life, so I be robbed
of Vasantasenā. [*Aloud.*] Ah, why waste words?
A scoundrel I, who bear the blame,
Nor think of earth, nor heaven blest;
That sweetest maid, in passion's flame—
But *he* will say the rest.³⁸

Sansthānaka. Killed her! Come, you shay it too. "I killed her."

Chārudatta. You have said it.

Sansthānaka. Lishten, my mashters, lishten! He murdered
her! No one but him! Doubt is over. Let punishment be inflicted
on the body of thish poor Chārudatta.

P. 253.1]

Judge. Beadle, we must do as the king's brother-in-law says.
Guardsmen, lay hold on this Chārudatta. [*The guardsmen do*
so.]

Mother. Be merciful, good gentlemen, be merciful! [*She*
repeats what she had said before, beginning "When the
golden casket:" If my daughter is killed, she is killed. Let him live
for me—bless him! And besides, a lawsuit is a matter between
plaintiff and defendant. I am the real plaintiff. So let him go
free!

Sansthānaka. You shlave, get out of the way! What have you
got to shay about him?

Judge. Go, madam. Guardsmen, conduct her forth.

Mother. Oh, my child, my son! [*Exit weeping.*]

Sansthānaka. [*Aside.*] I 've done shomething worthy of
myself. Now I 'll go. [*Exit.*]

Judge. Noble Chārudatta, the decision lies with us, but the
rest depends on the king. And yet, beadle, let King Pālaka be
reminded of this:

The Brahman who has sinned, our laws declare,
May not be slain, but banished from the realm,
And with his wealth entire abroad may fare.³⁹

Beadle. Yes, Your Honor. [*He goes out, then reënters in tears.*]
Oh, sirs, I was with the king. And King Pālaka says: "Inasmuch
as he killed Vasantasenā for such a trifle, these same jewels
shall be hung about his neck, the drum shall be beaten, he
shall be conducted to the southern burying-ground, and there
impaled." And whoever else shall commit such a crime, shall be
punished with the like dreadful doom.

Chārudatta. Oh, how wanton is this act of King Pālaka!
Nevertheless,
Although his counsellors may plunge a king
Into injustice' dangers great,
Yet he will reap the woe and suffering;
And 't is a righteous fate.⁴⁰

[155.10. S.

And more than this:
They who pervert the king's true bent,
The white crow's part who play,
Have slain their thousands innocent,
And slay, and slay, and slay.⁴¹

My friend Maitreya, go, greet the mother of my son in my name
for the last time. And keep my son Rohasena free from harm.

Maitreya. When the root is cut away, how can the tree be
saved?

Chārudatta. No, not so.
When man departs to worlds above,
In living son yet liveth he;
Bestow on Rohasena love
No less than that thou gavest me.⁴²

Maitreya. Oh, my friend! I will prove myself your friend by continuing the life that you leave unfinished.

Chārudatta. And let me see Rohasena for a single moment.

Maitreya. I will. It is but fitting.

Judge. My good beadle, remove this man. [*The beadle does so.*] Who is there? Let the headsman receive their orders. [*The guardsmen loose their hold on Chārudatta, and all of them go out.*]

Beadle. Come with me, sir.

Chārudatta. "My friend Maitreya!" Then, as if speaking to one not present.]

If you had proved my conduct by the fire,
By water, poison, scales, and thus had known
That I deserved that saws should bite my bone,
My Brahman's frame, more could I not desire.
You trust a foeman, slay me thus? 'T is well.
With sons, and sons' sons, now you plunge to hell!⁴³

I come! I come!

[*Exeunt*]

16. The Little Clay Cart - Act X

1

THE END

[Enter Chārudatta, accompanied by two headsmen.]

Headsmen.

Then think no longer of the pain;

In just a second you 'll be slain.

We understand the fashions new

To fetter you and kill you too.

In chopping heads we never fail,

Nor when the victim we impale.¹

Out of the way, gentlemen, out of the way! This is the noble
Chārudatta.

The oleander on his brow,

In headsmen's hands you see him now;

Like a lamp whose oil runs nearly dry,

His light fades gently, ere it die.²

Chārudatta. [Gloomily.]

My body wet by tear-drops falling, falling;

My limbs polluted by the clinging mud;

Flowers from the graveyard torn, my wreath appalling;

For ghastly sacrifice hoarse ravens calling,

And for the fragrant incense of my blood.³

Headsmen.

1. Act, the Tenth

Out of the way, gentlemen, out of the way!
Why gaze upon the good man so?
The ax of death soon lays him low.
Yet good men once sought shelter free,
Like birds, upon this kindly tree.⁴

Come, Chārudatta, come!

Chārudatta. Incalculable are the ways of human destiny, that
I am come to such a plight!
Red marks of hands in sandal paste
O'er all my body have been placed;
The man, with meal and powder strewn,
Is now to beast of offering grown.⁵

[157.19. S.

[He gazes intently before him.] Alas for human differences!
[Mournfully.]

For when they see the fate that I must brave,
With tears for death's poor victim freely given,
The citizens cry "shame," yet cannot save,—
Can only pray that I attain to heaven.⁶

Headsman. Out of the way, gentlemen, out of the way! Why do
you gaze upon him?
God Indra moving through the sky,
The calving cow, the falling star,
The good man when he needs must die,—
These four behold not from afar.⁷

Goha. Look, Ahīnta! Look, man!
While he, of citizens the best,
Goes to his death at fate's behest,
Does heaven thus weep that he must die?
Does lightning paint the cloudless sky?⁸

Ahīnta. Goha, man,
The heaven weeps not that he must die,

Nor lightning paints the cloudless sky;
Yet streams are falling constantly
From many a woman's clouded eye.⁹

And again:

While this poor victim to his death is led,
No man nor woman here but sorely weeps;
And so the dust, by countless tear-drops fed,
Thus peacefully upon the highway sleeps.¹⁰

Chārudatta. [Gazes intently. Mournfully.]

These women, in their palaces who stay,
From half-shut windows peering, thus lament,
“Alas for Chārudatta! Woe the day!”
And pity-streaming eyes on me are bent.¹¹

P. 258.^{12]}

Headsmen. Come, Chārudatta, come! Here is the place of proclamation. Beat the drum and proclaim the sentence.

Listen, good people, listen! This is the noble Chārudatta, son of Sāgaradatta, and grandson of the merchant Vinayadatta. This malefactor enticed the courtesan Vasantasenā into the deserted old garden Pushpakaranda, and for a mere trifle murdered her by strangling. He was taken with the booty, and confessed his guilt. Therefore are we under orders from King Pālaka to execute him. And if any other commit such a crime, accursèd in this world and the next, him too King Pālaka condemns to the like punishment.

Chārudatta. [Despondently. Aside.]

By hundred sacrifices purified,
My radiant name
Was once proclaimed by countless altars' side,
And knew no blame.
Now comes my hour of death, and evil men
Of baser fame
In public spots proclaim it once again,

But linked with shame.¹²

[He looks up and stops his ears.]

Vasantasenā! Oh, my beloved!

From thy dear lips, that vied with coral's red,

Betraying teeth more bright than moonbeams fair,

My soul with heaven's nectar once was fed.

How can I, helpless, taste that poison dread,

To drink shame's poisoned cup how can I bear?¹³

Headsmen.

Out of the way, gentlemen, out of the way!

This treasure-house, with pearls of virtue stored,

This bridge for good men o'er misfortune's river,

This gem now robbed of all its golden hoard,

Departs our town to-day, departs forever.¹⁴

[159.15. S.

And again:

Whom fortune favors, find

That all the world is kind;

Whose happy days are ended,

Are rarely thus befriended.¹⁵

Chārudatta. [Looks about him.]

Their faces with their garments' hem now hiding,

They stand afar, whom once I counted friends:

Even foes have smiles for men with Fortune bidding:

But friends prove faithless when good fortune ends.¹⁶

Headsmen. They are out of the way. The street is cleared. Lead on the condemned criminal.

Chārudatta. [Sighing.]

My friend Maitreya! Oh, this cruel blow!

My wife, thou issue of a spotless strain!

My Rohasena! Here am I, laid low

By sternest fate; and thou, thou dost not know
That all thy childish games are played in vain.
Thou playest, heedless of another's pain!(ix. 29)

Voices behind the scenes. My father! Oh, my friend!

Chārudatta. [*Listens. Mournfully.*] You are a leader in your own caste. I would beg a favor at your hands.

Headsmen. From our hands you would receive a favor?

Chārudatta. Heaven forbid! Yet a headsman is neither so wanton nor so cruel as King Pālaka. That I may be happy in the other world, I ask to see the face of my son.

Headsmen. So be it.

A voice behind the scenes. My father! oh, my father! [*Chārudatta hears the words, and mournfully repeats his request.*]

Headsmen. Citizens, make way a moment. Let the noble Chārudatta look upon the face of his son. [*Turning to the back of the stage.*] This way, sir! Come on, little boy!

P. 261.15]

[*Enter Maitreya, with Rohasena.*]

Maitreya. Make haste, my boy, make haste! Your father is being led to his death.

Rohasena. My father! oh, my father!

Maitreya. Oh, my friend! Where must I behold you now?

Chārudatta. [*Perceives his son and his friend.*] Alas, my son! Alas, Maitreya! [*Mournfully.*] Ah, woe is me! Long, too long, shall I thirst in vain Through all my sojourn dread; This vessel small will not contain The water for the dead.¹⁷

What may I give my son? [*He looks at himself, and perceives the sacrificial cord.*] Ah, this at least is mine.

The precious cord that Brahmans hold
Is unadorned with pearls and gold;
Yet, girt therewith, they sacrifice
To gods above and fathers[*He gives Rohasena the cord.*]Goha.
Come, Chārudatta! Come, man!

Ahīnta. Man, do you name the noble Chārudatta's name, and
forget the title? Remember:

In happy hours, in death, by night, by day,
Roving as free as a yet unbroken colt,
Fate wanders on her unrestricted way.¹⁹

And again:

Life will depart his body soon;
Shall our reproaches bow his head?
Although eclipse may seize the moon,
We worship while it seems but dead.²⁰

Rohasena. Oh, headsman, where are you leading my father?

[161.10. S.

Chārudatta. My darling,
About my neck I needs must wear
The oleander-wreath;
Upon my shoulder I must bear
The stake, and in my heart the care
Of near-approaching death.
I go to-day to meet a dastard's ending,
A victim, at the fatal altar bending.²¹

Goha. My boy,
Not we the headsman are,
Though born of headsman race;
Thy father's life who mar,
These, these are headsman base.²²

Rohasena. Then why do you murder my father?

Goha. Bless you, 't is the king's orders must bear the blame,
not we.

Rohasena. Kill me, and let father go free.

Goha. Bless you, may you live long for saying that!

Chārudatta. [*Tearfully embracing his son.*]

This treasure—love—this taste of heaven,
To rich and poor alike is given;
Than sandal better, or than balm,
To soothe the heart and give it calm.²³
About my neck I needs must wear
The oleander-wreath,
Upon my shoulder I must bear
The stake, and in my heart the care
Of near-approaching death.
I go to-day to meet a dastard's ending,
A victim, at the fatal altar bending.⁽²¹⁾

[*He looks about. Aside.*]

Their faces with their garments' hem now hiding,
They stand afar, whom once I counted friends:
Even foes have smiles⁽¹⁶⁾

P. 264.7]

Maitreya. My good men, let my dear friend Chārudatta go
free, and kill me instead.

Chārudatta. Heaven forbid! [*He looks about. Aside.*] Now I
understand.

for men with Fortune bidding;
But friends prove faithless when good fortune ends.⁽¹⁶⁾

[*Aloud.*]

These women, in their palaces who stay,
From half-shut windows peering, thus lament,
"Alas for Chārudatta! Woe the day!"
And pity-streaming eyes on me are bent.⁽¹¹⁾

Goha.

Out of the way, gentlemen, out of the way!

Why gaze upon the good man so,

When shame his living hope lays low?

The cord was broken at the well,

And down the golden pitcher fell.²⁴

Chārudatta. [Mournfully.]

From thy dear lips, that vied with coral's red,

Betraying teeth more bright than moonbeams fair,

My soul with heaven's nectar once was fed.

How can I, helpless, taste that poison dread,

To drink shame's poisoned cup how can I bear?(13)

Ahīnta. Proclaim the sentence again, man.*[Goha does so.]*

Chārud.

So lowly fallen! till shame my virtues blur,

Till such an ending seem not loss, but gain!

Yet o'er my heart there creeps a saddening pain,

To hear them cry abroad "You murdered *her*!"²⁵

[162.18. S.

[Enter Sthāvaraka, fettered, in the palace tower.]

Sthāvaraka. [After listening to the proclamation. In distress.]

What! the innocent Chārudatta is being put to death? And my master has thrown me into chains! Well, I must shout to them.—Listen, good gentlemen, listen! It was I, wretch that I am, who carried Vasantasenā to the old garden Pushpakaranda, because she mistook my bullock-cart for another. And then my master, Sansthānaka, found that she would not love him, and it was he, not this gentleman, who murdered her by strangling.—But they are so far away that no one hears me. What shall I do? Shall I cast myself down? *[He reflects.]* If I do, then the noble Chārudatta will not be put to death. Yes, through this broken window I will throw myself down from the palace tower. Better that I should meet my end,

than that the noble Chārudatta should perish, this tree of life for noble youths. And if I die in such a cause, I have attained heaven. [*He throws himself down.*] Wonderful! I did not meet my end, and my fetters are broken. So I will follow the sound of the headsmen's voices. [*He discovers the headsmen, and hastens forward.*] Headsmen, headsmen, make way!

Headsmen. For whom shall we make way?

Sthāvaraka. Listen, good gentlemen, listen! It was I, wretch that I am, who carried Vasantasenā to the old garden Pushpakaranda, because she mistook my bullock-cart for another. And then my master, Sansthānaka, found that she would not love him, and it was he, not this gentleman, who murdered her by strangling.

Chārudatta. Thank heaven!

But who thus gladdens this my latest morn,
When in Time's snare I struggle all forlorn,
A streaming cloud above the rainless corn?26

Listen! do you hear what I say?
Death have I never feared, but blackened fame;
My death were welcome, coming free from shame,
As were a son, new-born to bear my name.27

And again:

That small, weak fool, whom I have never hated,
Stained me with sin wherewith himself was mated,
An arrow, with most deadly poison baited.28

Headsmen. Are you telling the truth, Sthāvaraka?

P. 266.13]

Sthāvaraka. I am. And to keep me from telling anybody, he cast me into chains, and imprisoned me in the tower of his palace.

[Enter Sansthānaka.]

Sansthānaka. [Gleefully.]

I ate a shour and bitter dish
Of meat and herbs and shoup and fish;
I tried at home my tongue to tickle
With rice-cakes plain, and rice with treacle.²⁹

[*He listens.*] The headsmen's voices! They shound like a broken brass cymbal. I hear the music of the fatal drum and the kettle-drums, and sho I shuppose that that poor man, Chārudatta, is being led to the place of execution. I musht go and shee it. It is a great delight to shee my enemy die. Beshides, I 've heard that a man who shees his enemy being killed, is sure not to have shore eyes in his next birth. I acted like a worm that had crept into the knot of a lotush-root. I looked for a hole to crawl out at, and brought about the death of thish poor man, Chārudatta. Now I 'll climb up the tower of my own palace, and have a look at my own heroic deeds. [*He does so and looks about.*] Wonderful what a crowd there is, to shee that poor man led to his death! What would it be when an arishtocrat, a big man like me, was being led to his death? [*He gazes.*] Look! There he goes toward the shouth, adorned like a young shteer. But why was the proclamation made near my palace tower, and why was it shtopped? [*He looks about.*] Why, my shlave Sthāvaraka is gone, too. I hope he has n't run away and betrayed the shecret. I musht go and look for him. [*He descends and approaches the crowd.*]

Sthāvaraka. [Discovers him.] There he comes, good masters!
Headsmen.

Give way! Make room! And shut the door!
Be silent, and say nothing more!
Here comes a mad bull through the press,
Whose horns are sharp with wickedness.³⁰

[164.16. S.

Sansthānaka. Come, come, make way! [*He approaches.*]
Sthāvaraka, my little shon, my shlave, come, let 's go home.

Sthāvaraka. You scoundrel! Are you not content with the murder of Vasantasenā? Must you try now to murder the noble Chārudatta, that tree of life to all who loved him?

Sansthānaka. I am beautiful as a pot of jewels. I kill no woman!

Bystanders. Oho! *you* murdered her, not the noble Chārudatta.

Sansthānaka. Who shays that?

Bystanders. [*Pointing to Sthāvaraka.*] This honest man.

Sansthānaka. [*Fearfully. Aside.*] Merciful heavens! Why did n't I chain that shlave Sthāvaraka fasht? Why, he was a witnesssh of my crime. [*He reflects.*] I 'll do it thish way. [*Aloud.*] Lies, lies, good gentlemen. Why, I caught the shlave shtealing gold, and I pounded him, and murdered him, and put him in chains. He hates me. What he shays can't be true. [*He secretly hands Sthāvaraka a bracelet, and whispers.*] Sthāvaraka, my little shon, my shlave, take thish and shay shomething different.

Sthāvaraka. [*Takes it.*] Look, gentlemen, look! Why, he is trying to bribe me with gold.

Sansthānaka. [*Snatches the bracelet from him.*] That 's the gold that I put him in chains for. [*Angrily.*] Look here, headsmen! I put him in charge of my gold-chest, and when he turned thief, I murdered him and pounded him. If you don't believe it, jusht look at his back.

Headsmen. [*Doing so.*] Yes, yes. When a servant is branded that way, no wonder he tells tales.

Sthāvaraka. A curse on slavery! A slave convinces nobody. [*Mournfully.*] Noble Chārudatta, I have no further power. [*He falls at Chārudatta's feet.*]

Chārudatta. [*Mournfully.*]

Rise, rise! Kind soul to good men fallen on pain!

Brave friend who lendest such unselfish aid!

Thy greatest toil to save me was in vain,

For fate would not. Thy duty now is paid.³¹

P. 270.15]

Headsmen. Beat your servant, master, and drive him away.

Sansthānaka. Out of the way, you! [*He drives Sthāvaraka away.*] Come, headsmen, what are you waiting for? Kill him.

Headsmen. Kill him yourself, if you are in a hurry.

Rohasena. Oh, headsmen, kill me and let father go free.

Sansthānaka. Yesh, shon *and* father, kill them both.

Chārudatta. This fool might do anything. Go, my son, to your mother.

Rohasena. And what should I do then?

Chārud.

Go with thy mother to a hermitage;

No moment, dear, delay;

Lest of thy father's fault thou reap the wage,

And tread the selfsame way.³²

And you, my friend, go with him.

Maitreya. Oh, my friend, have you so known me as to think that I can live without you?

Chārudatta. Not so, my friend. Your life is your own. You may not throw it away.

Maitreya. [*Aside.*] True. And yet I cannot live apart from my friend. And so, when I have taken the boy to his mother, I will follow my friend even in death. [*Aloud.*] Yes, my friend, I will take him to her at once. [*He embraces Chārudatta, then falls at his feet. Rohasena does the same, weeping.*]

Sansthānaka. Look here! Did n't I tell you to kill Chārudatta, and his shon, too? [*At this, Chārudatta betrays fear.*]

Headsmen. We have n't any orders from the king to kill Chārudatta, and his son, too. Run away, boy, run away! [*They drive Rohasena away.*] Here is the third place of proclamation. Beat the drum! [*They proclaim the sentence again.*]

[167.1. S.

Sansthānaka. [*Aside.*] But the citizens don't believe it.

[*Aloud.*] Chārudatta, you jackanapes, the citizens don't believe it. Shay it with your own tongue, "I murdered Vasantasenā."
[*Chārudatta remains silent.*] Look here, headsman! The man won't speak, the jackanapes Chārudatta. Just make him speak. Beat him a few times with this ragged bamboo, or with a chain.

Goha. [*Raises his arm to strike.*] Come, Chārudatta, speak!

Chārudatta. [*Mournfully.*]

Now am I sunk so deep in sorrow's sea,
I know no fear, I know no sadness more;
Yet even now one flame still tortures me,
That men should say I slew whom I adore.³³

[*Sansthānaka repeats his words.*]

Chārudatta. Men of my own city!
A scoundrel I, who bear the blame,
Nor seek in heaven to be blest;
A maid—or goddess—'t is the same—
But he will say the rest.(ix. 30)

Sansthānaka. Killed her!

Chārudatta. So be it.

Goha. It 's your turn to kill him, man.

Ahīnta. No, yours.

Goha. Well, let 's reckon it out. [*He does so at great length.*]
Well, if it 's my turn to kill him, we will just let it wait a minute.

Ahīnta. Why?

Goha. Well, when my father was going to heaven, he said to me, "Son Goha, if it 's your turn to kill him, don't kill the sinner too quick."

Ahīnta. But why?

Goha. "Perhaps," said he, "some good man might give the money to set him free. Perhaps a son might be born to the king, and to celebrate the event, all the prisoners might be set free. Perhaps an elephant might break loose, and the prisoner

might escape in the excitement. Perhaps there might be a change of kings, and all the prisoners might be set free.”

P. 274.8]

Sansthānaka. What? What? A change of kings?

Goha. Well, let 's reckon it out, whose turn it is.

Sansthānaka. Oh, come! Kill Chārudatta at once. [*He takes Sthāvaraka, and withdraws a little.*]

Headsmen. Noble Chārudatta, it is the king's commandment that bears the blame, not we headsmen. Think then of what you needs must think.

Chārudatta.

Though slandered by a cruel fate,
And stained by men of high estate,
If that my virtue yet regarded be,
Then she who dwells with gods above
Or wheresoever else—my love—
By her sweet nature wipe the stain from me!³⁴

Tell me. Whither would you have me go?

Goha. [*Pointing ahead.*] Why, here is the southern burying-ground, and when a criminal sees that, he says good-by to life in a minute. For look!

One half the corpse gaunt jackals rend and shake,
And ply their horrid task;
One half still hangs impaled upon the stake,
Loud laughter's grinning mask.³⁵

Chārudatta. Alas! Ah, woe is me! [*In his agitation he sits down.*]

Sansthānaka. I won't go yet. I 'll jusht shee Chārudatta killed. [*He walks about, gazing.*] Well, well! He shat down.

Goha. Are you frightened, Chārudatta?

Chārudatta. [*Rising hastily.*] Fool!

Death have I never feared, but blackened fame;
My death were welcome, coming free from shame,
As were a son, new-born to bear my name.⁽²⁷⁾

[169.3. S.

Goha. Noble Chārudatta, the moon and the sun dwell in the vault of heaven, yet even they are overtaken by disaster. How much more, death-fearing creatures, and men! In this world, one rises only to fall, another falls only to rise again. But from him who has risen and falls, his body drops like a garment. Lay these thoughts to heart, and be strong. [*To Ahīnta.*] Here is the fourth place of proclamation. Let us proclaim the sentence. [*They do so once again.*]

Chārudatta.

Vasantasenā! Oh, my beloved!

From thy dear lips, that vied with coral's red,

Betraying teeth more bright than moonbeams fair,

My soul with heaven's nectar once was fed.

How can I, helpless, taste that poison dread,

To drink shame's poisoned cup how can I bear?(13)

[*Enter, in great agitation, Vasantasenā and the Buddhist monk.*]

Monk. Strange! My monkish life did me yeoman service when it proved necessary to comfort Vasantasenā, so untimely wearied, and to lead her on her way. Sister in Buddha, whither shall I lead you?

Vasantasenā. To the noble Chārudatta's house. Revive me with the sight of him, as the night-blooming water-lily is revived by the sight of the moon.

Monk. [*Aside.*] By which road shall I enter? [*He reflects.*] The king's highway—I'll enter by that. Come, sister in Buddha! Here is the king's highway. [*Listening.*] But what is this great tumult that I hear on the king's highway?

Vasantasenā. [*Looking before her.*] Why, there is a great crowd of people before us. Pray find out, sir, what it means. All Ujjayinī tips to one side, as if the earth bore an uneven load.

Goha. And here is the last place of proclamation. Beat the drum! Proclaim the sentence! [*They do so.*] Now, Chārudatta, wait! Don't be frightened. You will be killed very quickly.

P. 277.12]

Chārudatta. Ye blessèd gods!

Monk. [*Listens. In terror.*] Sister in Buddha, Chārudatta is being led to his death for murdering you.

Vasantasenā. [*In terror.*] Alas! For my wretched sake the noble Chārudatta put to death? Quick, quick! Oh, lead me thither!

Monk. Hasten, oh, hasten, sister in Buddha, to comfort the noble Chārudatta while he yet lives. Make way, gentlemen, make way!

Vasantasenā. Make way, make way!

Goha. Noble Chārudatta, it is the king's commandment that bears the blame. Think then of what you needs must think.

Chārudatta. Why waste words?

Though slandered by a cruel fate,
And stained by men of high estate,
If that my virtue yet regarded be,
Then she who dwells with gods above
Or wheresoever else—my love—
By her sweet nature wipe the stain from me!(34)

Goha. [*Drawing his sword.*] Noble Chārudatta, lie flat and be quiet. With one stroke we will kill you and send you to heaven.

[*Chārudatta does so. Goha raises his arm to strike. The sword falls from his hand.*] What is this?

I fiercely grasped within my hand
My thunderbolt-appalling brand;
Why did it fall upon the sand?36

But since it did, I conclude that the noble Chārudatta is not to die. Have mercy, O mighty goddess of the Sahya hills! If only Chārudatta might be saved, then hadst thou shown favor to our headsman caste.

Ahīnta. Let us do as we were ordered.

Goha. Well, let us do it. [*They make ready to impale Chārudatta.*]

[170.23. S.]

Chārud.

Though slandered by a cruel fate,
And stained by men of high estate,
If that my virtue yet regarded be,
Then she who dwells with gods above
Or wheresoever else—my love—
By her sweet nature wipe the stain from me!(34)

Monk and Vasantasenā. [*Perceiving what is being done.*] Good gentlemen! Hold, hold!

Vasantasenā. Good gentlemen! I am the wretch for whose sake he is put to death.

Goha. [*Perceiving her.*]

Who is the woman with the streaming hair
That smites her shoulder, loosened from its bands?
She loudly calls upon us to forbear,
And hastens hither with uplifted hands.³⁷

Vasantasenā. Oh, Chārudatta! What does it mean? [*She falls on his breast.*]

Monk. Oh, Chārudatta! What does it mean? [*He falls at his feet.*]

Goha. [*Anxiously withdrawing.*] Vasantasenā?—At least, we did not kill an innocent man.

Monk. [*Rising.*] Thank heaven! Chārudatta lives.

Goha. And shall live a hundred years!

Vasantasenā. [*Joyfully.*] And I too am brought back to life again.

Goha. The king is at the place of sacrifice. Let us report to him what has taken place. [*The two headsmen start to go away.*]

Sansthānaka. [*Perceives Vasantasenā. In terror.*] Goodnessh! who brought the shslave back to life? Thish is the end of me. Good! I 'll run away.[*He runs away.*]

Goha. [*Returning.*] Well, did n't we have orders from the king to put the man to death who murdered Vasantasenā? Let us hunt for the king's brother-in-law.
[*Exeunt the two headsmen.*]

P. 281.1]

Chārudatta. [*In amazement.*]

Who saves me from the uplifted weapon's scorn,
When in Death's jaws I struggled all forlorn,
A streaming cloud above the rainless corn?38

[*He gazes at her.*]

Is this Vasantasenā's counterfeit?
Or she herself, from heaven above descended?
Or do I but in madness see my sweet?
Or has her precious life not yet been ended?39

Or again:

Did she return from heaven,
That I might rescued be?
Was her form to another given?
Is this that other she?40

Vasantasenā. [*Rises tearfully and falls at his feet.*] O noble Chārudatta, I am indeed the wretch for whose sake you are fallen upon this unworthy plight.

Voices behind the scenes. A miracle, a miracle! Vasantasenā lives. [*The bystanders repeat the words.*]

Chārudatta. [*Listens, then rises suddenly, embraces Vasantasenā, and closes his eyes. In a voice trembling with emotion.*] My love! You are Vasantasenā!

Vasantasenā. That same unhappy woman.

Chārudatta. [*Gazes upon her. Joyfully.*] Can it be?
Vasantasenā herself? [*In utter happiness.*]
Her bosom bathed in streaming tears,
When in Death's power I fell,
Whence is she come to slay my fears,
Like heavenly magic's spell?⁴¹

Vasantasenā! Oh, my beloved!
Unto my body, whence the life was fleeting,
And all for thee, thou knewest life to give.
Oh, magic wonderful in lovers' meeting!
What power besides could make the dead man live?⁴²

[172.17. S.

But see, my beloved!
My blood-red garment seems a bridegroom's cloak,
Death's garland seems to me a bridal wreath;
My love is near.
And marriage music seems the fatal stroke
Of drums that heralded my instant death;
For she is here.⁴³

Vasantasenā. You with your utter kindness, what can it be
that you have done?

Chārudatta. My beloved, he said that I had killed you.
For ancient hatred's sake, my mighty foe,
Hell's victim now, had almost laid me low.⁴⁴

Vasantasenā. [*Stopping her ears.*] Heaven avert the omen! It
was he, the king's brother-in-law, who killed me.

Chārudatta. [*Perceiving the monk.*] But who is this?

Vasantasenā. When that unworthy wretch had killed me,
this worthy man brought me back to life.

Chārudatta. Who are you, unselfish friend?

Monk. You do not remember me, sir. I am that shampooer, who once was happy to rub your feet. When I fell into the hands of certain gamblers, this sister in Buddha, upon hearing that I had been your servant, bought my freedom with her jewels. Thereupon I grew tired of the gambler's life, and became a Buddhist monk. Now this lady made a mistake in her bullock-cart, and so came to the old garden Pushpakaranda. But when that unworthy wretch learned that she would not love him, he murdered her by strangling. And I found her there.

P. 283.11]

Loud voices behind the scenes.
Unending victory to Shiva be,
Who Daksha's offering foiled;
And victory may Kārttikeya see,
Who Krauncha smote and spoiled;
And victory to Aryaka the king—
His mighty foe he kills—
Far over all the earth's expansive ring,
That earth her joyous flag abroad may fling,
The snowy banner of Kailāsa's hills.⁴⁵

[*Enter hurriedly Sharvilaka.*]

Sharv.
Yes, Pālaka, the royal wretch, I slew,
Anointing Aryaka good king and true;
And now, like sacrificial flowers, I wed
The king's commandment to my bended head,
To give sad Chārudatta life anew.⁴⁶
The foe whose powers and friends had fled, he slew,
Consoled and comforted his subjects true;
And earth's broad sovereignty has gladly wed
His power, and bent to him her lowly head,
Who toward his foe plays Indra's part anew.⁴⁷

[*He looks before him.*] Ah! There he will be found, where the people are thus gathered together. Oh, that this deed of King Aryaka might be crowned with the rescued life of noble Chārudatta! [*He quickens his steps.*] Make way, you rascals! [*He discovers Chārudatta. Joyfully.*] Is Chārudatta yet living, and Vasantasenā? Truly, our sovereign's wishes are fulfilled.

Now, thanks to heaven, from sorrow's shoreless sea

I see him saved by her he loved, set free

By that sweet bark, that knew her course to steer

With virtue's tackle and with goodness' gear.

He seems the moon, whose light shines clear at last,

When all the sad eclipse is overpast.⁴⁸

Yet how shall I approach him, who have so grievously sinned against him? But no! Honesty is always honorable. [*He approaches and folds his hands. Aloud.*] O noble Chārudatta!

Chārudatta. Who are you, sir?

[174.13. S.

Sharvilaka.

I forced your house in manner base,

And stole the gems there left behind;

But though this sin oppress my mind,

I throw myself upon your grace.⁴⁹

Chārudatta. Not so, my friend. Thereby you showed your faith in me. [*He embraces him.*]

Sharvilaka. And one thing more:

The very noble Aryaka,

To save his family and name,

Has slain the wretched Pālaka,

A victim at the altar's flame.⁵⁰

Chārudatta. What say you?

Sharvilaka.

'T was your cart helped him on his way,

Who sought the shelter of your name;

He slew King Pālaka to-day,
A victim at the altar's flame.⁵¹

Chārudatta. Sharvilaka, did you set free that Aryaka, whom Pālaka took from his hamlet, and confined without cause in the tower?

Sharvilaka. I did.

Chārudatta. This is indeed most welcome tidings.

Sharvilaka. Scarcely was your friend Aryaka established in Ujjayinī, when he bestowed upon you the throne of Kushāvati, on the bank of the Venā. May you graciously receive this first token of his love. [*He turns around.*] Come, lead hither that rascal, that villain, the brother-in-law of the king!

Voices behind the scenes. We will, Sharvilaka.

Sharvilaka. Sir, King Aryaka declares that he won this kingdom through your virtues, and that you are therefore to have some benefit from it.

Chārudatta. The kingdom won through my virtues?

Voices behind the scenes. Come on, brother-in-law of the king, and reap the reward of your insolence. [*Enter Sansthānaka, guarded, with his hands tied behind his back.*]

P. 285.18]

Sansthānaka. Goodnessh gracious!

It came to pass, I ran away
Like any ass, and had my day.
They drag me round, a prishoner,
As if they 'd found a naughty cur.⁵²

[*He looks about him.*] They crowd around me, though I 'm a relative of the king's. To whom shall I go for help in my helplessnessh? [*He reflects.*] Good! I 'll go to the man who gives help and shows mercy to the shuppliant. [*He*

approaches.] Noble Chārudatta, protect me, protect me! [*He falls at his feet.*]

Voices behind the scenes. Noble Chārudatta, leave him to us! let us kill him!

Sansthānaka. [*To Chārudatta.*] O helper of the helpless, protect me!

Chārudatta. [*Mercifully.*] Yes, yes. He who seeks protection shall be safe.

Sharvilaka. [*Impatiently.*] Confound him! Take him away from Chārudatta! [*To Chārudatta.*] Tell me. What shall be done with the wretch?

Shall he be bound and dragged until he dies?

Shall dogs devour the scoundrel as he lies?

If he should be impaled, 't would be no blunder,

Nor if we had the rascal sawn asunder.⁵³

Chārudatta. Will you do as I say?

Sharvilaka. How can you doubt it?

Sansthānaka. Chārudatta! Mashter! I sheek your protection. Protect me, protect me! Do shomething worthy of yourshelf. I 'll never do it again!

Voices of citizens behind the scenes. Kill him! Why should the wretch be allowed to live?

[176.8. S.]

[*Vasantasenā takes the garland of death from Chārudatta's neck, and throws it upon Sansthānaka.*]

Sansthānaka. You shlave-wench, be merciful, be merciful! I 'll never murder you again. Protect me!

Sharvilaka. Come, take him away! Noble Chārudatta, say what shall be done with the wretch.

Chārudatta. Will you do as I say?

Sharvilaka. How can you doubt it?

Chārudatta. Really?

Sharvilaka. Really.

Chārudatta. Then let him be immediately—

Sharvilaka. Killed?

Chārudatta. No, no! Set free.

Sharvilaka. What for?

Chārud.

The humbled foe who seeks thine aid,
Thou mayst not smite with steely blade—

Sharvilaka. All right. We will have the dogs eat him alive.

Chārudatta. No, no!

Be cruelty with kindness paid.⁵⁴

Sharvilaka. Wonderful! What shall I do? Tell me, sir.

Chārudatta. Why, set him free.

Sharvilaka. It shall be done.

Sansthānaka. Hooray! I breathe again.*[Exit, with the guards.*

Sharvilaka. Mistress Vasantasenā, the king is pleased to bestow upon you the title “wedded wife.”

Vasantasenā. Sir, I desire no more.

Sharvilaka. upon Vasantasenā. To Chārudatta.] Sir, what shall be done for this monk?

Chārudatta. Monk, what do you most desire?

Monk. When I see this example of the uncertainty of all things, I am twice content to be a monk.

P. 292.16]

Chārudatta. His purpose is not to be changed, my friend. Let him be appointed spiritual father over all the monasteries in the land.

Sharvilaka. It shall be done.

Monk. It is all that I desire.

Vasantasenā. Now I am indeed brought back to life.

Sharvilaka. What shall be done for Sthāvaraka?

Chārudatta. Let the good fellow be given his freedom. Let those headsman be appointed chiefs of all the headsman. Let Chandanaka be appointed chief of all the police in the land. Let the brother-in-law of the king continue to act exactly as he acted in the past.

Sharvilaka. It shall be done. Only *that* man—leave him to me,
and I 'll kill him.

Chārudatta.

He who seeks protection shall be safe.
The humbled foe who seeks thine aid,
Thou mayst not smite with steely blade.
Be cruelty with kindness paid.(54)

Sharvilaka. Then tell me what I may yet do for you.

Chārudatta. Can there be more than this?

I kept unstained my virtue's even worth,
Granted my enemy his abject suit;
Friend Aryaka destroyed his foeman's root,
And rules a king o'er all the steadfast earth.
This dear-loved maiden is at last mine own,
And you united with me as a friend.
And shall I ask for further mercies, shown
To me, who cannot sound these mercies' end?58
Fate plays with us like buckets at the well,
Where one is filled, and one an empty shell,
Where one is rising, while another falls;
And shows how life is change—now heaven, now hell.59

Yet may the wishes of our epilogue be fulfilled.

EPILOGUE

[178.9. S.

May kine yield streaming milk, the earth her grain,
And may the heaven give never-failing rain,
The winds waft happiness to all that breathes,
And all that lives, live free from every pain.
In paths of righteousness may Brahmins tread,
And high esteem their high deserving wed;

May kings in justice' ways be ever led,
And earth, submissive, bend her grateful head.60

[Exeunt omnes.]

17. The Little Clay Cart - Act VII

Act, the Seventh

ARYAKA'S ESCAPE

[Enter Chārudatta and Maitreya.]

Maitreya.

How beautiful the old garden Pushpakaranda is.

Chārudatta. You are quite right, my friend. For see!

The trees, like merchants, show their wares;

Each several tree his blossoms bears,

While bees, like officers, are flitting,

To take from each what toll is fitting.]

Maitreya. This simple stone is very attractive. Pray be seated.

Chārudatta. [Seats himself.] How Vardhamānaka lingers, my friend!

Maitreya. I told Vardhamānaka to bring Vasantasenā and come as quickly as he could.

Chārudatta. Why then does he linger?

Is he delayed by some slow-moving load?

Has he returned with broken wheel or traces?

Obstructions bid him seek another road?

His bullocks, or himself, choose these slow paces?2

[Enter Vardhamānaka with the bullock-cart, in which Aryaka lies hidden.]

Vardhamānaka. Get up, bullocks, get up!

Aryaka. [Aside.]

And still I fear the spies that serve the king;

Escape is even yet a doubtful thing,

While to my foot these cursèd fetters cling.

Some good man 't is, within whose cart I lie,
Like cuckoo chicks, whose heartless mothers fly,
And crows must rear the fledglings, or they die.³

I have come a long distance from the city. Shall I get out of the cart and seek a hiding-place in the grove? or shall I wait to see the owner of the cart? On second thoughts, I will not hide myself in the grove; for men say that the noble Chārudatta is ever helpful to them that seek his protection. I will not go until I have seen him face to face.

[108.3. S.

'T will bring contentment to that good man's heart

To see me rescued from misfortune's sea.

This body, in its suffering, pain, and smart,

Is saved through his sweet magnanimity.⁴

Vardhamānaka. Here is the garden. I 'll drive in. [He does so.]
Maitreya!

Maitreya. Good news, my friend. It is Vardhamānaka's voice.
Vasantasenā must have come.

Chārudatta. Good news, indeed.

Maitreya. You son of a slave, what makes you so late?

Vardhamānaka. Don't get angry, good Maitreya. I remembered that I had forgotten the cushion, and I had to go back for it, and that is why I am late.

Chārudatta. Turn the cart around, Vardhamānaka. Maitreya, my friend, help Vasantasenā to get out.

Maitreya. Has she got fetters on her feet, so that she can't get out by herself? [He rises and lifts the curtain of the cart.] Why, this is n't mistress Vasantasenā—this is Mister Vasantasena.

Chārudatta. A truce to your jests, my friend. Love cannot wait. I will help her to get out myself. [He rises.]

Aryaka. [Discovers him.] Ah, the owner of the bullock-cart! He is attractive not only to the ears of men, but also to their eyes. Thank heaven! I am safe.

Chārudatta. [Enters the bullock-cart and discovers Aryaka.]
Who then is this?

As trunk of elephant his arms are long,
His chest is full, his shoulders broad and strong,
His great eyes restless-red;[71]
Why should this man be thus enforced to fight—
So noble he—with such ignoble plight,
His foot to fetters wed?5

180. 180.14]

Who are you, sir?

Aryaka. I am one who seeks your protection, Aryaka, by birth
a herdsman.

Chārudatta. Are you he whom King Pālaka took from the
hamlet where he lived and thrust into prison?

Aryaka. The same.

Chārudatta.

'T is fate that brings you to my sight;

May I be reft of heaven's light,

Ere I desert you in your hapless plight.6

[Aryaka manifests his joy.]

Chārudatta. Vardhamānaka, remove the fetters from his foot.

Vardhamānaka. Yes, sir. [He does so.] Master, the fetters are
removed.

Aryaka. But you have bound me with yet stronger fetters of
love.

Maitreya. Now you may put on the fetters yourself. He is free
anyway. And it 's time for us to be going.

Chārudatta. Peace! For shame!

Aryaka. Chārudatta, my friend, I entered your cart somewhat
unceremoniously. I beg your pardon.

Chārudatta. I feel honored that you should use no ceremony
with me.

Aryaka. If you permit it, I now desire to go.

Chārudatta. Go in peace.

Aryaka. Thank you. I will alight from the cart.

Chārudatta. No, my friend. The fetters have but this moment been removed, and you will find walking difficult. In this spot where men seek pleasure, a bullock-cart will excite no suspicion. Continue your journey then in the cart.

[110.4. S.

Aryaka. I thank you, sir.

Chārud. Seek now thy kinsmen. Happiness be thine!

Aryaka. Ah, I have found thee, blessed kinsman mine!

Chārud. Remember me, when thou hast cause to speak.

Aryaka. Thy name, and not mine own, my words shall seek.

Chārud. May the immortal gods protect thy ways!

Aryaka. Thou didst protect me, in most perilous days.

Chārud. Nay, it was fate that sweet protection lent.

Aryaka. But thou wast chosen as fate's instrument.⁷

Chārudatta. King Pālaka is aroused, and protection will prove difficult. You must depart at once.

Aryaka. Until we meet again, farewell.[Exit.

Chārud.

From royal wrath I now have much to fear;

It were unwise for me to linger here.

Then throw the fetters in the well; for spies

Serve to their king as keen, far-seeing eyes.⁸

[His left eye twitches.] Maitreya, my friend, I long to see Vasantasenā. For now, because

I have not seen whom I love best,

My left eye twitches; and my breast

Is causeless-anxious and distressed.⁹

Come, let us go. [He walks about.] See! a Buddhist monk approaches, and the sight bodes ill. [Reflecting.] Let him enter by that path, while we depart by this.[Exit.]

PART V

EVERYMAN, WITH OTHER INTERLUDES

18. Everyman

EVERYMAN

CHARACTERS

- Everyman
- God: Adonai
- Death
- Messenger
- Fellowship
- Cousin
- Kindred
- Goods
- Good-Deeds
- Strength
- Discretion
- Five-Wits
- Beauty
- Knowledge
- Confession
- Angel
- Doctor

HERE BEGINNETH A TREATISE HOW THE HIGH FATHER
OF HEAVEN SENDETH DEATH TO SUMMON EVERY
CREATURE TO COME AND GIVE ACCOUNT OF THEIR
LIVES IN THIS WORLD AND IS IN MANNER OF A MORAL
PLAY.

Messenger. I pray you all give your audience,
And hear this matter with reverence,
By figure a moral play—

The *Summoning of Everyman* called it is,
That of our lives and ending shows
How transitory we be all day.
This matter is wondrous precious,
But the intent of it is more gracious,
And sweet to bear away.
The story saith,—Man, in the beginning,
Look well, and take good heed to the ending,
Be you never so gay!
Ye think sin in the beginning full sweet,
Which in the end causeth thy soul to weep,
When the body lieth in clay.
Here shall you see how *Fellowship* and *Jollity*,
Both *Strength*, *Pleasure*, and *Beauty*,
Will fade from thee as flower in May.
For ye shall hear, how our heaven king
Calleth *Everyman* to a general reckoning:
Give audience, and hear what he doth say.

God. I perceive here in my majesty,
How that all creatures be to me unkind,
Living without dread in worldly prosperity:
Of ghostly sight the people be so blind,
Drowned in sin, they know me not for their God;
In worldly riches is all their mind,
They fear not my rightwiseness, the sharp rod;
My law that I shewed, when I for them died,
They forget clean, and shedding of my blood red;
I hanged between two, it cannot be denied;
To get them life I suffered to be dead;
I healed their feet, with thorns hurt was my head:
I could do no more than I did truly,
And now I see the people do clean forsake me.
They use the seven deadly sins damnable;
As pride, covetise, wrath, and lechery,
Now in the world be made commendable;

And thus they leave of angels the heavenly company;
Everyman liveth so after his own pleasure,
And yet of their life they be nothing sure:
I see the more that I them forbear
The worse they be from year to year;
All that liveth appaireth⁷ fast,
Therefore I will in all the haste
Have a reckoning of Everyman's person
For and I leave the people thus alone
In their life and wicked tempests,
Verily they will become much worse than beasts;
For now one would by envy another up eat;
Charity they all do clean forget.
I hoped well that Everyman
In my glory should make his mansion,
And thereto I had them all elect;
But now I see, like traitors deject,
They thank me not for the pleasure that I to them meant,
Nor yet for their being that I them have lent;
I proffered the people great multitude of mercy,
And few there be that asketh it heartily;
They be so cumbered with worldly riches,
That needs on them I must do justice,
On Everyman living without fear.
Where art thou, *Death*, thou mighty messenger?

Death. Almighty God, I am here at your will,
Your commandment to fulfil.

God. Go thou to *Everyman*,
And show him in my name
A pilgrimage he must on him take,
Which he in no wise may escape;
And that he bring with him a sure reckoning
Without delay or any tarrying.

Death. Lord, I will in the world go run over all,
And cruelly outsearch both great and small;

Every man will I beset that liveth beastly
Out of God's laws, and dreadeth not folly:
He that loveth riches I will strike with my dart,
His sight to blind, and from heaven to depart,
Except that alms be his good friend,
In hell for to dwell, world without end.
Lo, yonder I see *Everyman* walking;
Full little he thinketh on my coming;
His mind is on fleshly lusts and his treasure,
And great pain it shall cause him to endure
Before the Lord Heaven King.
Everyman, stand still; whither art thou going
Thus gaily? Hast thou thy Maker forget?

Everyman. Why askst thou?
Wouldest thou wete?⁸

Death. Yea, sir, I will show you;
In great haste I am sent to thee
From God out of his majesty.

Everyman. What, sent to me?

Death. Yea, certainly.
Though thou have forget him here,
He thinketh on thee in the heavenly sphere,
As, or we depart, thou shalt know.

Everyman. What desireth God of me?

Death. That shall I show thee;
A reckoning he will needs have
Without any longer respite.

Everyman. To give a reckoning longer leisure I crave;
This blind matter troubleth my wit.

Death. On thee thou must take a long journey:
Therefore thy book of count with thee thou bring;
For turn again thou can not by no way,
And look thou be sure of thy reckoning:
For before God thou shalt answer, and show
Thy many bad deeds and good but a few;

How thou hast spent thy life, and in what wise,
Before the chief lord of paradise.
Have ado that we were in that way,
For, wete thou well, thou shalt make none attournay.⁹

Everyman. Full unready I am such reckoning to give.
I know thee not: what messenger art thou?

Death. I am *Death*, that no man dreadeth.
For every man I rest and no man spareth;
For it is God's commandment
That all to me should be obedient.

Everyman. O *Death*, thou comest when I had thee least in
mind;

In thy power it lieth me to save,
Yet of my good will I give thee, if ye will be kind,
Yea, a thousand pound shalt thou have,
And defer this matter till another day.

Death. *Everyman*, it may not be by no way;
I set not by gold, silver, nor riches,
Ne by pope, emperor, king, duke, ne princes.
For and I would receive gifts great,
All the world I might get;
But my custom is clean contrary.
I give thee no respite: come hence, and not tarry.

Everyman. Alas, shall I have no longer respite?
I may say *Death* giveth no warning:
To think on thee, it maketh my heart sick,
For all unready is my book of reckoning.
But twelve year and I might have abiding,
My counting book I would make so clear,
That my reckoning I should not need to fear.
Wherefore, *Death*, I pray thee, for God's mercy,
Spare me till I be provided of remedy.

Death. Thee availeth not to cry, weep, and pray:
But haste thee lightly that you were gone the journey,
And prove thy friends if thou can.

For, wete thou well, the tide abideth no man,
And in the world each living creature
For *Adam's* sin must die of nature.

Everyman. *Death*, if I should this pilgrimage take,
And my reckoning surely make,
Show me, for saint *charity*,
Should I not come again shortly?

Death. No, *Everyman*; and thou be once there,
Thou mayst never more come here,
Trust me verily.

Everyman. O gracious God, in the high seat celestial,
Have mercy on me in this most need;
Shall I have no company from this vale terrestrial
Of mine acquaintance that way me to lead?

Death. Yea, if any be so hardy,
That would go with thee and bear thee company.
Hie thee that you were gone to God's magnificence,
Thy reckoning to give before his presence.
What, weenest thou thy life is given thee,
And thy worldly goods also?

Everyman. I had wend so, verily.

Death. Nay, nay; it was but lent thee;
For as soon as thou art go,
Another awhile shall have it, and then go therefro
Even as thou hast done.

Everyman, thou art mad; thou hast thy wits five,
And here on earth will not amend thy life,
For suddenly I do come.

Everyman. O wretched caitiff, whither shall I flee,
That I might scape this endless sorrow!
Now, gentle *Death*, spare me till to-morrow,
That I may amend me
With good advisement.

Death. Nay, thereto I will not consent,
Nor no man will I respite,

But to the heart suddenly I shall smite
Without any advisement.

And now out of thy sight I will me hie;
See thou make thee ready shortly,
For thou mayst say this is the day
That no man living may scape away.

Everyman. Alas, I may well weep with sighs deep;
Now have I no manner of company
To help me in my journey, and me to keep;
And also my writing is full unready.
How shall I do now for to excuse me?
I would to God I had never be gete!¹⁰
To my soul a full great profit it had be;
For now I fear pains huge and great.
The time passeth; Lord, help that all wrought;
For though I mourn it availeth nought.
The day passeth, and is almost a-go;
I wot not well what for to do.

To whom were I best my complaint to make?
What, and I to *Fellowship* thereof spake,
And showed him of this sudden chance?
For in him is all mine affiance;
We have in the world so many a day
Be on good friends in sport and play.
I see him yonder, certainly;
I trust that he will bear me company;
Therefore to him will I speak to ease my sorrow.
Well met, good *Fellowship*, and good morrow!

Fellowship speaketh. *Everyman*, good morrow by this day.
Sir, why lookest thou so piteously?
If any thing be amiss, I pray thee, me say,
That I may help to remedy.

Everyman. Yea, good *Fellowship*, yea,
I am in great jeopardy.

Fellowship. My true friend, show to me your mind;

I will not forsake thee, unto my life's end,
In the way of good company.

Everyman. That was well spoken, and lovingly.

Fellowship. Sir, I must needs know your heaviness;
I have pity to see you in any distress;
If any have you wronged ye shall revenged be,
Though I on the ground be slain for thee,—
Though that I know before that I should die.

Everyman. Verily, *Fellowship*, gramercy.

Fellowship. Tush! by thy thanks I set not a straw.
Show me your grief, and say no more.

Everyman. If I my heart should to you break,
And then you to turn your mind from me,
And would not me comfort, when you hear me speak,
Then should I ten times sorrier be.

Fellowship. Sir, I say as I will do in deed.

Everyman. Then be you a good friend at need:
I have found you true here before.

Fellowship. And so ye shall evermore;
For, in faith, and thou go to Hell,
I will not forsake thee by the way!

Everyman. Ye speak like a good friend; I believe you well;
I shall deserve it, and I may.

Fellowship. I speak of no deserving, by this day.
For he that will say and nothing do
Is not worthy with good company to go;
Therefore show me the grief of your mind,
As to your friend most loving and kind.

Everyman. I shall show you how it is;
Commanded I am to go a journey,
A long way, hard and dangerous,
And give a strait count without delay
Before the high judge Adonai.¹¹
Wherefore I pray you, bear me company,
As ye have promised, in this journey.

Fellowship. That is matter indeed! Promise is duty,
But, and I should take such a voyage on me,
I know it well, it should be to my pain:
Also it make me afeard, certain.
But let us take counsel here as well as we can,
For your words would fear a strong man.

Everyman. Why, ye said, If I had need,
Ye would me never forsake, quick nor dead,
Though it were to hell truly.

Fellowship. So I said, certainly,
But such pleasures be set aside, thee sooth to say:
And also, if we took such a journey,
When should we come again?

Everyman. Nay, never again till the day of doom.

Fellowship. In faith, then will not I come there!
Who hath you these tidings brought?

Everyman. Indeed, *Death* was with me here.

Fellowship. Now, by God that all hath bought,
If *Death* were the messenger,
For no man that is living to-day
I will not go that loath journey—
Not for the father that begat me!

Everyman. Ye promised other wise, pardie.

Fellowship. I wot well I say so truly;
And yet if thou wilt eat, and drink, and make good cheer,
Or haunt to women, the lusty company,
I would not forsake you, while the day is clear,
Trust me verily!

Everyman. Yea, thereto ye would be ready;
To go to mirth, solace, and play,
Your mind will sooner apply
Than to bear me company in my long journey.

Fellowship. Now, in good faith, I will not that way.
But and thou wilt murder, or any man kill,
In that I will help thee with a good will!

Everyman. O that is a simple advice indeed!
Gentle *fellow*, help me in my necessity;
We have loved long, and now I need,
And now, gentle *Fellowship*, remember me.

Fellowship. Whether ye have loved me or no,
By Saint John, I will not with thee go.

Everyman. Yet I pray thee, take the labour, and do so much
for me

To bring me forward, for saint charity,
And comfort me till I come without the town.

Fellowship. Nay, and thou would give me a new gown,
I will not a foot with thee go;
But and you had tarried I would not have left thee so.
And as now, God speed thee in thy journey,
For from thee I will depart as fast as I may.

Everyman. Whither away, *Fellowship*? will you forsake me?

Fellowship. Yea, by my fay, to God I betake thee.

Everyman. Farewell, good *Fellowship*; for this my heart is
sore;

Adieu for ever, I shall see thee no more.

Fellowship. In faith, *Everyman*, farewell now at the end;
For you I will remember that parting is mourning.

Everyman. Alack! shall we thus depart indeed?
Our Lady, help, without any more comfort,
Lo, *Fellowship* forsaketh me in my most need:
For help in this world whither shall I resort?

Fellowship herebefore with me would merry make;
And now little sorrow for me doth he take.
It is said, in prosperity men friends may find,
Which in adversity be full unkind.

Now whither for succour shall I flee,
Sith that *Fellowship* hath forsaken me?
To my kinsmen I will truly,
Praying them to help me in my necessity;
I believe that they will do so,

For kind will creep where it may not go.
I will go say, for yonder I see them go.
Where be ye now, my friends and kinsmen?

Kindred. Here be we now at your commandment.
Cousin, I pray you show us your intent
In any wise, and not spare.

Cousin. Yea, *Everyman*, and to us declare
If ye be disposed to go any whither,
For wete you well, we will live and die together.

Kindred. In wealth and woe we will with you hold,
For over his kin a man may be bold.

Everyman. Gramercy, my friends and kinsmen kind.
Now shall I show you the grief of my mind:
I was commanded by a messenger,
That is an high king's chief officer;
He bade me go a pilgrimage to my pain,
And I know well I shall never come again;
Also I must give a reckoning straight,
For I have a great enemy, that hath me in wait,
Which intendeth me for to hinder.

Kindred. What account is that which ye must render?
That would I know.

Everyman. Of all my works I must show
How I have lived and my days spent;
Also of ill deeds, that I have used
In my time, sith life was me lent;
And of all virtues that I have refused.
Therefore I pray you go thither with me,
To help to make mine account, for saint *charity*.

Cousin. What, to go thither? Is that the matter?
Nay, *Everyman*, I had liefer fast bread and water
All this five year and more.

Everyman. Alas, that ever I was bore!¹²
For now shall I never be merry
If that you forsake me.

Kindred. Ah, sir; what, ye be a merry man!
Take good heart to you, and make no moan.
But one thing I warn you, by Saint Anne,
As for me, ye shall go alone.

Everyman. My *Cousin*, will you not with me go?

Cousin. No, by our Lady; I have the cramp in my toe.
Trust not to me, for, so God me speed,
I will deceive you in your most need,
Kindred. It availeth not us to tice.

Ye shall have my maid with all my heart;
She loveth to go to feasts, there to be nice,
And to dance, and abroad to start:
I will give her leave to help you in that journey,
If that you and she may agree.

Everyman. Now show me the very effect of your mind.
Will you go with me, or abide behind?

Kindred. Abide behind? yea, that I will and I may!
Therefore farewell until another day.

Everyman. How should I be merry or glad?
For fair promises to me make,
But when I have most need, they me forsake.
I am deceived; that maketh me sad.

Cousin. Cousin *Everyman*, farewell now,
For verily I will not go with you;
Also of mine own an unready reckoning
I have to account; therefore I make tarrying.
Now, God keep thee, for now I go.

Everyman. Ah, *Jesus*, is all come hereto?
Lo, fair words maketh fools feign;
They promise and nothing will do certain.
My kinsmen promised me faithfully
For to abide with me steadfastly,
And now fast away do they flee:
Even so *Fellowship* promised me.
What friend were best me of to provide?

I lose my time here longer to abide.
Yet in my mind a thing there is;—
All my life I have loved riches;
If that my good now help me might,
He would make my heart full light.
I will speak to him in this distress.—
Where art thou, my *Goods* and riches?

Goods. Who calleth me? *Everyman*? what haste thou hast!
I lie here in corners, trussed and piled so high,
And in chests I am locked so fast,
Also sacked in bags, thou mayst see with thine eye,
I cannot stir; in packs low I lie.
What would ye have, lightly me say.

Everyman. Come hither, *Good*, in all the haste thou may,
For of counsel I must desire thee.

Goods. Sir, and ye in the world have trouble or adversity,
That can I help you to remedy shortly.

Everyman. It is another disease that grieveth me;
In this world it is not, I tell thee so.
I am sent for another way to go,
To give a straight account general
Before the highest *Jupiter* of all;
And all my life I have had joy and pleasure in thee.
Therefore I pray thee go with me,
For, peradventure, thou mayst before God Almighty
My reckoning help to clean and purify;
For it is said ever among,
That money maketh all right that is wrong.

Goods. Nay, *Everyman*, I sing another song,
I follow no man in such voyages;
For and I went with thee
Thou shouldst fare much the worse for me;
For because on me thou did set thy mind,
Thy reckoning I have made blotted and blind,

That thine account thou cannot make truly;
And that hast thou for the love of me.

Everyman. That would grieve me full sore,
When I should come to that fearful answer.
Up, let us go thither together.

Goods. Nay, not so, I am too brittle, I may not endure;
I will follow no man one foot, be ye sure.

Everyman. Alas, I have thee loved, and had great pleasure
All my life-days on good and treasure.

Goods. That is to thy damnation without lesing,
For my love is contrary to the love everlasting.
But if thou had me loved moderately during,
As, to the poor give part of me,
Then shouldst thou not in this dolour be,
Nor in this great sorrow and care.

Everyman. Lo, now was I deceived or I was ware,
And all I may wyte¹³ my spending of time.

Goods. What, weenest thou that I am thine?

Everyman. I had wend so.

Goods. Nay, *Everyman*, I say no;
As for a while I was lent thee,
A season thou hast had me in prosperity;
My condition is man's soul to kill;
If I save one, a thousand I do spill;
Weenest thou that I will follow thee?
Nay, from this world, not verily.

Everyman. I had wend otherwise.

Goods. Therefore to thy soul *Good* is a thief;
For when thou art dead, this is my guise
Another to deceive in the same wise
As I have done thee, and all to his soul's reproof.

Everyman. O false *Good*, cursed thou be!
Thou traitor to God, that hast deceived me,
And caught me in thy snare.

Goods. Marry, thou brought thyself in care,

Whereof I am glad,
I must needs laugh, I cannot be sad.

Everyman. Ah, *Good*, thou hast had long my heartily love;
I gave thee that which should be the Lord's above.
But wilt thou not go with me in deed?
I pray thee truth to say.

Goods. No, so God me speed,
Therefore farewell, and have good day.

Everyman. O, to whom shall I make my moan
For to go with me in that heavy journey?
First *Fellowship* said he would with me gone;
His words were very pleasant and gay,
But afterward he left me alone.
Then spake I to my kinsmen all in despair,
And also they gave me words fair,
They lacked no fair speaking,
But all forsake me in the ending.
Then went I to my *Goods* that I loved best,
In hope to have comfort, but there had I least;
For my *Goods* sharply did me tell
That he bringeth many into hell.
Then of myself I was ashamed,
And so I am worthy to be blamed;
Thus may I well myself hate.
Of whom shall I now counsel take?
I think that I shall never speed
Till that I go to my *Good-Deed*,
But alas, she is so weak,
That she can neither go nor speak;
Yet will I venture on her now.—
My *Good-Deeds*, where be you?
Good-Deeds. Here I lie cold in the ground;
Thy sins hath me sore bound,
That I cannot stir.

Everyman. O, *Good-Deeds*, I stand in fear;

I must you pray of counsel,
For help now should come right well.

Goods-Deeds. Everyman, I have understanding
That ye be summoned account to make
Before *Messias*, of Jerusalem King;
And you do by me¹⁴ that journey what¹⁵ you will I take.

Everyman. Therefore I come to you, my moan to make;
I pray you, that ye will go with me.

Good-Deeds. I would full fain, but I cannot stand verily.

Everyman. Why, is there anything on you fall?

Good-Deeds. Yea, sir, I may thank you of all;
If ye had perfectly cheered me,
Your book of account now full ready had be.
Look, the books of your works and deeds eke;
Oh, see how they lie under the feet,
To your soul's heaviness.

Everyman. Our Lord *Jesus*, help me!
For one letter here I can not see.

Good-Deeds. There is a blind reckoning in time of distress!

Everyman. Good-Deeds, I pray you, help me in this need,
Or else I am for ever damned indeed;
Therefore help me to make reckoning
Before the redeemer of all thing,
That king is, and was, and ever shall.

Good-Deeds. Everyman, I am sorry of your fall,
And fain would I help you, and I were able.

Everyman. Good-Deeds, your counsel I pray you give me.

Good-Deeds. That shall I do verily;
Though that on my feet I may not go,
I have a sister, that shall with you also,
Called *Knowledge*, which shall with you abide,
To help you to make that dreadful reckoning.

Knowledge. Everyman, I will go with thee, and be thy guide,
In thy most need to go by thy side.

Everyman. In good condition I am now in every thing,

And am wholly content with this good thing;
Thanked be God my Creator.

Good-Deeds. And when he hath brought thee there,
Where thou shalt heal thee of thy smart,
Then go you with your reckoning and your *Good-Deeds*
together
For to make you joyful at heart
Before the blessed Trinity.

Everyman. My *Good-Deeds*, gramercy;
I am well content, certainly,
With your words sweet.

Knowledge. Now go we together lovingly,
To *Confession*, that cleansing river.

Everyman. For joy I weep; I would we were there;
But, I pray you, give me cognition
Where dwelleth that holy man, *Confession*.

Knowledge. In the house of salvation:
We shall find him in that place,
That shall us comfort by God's grace.
Lo, this is *Confession*; kneel down and ask mercy,
For he is in good conceit with God almighty.

Everyman. O glorious fountain that all uncleanness doth
clarify,
Wash from me the spots of vices unclean,
That on me no sin may be seen;
I come with *Knowledge* for my redemption,
Repent with hearty and full contrition;
For I am commanded a pilgrimage to take,
And great accounts before God to make.
Now, I pray you, *Shrift*, mother of salvation,
Help my good deeds for my piteous exclamation.

Confession. I know your sorrow well, *Everyman*;
Because with *Knowledge* ye come to me,
I will you comfort as well as I can,
And a precious jewel I will give thee,

Called penance, wise voider of adversity;
Therewith shall your body chastised be,
With abstinence and perseverance in God's service:
Here shall you receive that scourge of me,
Which is penance strong, that ye must endure,
To remember thy Saviour was scourged for thee
With sharp scourges, and suffered it patiently;
So must thou, or thou scape that painful pilgrimage;
Knowledge, keep him in this voyage,
And by that time *Good-Deeds* will be with thee.
But in any wise, be sure of mercy,
For your time draweth fast, and ye will saved be;
Ask God mercy, and He will grant truly,
When with the scourge of penance man doth him bind,
The oil of forgiveness then shall he find.

Everyman. Thanked be God for his gracious work!
For now I will my penance begin;
This hath rejoiced and lighted my heart,
Though the knots be painful and hard within.

Knowledge. *Everyman*, look your penance that ye fulfil,
What pain that ever it to you be,
And *Knowledge* shall give you counsel at will,
How your accounts ye shall make clearly.

Everyman. O eternal God, O heavenly figure,
O way of rightwiseness, O goodly vision,
Which descended down in a virgin pure
Because he would *Everyman* redeem,
Which *Adam* forfeited by his disobedience:
O blessed Godhead, elect and high-divine,
Forgive my grievous offence;
Here I cry thee mercy in this presence.
O ghostly treasure, O ransomer and redeemer
Of all the world, hope and conductor,
Mirror of joy, and founder of mercy,
Which illumineth heaven and earth thereby,

Hear my clamorous complaint, though it late be;
Receive my prayers; unworthy in this heavy life,
Though I be, a sinner most abominable,
Yet let my name be written in *Moses'* table;
O *Mary*, pray to the Maker of all thing,
Me for to help at my ending,
And save me from the power of my enemy,
For *Death* assaileth me strongly;
And, Lady, that I may by means of thy prayer
Of your Son's glory to be partaker,
By the means of his passion I it crave,
I beseech you, help my soul to save.—
Knowledge, give me the scourge of penance;
My flesh therewith shall give a quittance:
I will now begin, if God give me grace.

Knowledge. Everyman, God give you time and space:
Thus I bequeath you in the hands of our Saviour,
Thus may you make your reckoning sure.

Everyman. In the name of the Holy Trinity,
My body sore punished shall be:
Take this body for the sin of the flesh;
Also thou delightest to go gay and fresh,
And in the way of damnation thou did me bring;
Therefore suffer now strokes and punishing.
Now of penance I will wade the water clear,
To save me from purgatory, that sharp fire.

Good-Deeds. I thank God, now I can walk and go;
And am delivered of my sickness and woe.
Therefore with *Everyman* I will go, and not spare;
His good works I will help him to declare.

Knowledge. Now, *Everyman*, be merry and glad;
Your *Good-Deeds* cometh now; ye may not be sad;
Now is your *Good-Deeds* whole and sound,
Going upright upon the ground.

Everyman. My heart is light, and shall be evermore;
Now will I smite faster than I did before.

Good-Deeds. Everyman, pilgrim, my special friend,
Blessed be thou without end;
For thee is prepared the eternal glory.
Ye have me made whole and sound,
Therefore I will bide by thee in every stound.¹⁶

Everyman. Welcome, my *Good-Deeds*; now I hear thy voice,
I weep for very sweetness of love.

Knowledge. Be no more sad, but ever rejoice,
God seeth thy living in his throne above;
Put on this garment to thy behove,
Which is wet with your tears,
Or else before God you may it miss,
When you to your journey's end come shall.

Everyman. Gentle *Knowledge*, what do you it call?

Knowledge. It is a garment of sorrow:
From pain it will you borrow;
Contrition it is,
That getteth forgiveness;
It pleaseth God passing well.

Good-Deeds. Everyman, will you wear it for your heal?

Everyman. Now blessed be *Jesu, Mary's Son*!
For now have I on true contrition.

And let us go now without tarrying;

Good-Deeds, have we clear our reckoning?

Good-Deeds. Yea, indeed I have it here.

Everyman. Then I trust we need not fear;
Now, friends, let us not part in twain.

Knowledge. Nay, *Everyman*, that will we not, certain.

Good-Deeds. Yet must thou lead with thee
Three persons of great might.

Everyman. Who should they be?

Good-Deeds. Discretion and Strength they hight,
And thy *Beauty* may not abide behind.

Knowledge. Also ye must call to mind
Your *Five-wits* as for your counsellors.

Good-Deeds. You must have them ready at all hours.

Everyman. How shall I get them hither?

Knowledge. You must call them all together,
And they will hear you incontinent.

Everyman. My friends, come hither and be present
Discretion, Strength, my Five-wits, and Beauty.

Beauty. Here at your will we be all ready.
What will ye that we should do?

Good-Deeds. That ye would with *Everyman* go,
And help him in his pilgrimage,
Advise you, will ye with him or not in that voyage?

Strength. We will bring him all thither,
To his help and comfort, ye may believe me.

Discretion. So will we go with him all together.

Everyman. Almighty God, loved thou be,
I give thee laud that I have hither brought
Strength, Discretion, Beauty, and Five-wits; lack I nought;
And my *Good-Deeds*, with *Knowledge* clear,
All be in my company at my will here;
I desire no more to my business.

Strength. And I, *Strength*, will by you stand in distress,
Though thou would in battle fight on the ground.

Five-wits. And though it were through the world round,
We will not depart for sweet nor sour.

Beauty. No more will I unto death's hour,
Whatsoever thereof befall.

Discretion. *Everyman*, advise you first of all;
Go with a good advisement and deliberation;
We all give you virtuous monition
That all shall be well.

Everyman. My friends, hearken what I will tell:
I pray God reward you in his heavenly sphere.
Now hearken, all that be here,

For I will make my testament
Here before you all present.
In alms half my good I will give with my hands twain
In the way of charity, with good intent,
And the other half still shall remain
In quiet to be returned there it ought to be.
This I do in despite of the fiend of hell
To go quite out of his peril
Ever after and this day.

Knowledge. Everyman, hearken what I say;
Go to priesthood, I you advise,
And receive of him in any wise
The holy sacrament and ointment together;
Then shortly see ye turn again hither;
We will all abide you here.

Five-Wits. Yea, Everyman, hie you that ye ready were,
There is no emperor, king, duke, ne baron,
That of God hath commission,
As hath the least priest in the world being;
For of the blessed sacraments pure and benign,
He beareth the keys and thereof hath the cure
For man's redemption, it is ever sure;
Which God for our soul's medicine
Gave us out of his heart with great pine;
Here in this transitory life, for thee and me
The blessed sacraments seven there be,
Baptism, confirmation, with priesthood good,
And the sacrament of God's precious flesh and blood,
Marriage, the holy extreme unction, and penance;
These seven be good to have in remembrance,
Gracious sacraments of high divinity.

Everyman. Fain would I receive that holy body
And meekly to my ghostly father I will go.

Five-wits. Everyman, that is the best that ye can do:
God will you to salvation bring,

For priesthood exceedeth all other thing;
To us Holy Scripture they do teach,
And converteth man from sin heaven to reach;
God hath to them more power given,
Than to any angel that is in heaven;
With five words he may consecrate
God's body in flesh and blood to make,
And handleth his maker between his hands;
The priest bindeth and unbindeth all bands,
Both in earth and in heaven;
Thou ministers all the sacraments seven;
Though we kissed thy feet thou were worthy;
Thou art surgeon that cureth sin deadly:
No remedy we find under God
But all only priesthood.

Everyman, God gave priests that dignity,
And setteth them in his stead among us to be;
Thus be they above angels in degree.

Knowledge. If priests be good it is so surely;
But when Jesus hanged on the cross with great smart
There he gave, out of his blessed heart,
The same sacrament in great torment:
He sold them not to us, that Lord Omnipotent.
Therefore Saint Peter the apostle doth say
That Jesu's curse hath all they
Which God their Saviour do buy or sell,
Or they for any money do take or tell.
Sinful priests giveth the sinners example bad;
Their children sitteth by other men's fires, I have heard;
And some haunteth women's company,
With unclean life, as lusts of lechery
These be with sin made blind.

Five-wits. I trust to God no such may we find;
Therefore let us priesthood honour,
And follow their doctrine for our souls' succour;

We be their sheep, and they shepherds be
By whom we all be kept in surety.
Peace, for yonder I see *Everyman* come,
Which hath made true satisfaction.

Good-Deeds. Methinketh it is he indeed.

Everyman. Now Jesu be our alder speed.¹⁷

I have received the sacrament for my redemption,
And then mine extreme unction:
Blessed be all they that counselled me to take it!
And now, friends, let us go without longer respite;
I thank God that ye have tarried so long.
Now set each of you on this rod your hand,
And shortly follow me:

I go before, there I would be; God be our guide.

Strength. *Everyman*, we will not from you go,
Till ye have gone this voyage long.

Discretion. I, *Discretion*, will bide by you also.

Knowledge. And though this pilgrimage be never so strong,
I will never part you fro:

Everyman, I will be as sure by thee
As ever I did by Judas Maccabee.

Everyman. Alas, I am so faint I may not stand,
My limbs under me do fold;
Friends, let us not turn again to this land,
Not for all the world's gold,
For into this cave must I creep
And turn to the earth and there to sleep.

Beauty. What, into this grave? alas!

Everyman. Yea, there shall you consume more and less.

Beauty. And what, should I smother here?

Everyman. Yea, by my faith, and never more appear.
In this world live no more we shall,
But in heaven before the highest Lord of all.

Beauty. I cross out all this; adieu by Saint *John*;
I take my cap in my lap and am gone.

Everyman. What, *Beauty*, whither will ye?

Beauty. Peace, I am deaf; I look not behind me,
Not and thou would give me all the gold in thy chest.

Everyman. Alas, whereto may I trust?

Beauty goeth fast away hie;
She promised with me to live and die.

Strength. *Everyman*, I will thee also forsake and deny;
Thy game liketh me not at all.

Everyman. Why, then ye will forsake me all.
Sweet *Strength*, tarry a little space.

Strength. Nay, sir, by the rood of grace
I will hie me from thee fast,
Though thou weep till thy heart brast.

Everyman. Ye would ever bide by me, ye said.

Strength. Yea, I have you far enough conveyed;
Ye be old enough, I understand,
Your pilgrimage to take on hand;
I repent me that I hither came.

Everyman. *Strength*, you to displease I am to blame;
Will you break promise that is debt?

Strength. In faith, I care not;
Thou art but a fool to complain,
You spend your speech and waste your brain;
Go thrust thee into the ground.

Everyman. I had wend surer I should you have found.
He that trusteth in his *Strength*
She him deceiveth at the length.
Both *Strength* and *Beauty* forsaketh me,
Yet they promised me fair and lovingly.

Discretion. *Everyman*, I will after *Strength* be gone,
As for me I will leave you alone.

Everyman. Why, *Discretion*, will ye forsake me?

Discretion. Yea, in faith, I will go from thee,
For when *Strength* goeth before
I follow after evermore.

Everyman. Yet, I pray thee, for the love of the Trinity,
Look in my grave once piteously.

Discretion. Nay, so nigh will I not come.
Farewell, every one!

Everyman. O all thing faileth, save God alone;
Beauty, Strength, and Discretion;
For when *Death* bloweth his blast,
They all run from me full fast.

Five-wits. *Everyman*, my leave now of thee I take;
I will follow the other, for here I thee forsake.

Everyman. Alas! then may I wail and weep,
For I took you for my best friend.

Five-wits. I will no longer thee keep;
Now farewell, and there an end.

Everyman. O Jesu, help, all hath forsaken me!

Good-Deeds. Nay, *Everyman*, I will bide with thee,
I will not forsake thee indeed;
Thou shalt find me a good friend at need.

Everyman. Gramercy, *Good-Deeds*; now may I true friends
see;

They have forsaken me every one;
I loved them better than my *Good-Deeds* alone.

Knowledge, will ye forsake me also?

Knowledge. Yea, *Everyman*, when ye to death do go:
But not yet for no manner of danger.

Everyman. Gramercy, *Knowledge*, with all my heart.

Knowledge. Nay, yet I will not from hence depart,
Till I see where ye shall be come.

Everyman. Methinketh, alas, that I must be gone,
To make my reckoning and my debts pay,
For I see my time is nigh spent away.
Take example, all ye that this do hear or see,
How they that I loved best do forsake me,
Except my *Good-Deeds* that bideth truly.

Good-Deeds. All earthly things is but vanity:

Beauty, Strength, and Discretion, do man forsake,
Foolish friends and kinsmen, that fair spake,
All fleeth save *Good-Deeds*, and that am I.

Everyman. Have mercy on me, God most mighty;
And stand by me, thou Mother and Maid, holy *Mary*.

Good-Deeds. Fear not, I will speak for thee.

Everyman. Here I cry God mercy.

Good-Deeds. Short our end, and minish our pain;
Let us go and never come again.

Everyman. Into thy hands, Lord, my soul I commend;
Receive it, Lord, that it be not lost;
As thou me boughtest, so me defend,
And save me from the fiend's boast,
That I may appear with that blessed host
That shall be saved at the day of doom.

In manus tuas—of might's most
For ever—*commendo spiritum meum*.

Knowledge. Now hath he suffered that we all shall endure;
The *Good-Deeds* shall make all sure.
Now hath he made ending;
Methinketh that I hear angels sing
And make great joy and melody,
Where *Everyman's* soul received shall be.

Angel. Come, excellent elect spouse to Jesu:
Hereabove thou shalt go
Because of thy singular virtue:
Now the soul is taken the body fro;
Thy reckoning is crystal-clear.
Now shalt thou into the heavenly sphere,
Unto the which all ye shall come
That liveth well before the day of doom.

Doctor. This moral men may have in mind;
Ye hearers, take it of worth, old and young,
And forsake pride, for he deceiveth you in the end,
And remember *Beauty, Five-wits, Strength, and Discretion*,

They all at the last do *Everyman* forsake,
Save his *Good-Deeds*, there doth he take.
But beware, and they be small
Before God, he hath no help at all.
None excuse may be there for *Everyman*:
Alas, how shall he do then?
For after death amends may no man make,
For then mercy and pity do him forsake.
If his reckoning be not clear when he do come,
God will say—*ite maledicti in ignem æternum*.
And he that hath his account whole and sound,
High in heaven he shall be crowned;
Unto which place God bring us all thither
That we may live body and soul together.
There to help the Trinity,
Amen, say ye, for saint *Charity*.

THUS ENDETH THIS MORALL PLAY OF EVERYMAN.

PART VI
HAMLET

19. Hamlet - Act I

THE TRAGEDY OF HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK

by William Shakespeare

About this edition: This etext was prepared by Dianne Bean.
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Dramatis Personæ

HAMLET, Prince of Denmark.

CLAUDIUS, King of Denmark, Hamlet's uncle.

The GHOST of the late king, Hamlet's father.

GERTRUDE, the Queen, Hamlet's mother, now wife of Claudius.

POLONIUS, Lord Chamberlain.

LAERTES, Son to Polonius.

OPHELIA, Daughter to Polonius.

HORATIO, Friend to Hamlet.

FORTINBRAS, Prince of Norway.

VOLTEMAND, Courtier.
CORNELIUS, Courtier.
ROSENCRANTZ, Courtier.
GUILDENSTERN, Courtier.
MARCELLUS, Officer.
BARNARDO, Officer.
FRANCISCO, a Soldier
OSRIC, Courtier.
REYNALDO, Servant to Polonius.
Players.
A Gentleman, Courtier.
A Priest.
Two Clowns, Grave-diggers.
A Captain.
English Ambassadors.
Lords, Ladies, Officers, Soldiers, Sailors, Messengers, and Attendants.

ACT I

SCENE I. Elsinore. A platform before the Castle.

Enter Francisco and Barnardo, two sentinels.

BARNARDO.

Who's there?

FRANCISCO.

Nay, answer me. Stand and unfold yourself.

BARNARDO.

Long live the King!

FRANCISCO.

Barnardo?

BARNARDO.

He.

FRANCISCO.

You come most carefully upon your hour.

BARNARDO.

'Tis now struck twelve. Get thee to bed, Francisco.

FRANCISCO.

For this relief much thanks. 'Tis bitter cold,
And I am sick at heart.

BARNARDO.

Have you had quiet guard?

FRANCISCO.

Not a mouse stirring.

BARNARDO.

Well, good night.

If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,
The rivals of my watch, bid them make haste.

Enter Horatio and Marcellus.

FRANCISCO.

I think I hear them. Stand, ho! Who is there?

HORATIO.

Friends to this ground.

MARCELLUS.

And liegemen to the Dane.

FRANCISCO.

Give you good night.

MARCELLUS.

O, farewell, honest soldier, who hath reliev'd you?

FRANCISCO.

Barnardo has my place. Give you good-night.

[Exit.]

MARCELLUS.

Holla, Barnardo!

BARNARDO.

Say, what, is Horatio there?

HORATIO.

A piece of him.

BARNARDO.

Welcome, Horatio. Welcome, good Marcellus.

MARCELLUS.

What, has this thing appear'd again tonight?

BARNARDO.

I have seen nothing.

MARCELLUS.

Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy,
And will not let belief take hold of him
Touching this dreaded sight, twice seen of us.
Therefore I have entreated him along
With us to watch the minutes of this night,
That if again this apparition come
He may approve our eyes and speak to it.

HORATIO.

Tush, tush, 'twill not appear.

BARNARDO.

Sit down awhile,
And let us once again assail your ears,
That are so fortified against our story,
What we two nights have seen.

HORATIO.

Well, sit we down,
And let us hear Barnardo speak of this.

BARNARDO.

Last night of all,
When yond same star that's westward from the pole,
Had made his course t'illumine that part of heaven
Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,
The bell then beating one—

MARCELLUS.

Peace, break thee off. Look where it comes again.
Enter Ghost.

BARNARDO.

In the same figure, like the King that's dead.

MARCELLUS.

Thou art a scholar; speak to it, Horatio.

BARNARDO.

Looks it not like the King? Mark it, Horatio.

HORATIO.

Most like. It harrows me with fear and wonder.

BARNARDO

It would be spoke to.

MARCELLUS.

Question it, Horatio.

HORATIO.

What art thou that usurp'st this time of night,

Together with that fair and warlike form

In which the majesty of buried Denmark

Did sometimes march? By heaven I charge thee speak.

MARCELLUS.

It is offended.

BARNARDO.

See, it stalks away.

HORATIO.

Stay! speak, speak! I charge thee speak!

[Exit Ghost.]

MARCELLUS.

'Tis gone, and will not answer.

BARNARDO.

How now, Horatio! You tremble and look pale.

Is not this something more than fantasy?

What think you on't?

HORATIO.

Before my God, I might not this believe

Without the sensible and true avouch

Of mine own eyes.

MARCELLUS.

Is it not like the King?

HORATIO.

As thou art to thyself:

Such was the very armour he had on

When he th'ambitious Norway combated;

So frown'd he once, when in an angry parle

He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice.

'Tis strange.

MARCELLUS.

Thus twice before, and jump at this dead hour,

With martial stalk hath he gone by our watch.

HORATIO.

In what particular thought to work I know not;

But in the gross and scope of my opinion,

This bodes some strange eruption to our state.

MARCELLUS.

Good now, sit down, and tell me, he that knows,

Why this same strict and most observant watch

So nightly toils the subject of the land,

And why such daily cast of brazen cannon

And foreign mart for implements of war;

Why such impress of shipwrights, whose sore task

Does not divide the Sunday from the week.

What might be toward, that this sweaty haste

Doth make the night joint-labourer with the day:

Who is't that can inform me?

HORATIO.

That can I;

At least, the whisper goes so. Our last King,

Whose image even but now appear'd to us,

Was, as you know, by Fortinbras of Norway,

Thereto prick'd on by a most emulate pride,

Dar'd to the combat; in which our valiant Hamlet,

For so this side of our known world esteem'd him,

Did slay this Fortinbras; who by a seal'd compact,
Well ratified by law and heraldry,
Did forfeit, with his life, all those his lands
Which he stood seiz'd of, to the conqueror;
Against the which, a moiety competent
Was gaged by our King; which had return'd
To the inheritance of Fortinbras,
Had he been vanquisher; as by the same cov'nant
And carriage of the article design'd,
His fell to Hamlet. Now, sir, young Fortinbras,
Of unimproved mettle, hot and full,
Hath in the skirts of Norway, here and there,
Shark'd up a list of lawless resolute,
For food and diet, to some enterprise
That hath a stomach in't; which is no other,
As it doth well appear unto our state,
But to recover of us by strong hand
And terms compulsory, those foresaid lands
So by his father lost. And this, I take it,
Is the main motive of our preparations,
The source of this our watch, and the chief head
Of this post-haste and rummage in the land.

BARNARDO.

I think it be no other but e'en so:
Well may it sort that this portentous figure
Comes armed through our watch so like the King
That was and is the question of these wars.

HORATIO.

A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye.
In the most high and palmy state of Rome,
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,
The graves stood tenantless and the sheeted dead
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets;
As stars with trains of fire and dews of blood,
Disasters in the sun; and the moist star,

Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands,
Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse.
And even the like precursor of fierce events,
As harbingers preceding still the fates
And prologue to the omen coming on,
Have heaven and earth together demonstrated
Unto our climatures and countrymen.

Re-enter Ghost.

But, soft, behold! Lo, where it comes again!
I'll cross it, though it blast me. Stay, illusion!
If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,
Speak to me.

If there be any good thing to be done,
That may to thee do ease, and grace to me,
Speak to me.

If thou art privy to thy country's fate,
Which, happily, foreknowing may avoid,
O speak!

Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life
Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,
For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,
Speak of it. Stay, and speak!

[The cock crows.]

Stop it, Marcellus!

MARCELLUS.

Shall I strike at it with my partisan?

HORATIO.

Do, if it will not stand.

BARNARDO.

'Tis here!

HORATIO.

'Tis here!

[Exit Ghost.]

MARCELLUS.

'Tis gone!

We do it wrong, being so majestic,
To offer it the show of violence,
For it is as the air, invulnerable,
And our vain blows malicious mockery.

BARNARDO.

It was about to speak, when the cock crew.

HORATIO.

And then it started, like a guilty thing
Upon a fearful summons. I have heard
The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,
Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat
Awake the god of day; and at his warning,
Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,
Th'extravagant and erring spirit hies
To his confine. And of the truth herein
This present object made probation.

MARCELLUS.

It faded on the crowing of the cock.
Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth all night long;
And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad,
The nights are wholesome, then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm;
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time.

HORATIO.

So have I heard, and do in part believe it.
But look, the morn in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill.
Break we our watch up, and by my advice,
Let us impart what we have seen tonight
Unto young Hamlet; for upon my life,
This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him.
Do you consent we shall acquaint him with it,
As needful in our loves, fitting our duty?

MARCELLUS.

Let's do't, I pray, and I this morning know
Where we shall find him most conveniently.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. Elsinore. A room of state in the Castle.

Enter Claudius King of Denmark, Gertrude the Queen, Hamlet,
Polonius, Laertes, Voltemand,
Cornelius, Lords and Attendant.

KING.

Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
The memory be green, and that it us befitted
To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole kingdom
To be contracted in one brow of woe;
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature
That we with wisest sorrow think on him,
Together with remembrance of ourselves.
Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,
Th'imperial jointress to this warlike state,
Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy,
With one auspicious and one dropping eye,
With mirth in funeral, and with dirge in marriage,
In equal scale weighing delight and dole,
Taken to wife; nor have we herein barr'd
Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone
With this affair along. For all, our thanks.
Now follows, that you know young Fortinbras,
Holding a weak supposal of our worth,
Or thinking by our late dear brother's death
Our state to be disjoint and out of frame,
Collegued with this dream of his advantage,

He hath not fail'd to pester us with message,
Importing the surrender of those lands
Lost by his father, with all bonds of law,
To our most valiant brother. So much for him.
Now for ourself and for this time of meeting:
Thus much the business is: we have here writ
To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras,
Who, impotent and bed-rid, scarcely hears
Of this his nephew's purpose, to suppress
His further gait herein; in that the levies,
The lists, and full proportions are all made
Out of his subject: and we here dispatch
You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltemand,
For bearers of this greeting to old Norway,
Giving to you no further personal power
To business with the King, more than the scope
Of these dilated articles allow.
Farewell; and let your haste commend your duty.

CORNELIUS and VOLTEMAND.

In that, and all things, will we show our duty.

KING.

We doubt it nothing: heartily farewell.

[Exeunt Voltemand and Cornelius.]

And now, Laertes, what's the news with you?
You told us of some suit. What is't, Laertes?
You cannot speak of reason to the Dane,
And lose your voice. What wouldst thou beg, Laertes,
That shall not be my offer, not thy asking?
The head is not more native to the heart,
The hand more instrumental to the mouth,
Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father.
What wouldst thou have, Laertes?

LAERTES.

Dread my lord,
Your leave and favour to return to France,

From whence though willingly I came to Denmark
To show my duty in your coronation;
Yet now I must confess, that duty done,
My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France,
And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.

KING.

Have you your father's leave? What says Polonius?

POLONIUS.

He hath, my lord, wrung from me my slow leave
By laboursome petition; and at last
Upon his will I seal'd my hard consent.
I do beseech you give him leave to go.

KING.

Take thy fair hour, Laertes; time be thine,
And thy best graces spend it at thy will!
But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son—

HAMLET.

[*Aside.*] A little more than kin, and less than kind.

KING.

How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

HAMLET.

Not so, my lord, I am too much i' the sun.

QUEEN.

Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off,
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.
Do not for ever with thy vailed lids
Seek for thy noble father in the dust.
Thou know'st 'tis common, all that lives must die,
Passing through nature to eternity.

HAMLET.

Ay, madam, it is common.

QUEEN.

If it be,

Why seems it so particular with thee?

HAMLET.

Seems, madam! Nay, it is; I know not seems.
'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forc'd breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected haviour of the visage,
Together with all forms, moods, shows of grief,
That can denote me truly. These indeed seem,
For they are actions that a man might play;
But I have that within which passeth show;
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

KING.

'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,
To give these mourning duties to your father;
But you must know, your father lost a father,
That father lost, lost his, and the survivor bound
In filial obligation, for some term
To do obsequious sorrow. But to persevere
In obstinate condolement is a course
Of impious stubbornness. 'Tis unmanly grief,
It shows a will most incorrect to heaven,
A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,
An understanding simple and unschool'd;
For what we know must be, and is as common
As any the most vulgar thing to sense,
Why should we in our peevish opposition
Take it to heart? Fie, 'tis a fault to heaven,
A fault against the dead, a fault to nature,
To reason most absurd, whose common theme
Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried,
From the first corse till he that died today,
'This must be so.' We pray you throw to earth
This unprevailing woe, and think of us
As of a father; for let the world take note
You are the most immediate to our throne,

And with no less nobility of love
Than that which dearest father bears his son
Do I impart toward you. For your intent
In going back to school in Wittenberg,
It is most retrograde to our desire:
And we beseech you bend you to remain
Here in the cheer and comfort of our eye,
Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.

QUEEN.

Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet.
I pray thee stay with us; go not to Wittenberg.

HAMLET.

I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

KING.

Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply.
Be as ourself in Denmark. Madam, come;
This gentle and unforc'd accord of Hamlet
Sits smiling to my heart; in grace whereof,
No jocund health that Denmark drinks today
But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell,
And the King's rouse the heaven shall bruit again,
Re-speaking earthly thunder. Come away.

[Exeunt all but Hamlet.]

HAMLET.

O that this too too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter. O God! O God!
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't! Oh fie! 'tis an unweeded garden
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. That it should come to this!
But two months dead—nay, not so much, not two:
So excellent a king; that was to this

Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother,
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!
Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on; and yet, within a month—
Let me not think on't—Frailty, thy name is woman!
A little month, or ere those shoes were old
With which she followed my poor father's body
Like Niobe, all tears.—Why she, even she—
O God! A beast that wants discourse of reason
Would have mourn'd longer,—married with mine uncle,
My father's brother; but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules. Within a month?
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
She married. O most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
It is not, nor it cannot come to good.
But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue.

Enter Horatio, Marcellus and Barnardo.

HORATIO.

Hail to your lordship!

HAMLET.

I am glad to see you well:

Horatio, or I do forget myself.

HORATIO.

The same, my lord,

And your poor servant ever.

HAMLET.

Sir, my good friend;

I'll change that name with you:

And what make you from Wittenberg, Horatio?—

Marcellus?

MARCELLUS.

My good lord.

HAMLET.

I am very glad to see you.—Good even, sir.—
But what, in faith, make you from Wittenberg?

HORATIO.

A truant disposition, good my lord.

HAMLET.

I would not hear your enemy say so;
Nor shall you do my ear that violence,
To make it truster of your own report
Against yourself. I know you are no truant.
But what is your affair in Elsinore?
We'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart.

HORATIO.

My lord, I came to see your father's funeral.

HAMLET.

I prithee do not mock me, fellow-student.
I think it was to see my mother's wedding.

HORATIO.

Indeed, my lord, it follow'd hard upon.

HAMLET.

Thrift, thrift, Horatio! The funeral bak'd meats
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.
Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven
Or ever I had seen that day, Horatio.
My father,—methinks I see my father.

HORATIO.

Where, my lord?

HAMLET.

In my mind's eye, Horatio.

HORATIO.

I saw him once; he was a goodly king.

HAMLET.

He was a man, take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again.

HORATIO.

My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.

HAMLET.

Saw? Who?

HORATIO.

My lord, the King your father.

HAMLET.

The King my father!

HORATIO.

Season your admiration for a while
With an attent ear, till I may deliver
Upon the witness of these gentlemen
This marvel to you.

HAMLET.

For God's love let me hear.

HORATIO.

Two nights together had these gentlemen,
Marcellus and Barnardo, on their watch
In the dead waste and middle of the night,
Been thus encounter'd. A figure like your father,
Armed at point exactly, cap-à-pie,
Appears before them, and with solemn march
Goes slow and stately by them: thrice he walk'd
By their oppress'd and fear-surprised eyes,
Within his truncheon's length; whilst they, distill'd
Almost to jelly with the act of fear,
Stand dumb, and speak not to him. This to me
In dreadful secrecy impart they did,
And I with them the third night kept the watch,
Where, as they had deliver'd, both in time,
Form of the thing, each word made true and good,
The apparition comes. I knew your father;
These hands are not more like.

HAMLET.

But where was this?

MARCELLUS.

My lord, upon the platform where we watch.

HAMLET.

Did you not speak to it?

HORATIO.

My lord, I did;

But answer made it none: yet once methought

It lifted up it head, and did address

Itself to motion, like as it would speak.

But even then the morning cock crew loud,

And at the sound it shrunk in haste away,

And vanish'd from our sight.

HAMLET.

'Tis very strange.

HORATIO.

As I do live, my honour'd lord, 'tis true;

And we did think it writ down in our duty

To let you know of it.

HAMLET.

Indeed, indeed, sirs, but this troubles me.

Hold you the watch tonight?

Mar. and BARNARDO.

We do, my lord.

HAMLET.

Arm'd, say you?

Both.

Arm'd, my lord.

HAMLET.

From top to toe?

BOTH.

My lord, from head to foot.

HAMLET.

Then saw you not his face?

HORATIO.

O yes, my lord, he wore his beaver up.

HAMLET.

What, look'd he frowningly?

HORATIO.

A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.

HAMLET.

Pale, or red?

HORATIO.

Nay, very pale.

HAMLET.

And fix'd his eyes upon you?

HORATIO.

Most constantly.

HAMLET.

I would I had been there.

HORATIO.

It would have much amaz'd you.

HAMLET.

Very like, very like. Stay'd it long?

HORATIO.

While one with moderate haste might tell a hundred.

MARCELLUS and BARNARDO.

Longer, longer.

HORATIO.

Not when I saw't.

HAMLET.

His beard was grizzled, no?

HORATIO.

It was, as I have seen it in his life,

A sable silver'd.

HAMLET.

I will watch tonight;

Perchance 'twill walk again.

HORATIO.

I warrant you it will.

HAMLET.

If it assume my noble father's person,
I'll speak to it, though hell itself should gape
And bid me hold my peace. I pray you all,
If you have hitherto conceal'd this sight,
Let it be tenable in your silence still;
And whatsoever else shall hap tonight,
Give it an understanding, but no tongue.
I will requite your loves. So, fare ye well.
Upon the platform 'twixt eleven and twelve,
I'll visit you.

ALL.

Our duty to your honour.

HAMLET.

Your loves, as mine to you: farewell.

[Exeunt Horatio, Marcellus and Barnardo.]

My father's spirit in arms! All is not well;
I doubt some foul play: would the night were come!
Till then sit still, my soul: foul deeds will rise,
Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes.
[Exit.]

SCENE III. A room in Polonius's house.

Enter Laertes and Ophelia.

LAERTES.

My necessities are embark'd. Farewell.
And, sister, as the winds give benefit
And convoy is assistant, do not sleep,
But let me hear from you.

OPHELIA.

Do you doubt that?

LAERTES.

For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favour,
Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood;
A violet in the youth of primy nature,
Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting;
The perfume and suppliance of a minute;
No more.

OPHELIA.

No more but so?

LAERTES.

Think it no more.

For nature crescent does not grow alone
In thews and bulk; but as this temple waxes,
The inward service of the mind and soul
Grows wide withal. Perhaps he loves you now,
And now no soil nor cautel doth besmirch
The virtue of his will; but you must fear,
His greatness weigh'd, his will is not his own;
For he himself is subject to his birth:
He may not, as unvalu'd persons do,
Carve for himself; for on his choice depends
The sanctity and health of this whole state;
And therefore must his choice be circumscrib'd
Unto the voice and yielding of that body
Whereof he is the head. Then if he says he loves you,
It fits your wisdom so far to believe it
As he in his particular act and place
May give his saying deed; which is no further
Than the main voice of Denmark goes withal.
Then weigh what loss your honour may sustain
If with too credent ear you list his songs,
Or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure open
To his unmaster'd importunity.
Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister;
And keep you in the rear of your affection,

Out of the shot and danger of desire.
The chariest maid is prodigal enough
If she unmask her beauty to the moon.
Virtue itself scopes not calumnious strokes:
The canker galls the infants of the spring
Too oft before their buttons be disclos'd,
And in the morn and liquid dew of youth
Contagious blastments are most imminent.
Be wary then, best safety lies in fear.
Youth to itself rebels, though none else near.

OPHELIA.

I shall th'effect of this good lesson keep
As watchman to my heart. But good my brother,
Do not as some ungracious pastors do,
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven;
Whilst like a puff'd and reckless libertine
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,
And recks not his own rede.

LAERTES.

O, fear me not.

I stay too long. But here my father comes.

Enter Polonius.

A double blessing is a double grace;
Occasion smiles upon a second leave.

POLONIUS.

Yet here, Laertes? Aboard, aboard, for shame.
The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,
And you are stay'd for. There, my blessing with you.

[Laying his hand on Laertes's head.]

And these few precepts in thy memory
Look thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue,
Nor any unproportion'd thought his act.
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.
Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them unto thy soul with hoops of steel;

But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatch'd, unfledg'd comrade. Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel; but being in,
Bear't that th'opposed may beware of thee.
Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice:
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.
Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy:
For the apparel oft proclaims the man;
And they in France of the best rank and station
Are of a most select and generous chief in that.
Neither a borrower nor a lender be:
For loan oft loses both itself and friend;
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.
This above all: to thine own self be true;
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farewell: my blessing season this in thee.

LAERTES.

Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.

POLONIUS.

The time invites you; go, your servants tend.

LAERTES.

Farewell, Ophelia, and remember well

What I have said to you.

OPHELIA.

'Tis in my memory lock'd,

And you yourself shall keep the key of it.

LAERTES.

Farewell.

[*Exit.*]

POLONIUS.

What is't, Ophelia, he hath said to you?

OPHELIA.

So please you, something touching the Lord Hamlet.

POLONIUS.

Marry, well bethought:

'Tis told me he hath very oft of late

Given private time to you; and you yourself

Have of your audience been most free and bounteous.

If it be so,—as so 'tis put on me,

And that in way of caution,—I must tell you

You do not understand yourself so clearly

As it behoves my daughter and your honour.

What is between you? Give me up the truth.

OPHELIA.

He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders

Of his affection to me.

POLONIUS.

Affection! Pooh! You speak like a green girl,

Unsifted in such perilous circumstance.

Do you believe his tenders, as you call them?

OPHELIA.

I do not know, my lord, what I should think.

POLONIUS.

Marry, I'll teach you; think yourself a baby;

That you have ta'en these tenders for true pay,

Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly;

Or,—not to crack the wind of the poor phrase,

Roaming it thus,—you'll tender me a fool.

OPHELIA.

My lord, he hath importun'd me with love

In honourable fashion.

POLONIUS.

Ay, fashion you may call it; go to, go to.

OPHELIA.

And hath given countenance to his speech, my lord,

With almost all the holy vows of heaven.

POLONIUS.

Ay, springes to catch woodcocks. I do know,

When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul
Lends the tongue vows: these blazes, daughter,
Giving more light than heat, extinct in both,
Even in their promise, as it is a-making,
You must not take for fire. From this time
Be something scanter of your maiden presence;
Set your entreatments at a higher rate
Than a command to parley. For Lord Hamlet,
Believe so much in him that he is young;
And with a larger tether may he walk
Than may be given you. In few, Ophelia,
Do not believe his vows; for they are brokers,
Not of that dye which their investments show,
But mere implorators of unholy suits,
Breathing like sanctified and pious bawds,
The better to beguile. This is for all.
I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth
Have you so slander any moment leisure
As to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet.
Look to't, I charge you; come your ways.

OPHELIA.

I shall obey, my lord.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE IV. The platform.

Enter Hamlet, Horatio and Marcellus.

HAMLET.

The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold.

HORATIO.

It is a nipping and an eager air.

HAMLET.

What hour now?

HORATIO.

I think it lacks of twelve.

MARCELLUS.

No, it is struck.

HORATIO.

Indeed? I heard it not. It then draws near the season
Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk.

[A flourish of trumpets, and ordnance shot off within.]

What does this mean, my lord?

HAMLET.

The King doth wake tonight and takes his rouse,
Keeps wassail, and the swaggering upspring reels;
And as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down,
The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out
The triumph of his pledge.

HORATIO.

Is it a custom?

HAMLET.

Ay marry is't;
And to my mind, though I am native here,
And to the manner born, it is a custom
More honour'd in the breach than the observance.
This heavy-headed revel east and west
Makes us traduc'd and tax'd of other nations:
They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase
Soil our addition; and indeed it takes
From our achievements, though perform'd at height,
The pith and marrow of our attribute.
So oft it chances in particular men
That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
As in their birth, wherein they are not guilty,
Since nature cannot choose his origin,
By their o'ergrowth of some complexion,
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason;
Or by some habit, that too much o'erleavens

The form of plausible manners;—that these men,
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
Being Nature's livery or Fortune's star,—
His virtues else,—be they as pure as grace,
As infinite as man may undergo,
Shall in the general censure take corruption
From that particular fault. The dram of evil
Doth all the noble substance often doubt
To his own scandal.

HORATIO.

Look, my lord, it comes!

Enter Ghost.

HAMLET.

Angels and ministers of grace defend us!
Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn'd,
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
Thou com'st in such a questionable shape
That I will speak to thee. I'll call thee Hamlet,
King, father, royal Dane. O, answer me!
Let me not burst in ignorance; but tell
Why thy canoniz'd bones, hearsed in death,
Have burst their cerements; why the sepulchre,
Wherein we saw thee quietly inurn'd,
Hath op'd his ponderous and marble jaws
To cast thee up again! What may this mean,
That thou, dead corse, again in complete steel,
Revisit'st thus the glimpses of the moon,
Making night hideous, and we fools of nature
So horribly to shake our disposition
With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?
Say, why is this? Wherefore? What should we do?

[Ghost beckons Hamlet.]

HORATIO.

It beckons you to go away with it,

As if it some impartment did desire
To you alone.

MARCELLUS.

Look with what courteous action
It waves you to a more removed ground.
But do not go with it.

HORATIO.

No, by no means.

HAMLET.

It will not speak; then will I follow it.

HORATIO.

Do not, my lord.

HAMLET.

Why, what should be the fear?
I do not set my life at a pin's fee;
And for my soul, what can it do to that,
Being a thing immortal as itself?
It waves me forth again. I'll follow it.

HORATIO.

What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,
Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff
That beetles o'er his base into the sea,
And there assume some other horrible form
Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason,
And draw you into madness? Think of it.
The very place puts toys of desperation,
Without more motive, into every brain
That looks so many fadoms to the sea
And hears it roar beneath.

HAMLET.

It waves me still.
Go on, I'll follow thee.

MARCELLUS.

You shall not go, my lord.

HAMLET.

Hold off your hands.

HORATIO.

Be rul'd; you shall not go.

HAMLET.

My fate cries out,

And makes each petty artery in this body

As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.

[Ghost beckons.]

Still am I call'd. Unhand me, gentlemen.

[Breaking free from them.]

By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me.

I say, away!—Go on, I'll follow thee.

[Exeunt Ghost and Hamlet.]

HORATIO.

He waxes desperate with imagination.

MARCELLUS.

Let's follow; 'tis not fit thus to obey him.

HORATIO.

Have after. To what issue will this come?

MARCELLUS.

Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

HORATIO.

Heaven will direct it.

MARCELLUS.

Nay, let's follow him.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE V. A more remote part of the Castle.

Enter Ghost and Hamlet.

HAMLET.

Whither wilt thou lead me? Speak, I'll go no further.

GHOST.

Mark me.

HAMLET.

I will.

GHOST.

My hour is almost come,
When I to sulph'rous and tormenting flames
Must render up myself.

HAMLET.

Alas, poor ghost!

GHOST.

Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing
To what I shall unfold.

HAMLET.

Speak, I am bound to hear.

GHOST.

So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear.

HAMLET.

What?

GHOST.

I am thy father's spirit,
Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confin'd to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purg'd away. But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul; freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes like stars start from their spheres,
Thy knotted and combined locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand on end
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine.
But this eternal blazon must not be
To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, O, list!
If thou didst ever thy dear father love—

HAMLET.

O God!

GHOST.

Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

HAMLET.

Murder!

GHOST.

Murder most foul, as in the best it is;

But this most foul, strange, and unnatural.

HAMLET.

Haste me to know't, that I, with wings as swift

As meditation or the thoughts of love

May sweep to my revenge.

GHOST.

I find thee apt;

And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed

That rots itself in ease on Lethe wharf,

Wouldst thou not stir in this. Now, Hamlet, hear.

'Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard,

A serpent stung me; so the whole ear of Denmark

Is by a forged process of my death

Rankly abus'd; but know, thou noble youth,

The serpent that did sting thy father's life

Now wears his crown.

HAMLET.

O my prophetic soul!

Mine uncle!

GHOST.

Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,

With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts,—

O wicked wit, and gifts, that have the power

So to seduce!—won to his shameful lust

The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen.

O Hamlet, what a falling off was there,

From me, whose love was of that dignity

That it went hand in hand even with the vow
I made to her in marriage; and to decline
Upon a wretch whose natural gifts were poor
To those of mine. But virtue, as it never will be mov'd,
Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven;
So lust, though to a radiant angel link'd,
Will sate itself in a celestial bed
And prey on garbage.

But soft! methinks I scent the morning air;
Brief let me be. Sleeping within my orchard,
My custom always of the afternoon,
Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole
With juice of cursed hebenon in a vial,
And in the porches of my ears did pour
The leperous distilment, whose effect
Holds such an enmity with blood of man
That swift as quicksilver it courses through
The natural gates and alleys of the body;
And with a sudden vigour it doth posset
And curd, like eager droppings into milk,
The thin and wholesome blood. So did it mine;
And a most instant tetter bark'd about,
Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust
All my smooth body.

Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand,
Of life, of crown, of queen at once dispatch'd:
Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
Unhous'led, disappointed, unanel'd;
No reckoning made, but sent to my account
With all my imperfections on my head.
O horrible! O horrible! most horrible!
If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not;
Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
A couch for luxury and damned incest.
But howsoever thou pursu'st this act,

Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
Against thy mother aught; leave her to heaven,
And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge,
To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once!
The glow-worm shows the matin to be near,
And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire.
Adieu, adieu, adieu. Hamlet, remember me.

[*Exit.*]

HAMLET.

O all you host of heaven! O earth! What else?
And shall I couple hell? O, fie! Hold, my heart;
And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,
But bear me stiffly up. Remember thee?
Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat
In this distracted globe. Remember thee?
Yea, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
That youth and observation copied there;
And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain,
Unmix'd with baser matter. Yes, by heaven!
O most pernicious woman!
O villain, villain, smiling damned villain!
My tables. Meet it is I set it down,
That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain!
At least I am sure it may be so in Denmark.

[*Writing.*]

So, uncle, there you are. Now to my word;
It is 'Adieu, adieu, remember me.'
I have sworn't.

HORATIO and MARCELLUS.

[*Within.*] My lord, my lord.

MARCELLUS.

[*Within.*] Lord Hamlet.

HORATIO.

[*Within.*] Heaven secure him.

HAMLET.

So be it!

MARCELLUS.

[*Within.*] Illo, ho, ho, my lord!

HAMLET.

Hillo, ho, ho, boy! Come, bird, come.

Enter Horatio and Marcellus.

MARCELLUS.

How is't, my noble lord?

HORATIO.

What news, my lord?

HAMLET.

O, wonderful!

HORATIO.

Good my lord, tell it.

HAMLET.

No, you'll reveal it.

HORATIO.

Not I, my lord, by heaven.

MARCELLUS.

Nor I, my lord.

HAMLET.

How say you then, would heart of man once think it?—

But you'll be secret?

HORATIO and MARCELLUS.

Ay, by heaven, my lord.

HAMLET.

There's ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark

But he's an arrant knave.

HORATIO.

There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave

To tell us this.

HAMLET.

Why, right; you are i' the right;
And so, without more circumstance at all,
I hold it fit that we shake hands and part:
You, as your business and desires shall point you,—
For every man hath business and desire,
Such as it is;—and for my own poor part,
Look you, I'll go pray.

HORATIO.

These are but wild and whirling words, my lord.

HAMLET.

I'm sorry they offend you, heartily;
Yes faith, heartily.

HORATIO.

There's no offence, my lord.

HAMLET.

Yes, by Saint Patrick, but there is, Horatio,
And much offence too. Touching this vision here,
It is an honest ghost, that let me tell you.
For your desire to know what is between us,
O'ermaster't as you may. And now, good friends,
As you are friends, scholars, and soldiers,
Give me one poor request.

HORATIO.

What is't, my lord? We will.

HAMLET.

Never make known what you have seen tonight.

HORATIO and MARCELLUS.

My lord, we will not.

HAMLET.

Nay, but swear't.

HORATIO.

In faith, my lord, not I.

MARCELLUS.

Nor I, my lord, in faith.

HAMLET.

Upon my sword.

MARCELLUS.

We have sworn, my lord, already.

HAMLET.

Indeed, upon my sword, indeed.

GHOST.

[Cries under the stage.] Swear.

HAMLET.

Ha, ha boy, say'st thou so? Art thou there, truepenny?

Come on, you hear this fellow in the cellarage.

Consent to swear.

HORATIO.

Propose the oath, my lord.

HAMLET.

Never to speak of this that you have seen.

Swear by my sword.

GHOST.

[Beneath.] Swear.

HAMLET.

Hic et ubique? Then we'll shift our ground.

Come hither, gentlemen,

And lay your hands again upon my sword.

Never to speak of this that you have heard.

Swear by my sword.

GHOST.

[Beneath.] Swear.

HAMLET.

Well said, old mole! Canst work i' th'earth so fast?

A worthy pioner! Once more remove, good friends.

HORATIO.

O day and night, but this is wondrous strange.

HAMLET.

And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,

Than are dreamt of in your philosophy. But come,
Here, as before, never, so help you mercy,
How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself,—
As I perchance hereafter shall think meet
To put an antic disposition on—
That you, at such times seeing me, never shall,
With arms encumber'd thus, or this head-shake,
Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,
As 'Well, we know', or 'We could and if we would',
Or 'If we list to speak'; or 'There be and if they might',
Or such ambiguous giving out, to note
That you know aught of me:—this not to do.
So grace and mercy at your most need help you,
Swear.

GHOST.

[*Beneath.*] Swear.

HAMLET.

Rest, rest, perturbed spirit. So, gentlemen,
With all my love I do commend me to you;
And what so poor a man as Hamlet is
May do t'express his love and friending to you,
God willing, shall not lack. Let us go in together,
And still your fingers on your lips, I pray.
The time is out of joint. O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right.
Nay, come, let's go together.

[*Exeunt.*]

20. Hamlet - Act II

ACT II

SCENE I. A room in Polonius's house.

Enter Polonius and Reynaldo.

POLONIUS.

Give him this money and these notes, Reynaldo.

REYNALDO.

I will, my lord.

POLONIUS.

You shall do marvellous wisely, good Reynaldo,
Before you visit him, to make inquiry
Of his behaviour.

REYNALDO.

My lord, I did intend it.

POLONIUS.

Marry, well said; very well said. Look you, sir,
Enquire me first what Danskers are in Paris;
And how, and who, what means, and where they keep,
What company, at what expense; and finding
By this encompassment and drift of question,
That they do know my son, come you more nearer
Than your particular demands will touch it.

Take you as 'twere some distant knowledge of him,
As thus, 'I know his father and his friends,
And in part him'—do you mark this, Reynaldo?

REYNALDO.

Ay, very well, my lord.

POLONIUS.

'And in part him, but,' you may say, 'not well;
But if't be he I mean, he's very wild;
Addicted so and so,' and there put on him
What forgeries you please; marry, none so rank
As may dishonour him; take heed of that;
But, sir, such wanton, wild, and usual slips
As are companions noted and most known
To youth and liberty.

REYNALDO.

As gaming, my lord?

POLONIUS.

Ay, or drinking, fencing, swearing,
Quarrelling, drabbing. You may go so far.

REYNALDO.

My lord, that would dishonour him.

POLONIUS.

Faith no, as you may season it in the charge.
You must not put another scandal on him,
That he is open to incontinency;
That's not my meaning: but breathe his faults so quaintly
That they may seem the taints of liberty;
The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind,
A savageness in unreclaimed blood,

Of general assault.

REYNALDO.

But my good lord—

POLONIUS.

Wherefore should you do this?

REYNALDO.

Ay, my lord, I would know that.

POLONIUS.

Marry, sir, here's my drift,
And I believe it is a fetch of warrant.
You laying these slight sullies on my son,
As 'twere a thing a little soil'd i' th' working,
Mark you,
Your party in converse, him you would sound,
Having ever seen in the prenominate crimes
The youth you breathe of guilty, be assur'd
He closes with you in this consequence;
'Good sir,' or so; or 'friend,' or 'gentleman'—
According to the phrase or the addition
Of man and country.

REYNALDO.

Very good, my lord.

POLONIUS.

And then, sir, does he this,—

He does—What was I about to say?

By the mass, I was about to say something. Where did I
leave?

REYNALDO.

At 'closes in the consequence.'
At 'friend or so,' and 'gentleman.'

POLONIUS.

At 'closes in the consequence' ay, marry!
He closes with you thus: 'I know the gentleman,
I saw him yesterday, or t'other day,
Or then, or then, with such and such; and, as you say,
There was he gaming, there o'ertook in's rouse,
There falling out at tennis': or perchance,
'I saw him enter such a house of sale'—
Videlicet, a brothel, or so forth. See you now;
Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth;
And thus do we of wisdom and of reach,
With windlasses, and with assays of bias,
By indirections find directions out.
So by my former lecture and advice
Shall you my son. You have me, have you not?

REYNALDO.

My lord, I have.

POLONIUS.

God b' wi' you, fare you well.

REYNALDO.

Good my lord.

POLONIUS.

Observe his inclination in yourself.

REYNALDO.

I shall, my lord.

POLONIUS.

And let him ply his music.

REYNALDO.

Well, my lord.

POLONIUS.

Farewell.

[Exit Reynaldo.]

Enter Ophelia.

How now, Ophelia, what's the matter?

OPHELIA.

Alas, my lord, I have been so affrighted.

POLONIUS.

With what, in the name of God?

OPHELIA.

My lord, as I was sewing in my chamber,
Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbrac'd,
No hat upon his head, his stockings foul'd,
Ungart'red, and down-gyved to his ankle,
Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other,
And with a look so piteous in purport
As if he had been loosed out of hell
To speak of horrors, he comes before me.

POLONIUS.

Mad for thy love?

OPHELIA.

My lord, I do not know, but truly I do fear it.

POLONIUS.

What said he?

OPHELIA.

He took me by the wrist and held me hard;
Then goes he to the length of all his arm;
And with his other hand thus o'er his brow,
He falls to such perusal of my face
As he would draw it. Long stay'd he so,
At last,—a little shaking of mine arm,
And thrice his head thus waving up and down,
He rais'd a sigh so piteous and profound
As it did seem to shatter all his bulk
And end his being. That done, he lets me go,
And with his head over his shoulder turn'd
He seem'd to find his way without his eyes,
For out o' doors he went without their help,
And to the last bended their light on me.

POLONIUS.

Come, go with me. I will go seek the King.
This is the very ecstasy of love,
Whose violent property fordoes itself,
And leads the will to desperate undertakings,
As oft as any passion under heaven
That does afflict our natures. I am sorry,—
What, have you given him any hard words of late?

OPHELIA.

No, my good lord; but as you did command,
I did repel his letters and denied
His access to me.

POLONIUS.

That hath made him mad.

I am sorry that with better heed and judgment
I had not quoted him. I fear'd he did but trifle,
And meant to wreck thee. But beshrew my jealousy!
It seems it is as proper to our age
To cast beyond ourselves in our opinions
As it is common for the younger sort
To lack discretion. Come, go we to the King.
This must be known, which, being kept close, might move
More grief to hide than hate to utter love.
[Exeunt.]

SCENE II. A room in the Castle.

Enter King, Queen, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern and Attendants.

KING.

Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.
Moreover that we much did long to see you,
The need we have to use you did provoke
Our hasty sending. Something have you heard
Of Hamlet's transformation; so I call it,
Since nor th'exterior nor the inward man
Resembles that it was. What it should be,
More than his father's death, that thus hath put him
So much from th'understanding of himself,
I cannot dream of. I entreat you both
That, being of so young days brought up with him,
And since so neighbour'd to his youth and humour,
That you vouchsafe your rest here in our court
Some little time, so by your companies
To draw him on to pleasures and to gather,
So much as from occasion you may glean,
Whether aught to us unknown afflicts him thus
That, open'd, lies within our remedy.

QUEEN.

Good gentlemen, he hath much talk'd of you,
And sure I am, two men there are not living
To whom he more adheres. If it will please you
To show us so much gentry and good will
As to expend your time with us awhile,
For the supply and profit of our hope,
Your visitation shall receive such thanks
As fits a king's remembrance.

ROSENCRANTZ.

Both your majesties
Might, by the sovereign power you have of us,
Put your dread pleasures more into command
Than to entreaty.

GUILDENSTERN.

We both obey,
And here give up ourselves, in the full bent,
To lay our service freely at your feet
To be commanded.

KING.

Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern.

QUEEN.

Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz.
And I beseech you instantly to visit
My too much changed son. Go, some of you,
And bring these gentlemen where Hamlet is.

GUILDENSTERN.

Heavens make our presence and our practices
Pleasant and helpful to him.

QUEEN.

Ay, amen.

[Exeunt Rosencrantz, Guildenstern and some Attendants.]

Enter Polonius.

POLONIUS.

Th'ambassadors from Norway, my good lord,
Are joyfully return'd.

KING.

Thou still hast been the father of good news.

POLONIUS.

Have I, my lord? Assure you, my good liege,
I hold my duty, as I hold my soul,
Both to my God and to my gracious King:
And I do think,—or else this brain of mine
Hunts not the trail of policy so sure
As it hath us'd to do—that I have found
The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

KING.

O speak of that, that do I long to hear.

POLONIUS.

Give first admittance to th'ambassadors;
My news shall be the fruit to that great feast.

KING.

Thyself do grace to them, and bring them in.

[Exit Polonius.]

He tells me, my sweet queen, that he hath found
The head and source of all your son's distemper.

QUEEN.

I doubt it is no other but the main,
His father's death and our o'erhasty marriage.

KING.

Well, we shall sift him.

Enter Polonius with Voltemand and Cornelius.

Welcome, my good friends!

Say, Voltemand, what from our brother Norway?

VOLTEMAND.

Most fair return of greetings and desires.
Upon our first, he sent out to suppress
His nephew's levies, which to him appear'd
To be a preparation 'gainst the Polack;

But better look'd into, he truly found
It was against your Highness; whereat griev'd,
That so his sickness, age, and impotence
Was falsely borne in hand, sends out arrests
On Fortinbras; which he, in brief, obeys,
Receives rebuke from Norway; and in fine,
Makes vow before his uncle never more
To give th'assay of arms against your Majesty.
Whereon old Norway, overcome with joy,
Gives him three thousand crowns in annual fee,
And his commission to employ those soldiers
So levied as before, against the Polack:
With an entreaty, herein further shown,
[*Gives a paper.*]

That it might please you to give quiet pass
Through your dominions for this enterprise,
On such regards of safety and allowance
As therein are set down.

KING.

It likes us well;
And at our more consider'd time we'll read,
Answer, and think upon this business.
Meantime we thank you for your well-took labour.
Go to your rest, at night we'll feast together:.
Most welcome home.

[*Exeunt Voltemand and Cornelius.*]

POLONIUS.

This business is well ended.
My liege and madam, to expostulate
What majesty should be, what duty is,
Why day is day, night night, and time is time.
Were nothing but to waste night, day and time.
Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit,
And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,
I will be brief. Your noble son is mad.

Mad call I it; for to define true madness,
What is't but to be nothing else but mad?
But let that go.

QUEEN.

More matter, with less art.

POLONIUS.

Madam, I swear I use no art at all.
That he is mad, 'tis true: 'tis true 'tis pity;
And pity 'tis 'tis true. A foolish figure,
But farewell it, for I will use no art.
Mad let us grant him then. And now remains
That we find out the cause of this effect,
Or rather say, the cause of this defect,
For this effect defective comes by cause.
Thus it remains, and the remainder thus. Perpend,
I have a daughter—have whilst she is mine—
Who in her duty and obedience, mark,
Hath given me this. Now gather, and surmise.

[Reads.]

*To the celestial, and my soul's idol, the most beautified
Ophelia—*

That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; 'beautified' is a vile
phrase: but you shall hear.

[Reads.]

these; in her excellent white bosom, these, &c.

QUEEN.

Came this from Hamlet to her?

POLONIUS.

Good madam, stay awhile; I will be faithful.

[Reads.]

*Doubt thou the stars are fire,
Doubt that the sun doth move,
Doubt truth to be a liar,
But never doubt I love.*

O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers. I have not art to

reckon my groans. But that I love thee best, O most best, believe it. Adieu.

Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this machine is to him,
HAMLET.

This in obedience hath my daughter show'd me;
And more above, hath his solicitings,
As they fell out by time, by means, and place,
All given to mine ear.

KING.

But how hath she receiv'd his love?

POLONIUS.

What do you think of me?

KING.

As of a man faithful and honourable.

POLONIUS.

I would fain prove so. But what might you think,
When I had seen this hot love on the wing,
As I perceiv'd it, I must tell you that,
Before my daughter told me, what might you,
Or my dear Majesty your queen here, think,
If I had play'd the desk or table-book,
Or given my heart a winking, mute and dumb,
Or look'd upon this love with idle sight,
What might you think? No, I went round to work,
And my young mistress thus I did bespeak:
'Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of thy star.
This must not be.' And then I precepts gave her,
That she should lock herself from his resort,
Admit no messengers, receive no tokens.
Which done, she took the fruits of my advice,
And he, repulsed,—a short tale to make—
Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,
Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,
Thence to a lightness, and, by this declension,

Into the madness wherein now he raves,
And all we wait for.

KING.

Do you think 'tis this?

QUEEN.

It may be, very likely.

POLONIUS.

Hath there been such a time, I'd fain know that,
That I have positively said "'Tis so,'
When it prov'd otherwise?

KING.

Not that I know.

POLONIUS.

Take this from this, if this be otherwise.

[Points to his head and shoulder.]

If circumstances lead me, I will find
Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed
Within the centre.

KING.

How may we try it further?

POLONIUS.

You know sometimes he walks four hours together
Here in the lobby.

QUEEN.

So he does indeed.

POLONIUS.

At such a time I'll loose my daughter to him.
Be you and I behind an arras then,
Mark the encounter. If he love her not,
And be not from his reason fall'n thereon,
Let me be no assistant for a state,
But keep a farm and carters.

KING.

We will try it.

Enter Hamlet, reading.

QUEEN.

But look where sadly the poor wretch comes reading.

POLONIUS.

Away, I do beseech you, both away
I'll board him presently. O, give me leave.

[Exeunt King, Queen and Attendants.]

How does my good Lord Hamlet?

HAMLET.

Well, God-a-mercy.

POLONIUS.

Do you know me, my lord?

HAMLET.

Excellent well. You're a fishmonger.

POLONIUS.

Not I, my lord.

HAMLET.

Then I would you were so honest a man.

POLONIUS.

Honest, my lord?

HAMLET.

Ay sir, to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.

POLONIUS.

That's very true, my lord.

HAMLET.

For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a good kissing carrion,—

Have you a daughter?

POLONIUS.

I have, my lord.

HAMLET.

Let her not walk i' th' sun. Conception is a blessing, but not as your daughter may conceive. Friend, look to't.

POLONIUS.

How say you by that? *[Aside.]* Still harping on my daughter. Yet

he knew me not at first; he said I was a fishmonger. He is far gone, far gone. And truly in my youth I suffered much extremity for love; very near this. I'll speak to him again.—What do you read, my lord?

HAMLET.

Words, words, words.

POLONIUS.

What is the matter, my lord?

HAMLET.

Between who?

POLONIUS.

I mean the matter that you read, my lord.

HAMLET.

Slanders, sir. For the satirical slave says here that old men have grey beards; that their faces are wrinkled; their eyes purging thick amber and plum-tree gum; and that they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams. All which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down. For you yourself, sir, should be old as I am, if like a crab you could go backward.

POLONIUS.

[*Aside.*] Though this be madness, yet there is a method in't.—
Will you walk out of the air, my lord?

HAMLET.

Into my grave?

POLONIUS.

Indeed, that is out o' the air. [*Aside.*] How pregnant sometimes his replies are! A happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of. I will leave him and suddenly contrive the means of meeting between him and my daughter.

My honourable lord, I will most humbly take my leave of you.

HAMLET.

You cannot, sir, take from me anything that I will more willingly part withal, except my life, except my life, except my life.

POLONIUS.

Fare you well, my lord.

HAMLET.

These tedious old fools.

Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

POLONIUS.

You go to seek the Lord Hamlet; there he is.

ROSENCRANTZ.

[*To Polonius.*] God save you, sir.

[*Exit Polonius.*]

GUILDENSTERN.

My honoured lord!

ROSENCRANTZ.

My most dear lord!

HAMLET.

My excellent good friends! How dost thou, Guildenstern? Ah, Rosencrantz. Good lads, how do ye both?

ROSENCRANTZ.

As the indifferent children of the earth.

GUILDENSTERN.

Happy in that we are not over-happy;
On Fortune's cap we are not the very button.

HAMLET.

Nor the soles of her shoe?

ROSENCRANTZ.

Neither, my lord.

HAMLET.

Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of her favours?

GUILDENSTERN.

Faith, her privates we.

HAMLET.

In the secret parts of Fortune? O, most true; she is a strumpet.
What's the news?

ROSENCRANTZ.

None, my lord, but that the world's grown honest.

HAMLET.

Then is doomsday near. But your news is not true. Let me question more in particular. What have you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of Fortune, that she sends you to prison hither?

GUILDENSTERN.

Prison, my lord?

HAMLET.

Denmark's a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ.

Then is the world one.

HAMLET.

A goodly one; in which there are many confines, wards, and dungeons, Denmark being one o' th' worst.

ROSENCRANTZ.

We think not so, my lord.

HAMLET.

Why, then 'tis none to you; for there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so. To me it is a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ.

Why, then your ambition makes it one; 'tis too narrow for your mind.

HAMLET.

O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell, and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams.

GUILDENSTERN.

Which dreams, indeed, are ambition; for the very substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream.

HAMLET.

A dream itself is but a shadow.

ROSENCRANTZ.

Truly, and I hold ambition of so airy and light a quality that it is but a shadow's shadow.

HAMLET.

Then are our beggars bodies, and our monarchs and

outstretch'd heroes the beggars' shadows. Shall we to th' court? For, by my fay, I cannot reason.

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.

We'll wait upon you.

HAMLET.

No such matter. I will not sort you with the rest of my servants; for, to speak to you like an honest man, I am most dreadfully attended. But, in the beaten way of friendship, what make you at Elsinore?

ROSENCRANTZ.

To visit you, my lord, no other occasion.

HAMLET.

Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks; but I thank you. And sure, dear friends, my thanks are too dear a halfpenny. Were you not sent for? Is it your own inclining? Is it a free visitation? Come, deal justly with me. Come, come; nay, speak.

GUILDENSTERN.

What should we say, my lord?

HAMLET.

Why, anything. But to the purpose. You were sent for; and there is a kind of confession in your looks, which your modesties have not craft enough to colour. I know the good King and Queen have sent for you.

ROSENCRANTZ.

To what end, my lord?

HAMLET.

That you must teach me. But let me conjure you, by the rights of our fellowship, by the consonancy of our youth, by the obligation of our ever-preserved love, and by what more dear a better proposer could charge you withal, be even and direct with me, whether you were sent for or no.

ROSENCRANTZ.

[*To Guildenstern.*] What say you?

HAMLET.

[Aside.] Nay, then I have an eye of you. If you love me, hold not off.

GUILDENSTERN.

My lord, we were sent for.

HAMLET.

I will tell you why; so shall my anticipation prevent your discovery, and your secrecy to the King and Queen moults no feather. I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises; and indeed, it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason? How infinite in faculties, in form and moving, how express and admirable? In action how like an angel? In apprehension, how like a god? The beauty of the world, the paragon of animals. And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me; no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.

ROSENCRANTZ.

My lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts.

HAMLET.

Why did you laugh then, when I said 'Man delights not me'?

ROSENCRANTZ.

To think, my lord, if you delight not in man, what Lenten entertainment the players shall receive from you. We coted them on the way, and hither are they coming to offer you service.

HAMLET.

He that plays the king shall be welcome,—his Majesty shall have tribute of me; the adventurous knight shall use his foil and target; the lover shall not sigh gratis, the humorous man shall end his part in peace; the clown shall make those laugh whose

lungs are tickle a' th' sere; and the lady shall say her mind freely, or the blank verse shall halt for't. What players are they?

ROSENCRANTZ.

Even those you were wont to take such delight in—the tragedians of the city.

HAMLET.

How chances it they travel? Their residence, both in reputation and profit, was better both ways.

ROSENCRANTZ.

I think their inhibition comes by the means of the late innovation.

HAMLET.

Do they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the city? Are they so followed?

ROSENCRANTZ.

No, indeed, they are not.

HAMLET.

How comes it? Do they grow rusty?

ROSENCRANTZ.

Nay, their endeavour keeps in the wonted pace; but there is, sir, an ayry of children, little eyases, that cry out on the top of question, and are most tyrannically clapped for't. These are now the fashion, and so berattle the common stages—so they call them—that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose-quills and dare scarce come thither.

HAMLET.

What, are they children? Who maintains 'em? How are they escoted? Will they pursue the quality no longer than they can sing? Will they not say afterwards, if they should grow themselves to common players—as it is most like, if their means are no better—their writers do them wrong to make them exclaim against their own succession?

ROSENCRANTZ.

Faith, there has been much to do on both sides; and the nation holds it no sin to tarre them to controversy. There was for a

while, no money bid for argument unless the poet and the player went to cuffs in the question.

HAMLET.

Is't possible?

GUILDENSTERN.

O, there has been much throwing about of brains.

HAMLET.

Do the boys carry it away?

ROSENCRANTZ.

Ay, that they do, my lord. Hercules and his load too.

HAMLET.

It is not very strange; for my uncle is King of Denmark, and those that would make mouths at him while my father lived, give twenty, forty, fifty, a hundred ducats apiece for his picture in little. 'Sblood, there is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out.

[Flourish of trumpets within.]

GUILDENSTERN.

There are the players.

HAMLET.

Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands, come. The appurtenance of welcome is fashion and ceremony. Let me comply with you in this garb, lest my extent to the players, which I tell you must show fairly outward, should more appear like entertainment than yours. You are welcome. But my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived.

GUILDENSTERN.

In what, my dear lord?

HAMLET.

I am but mad north-north-west. When the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw.

Enter Polonius.

POLONIUS.

Well be with you, gentlemen.

HAMLET.

Hark you, Guildenstern, and you too, at each ear a hearer. That great baby you see there is not yet out of his swaddling clouts.

ROSENCRANTZ.

Happily he's the second time come to them; for they say an old man is twice a child.

HAMLET.

I will prophesy he comes to tell me of the players. Mark it.—You say right, sir: for a Monday morning 'twas so indeed.

POLONIUS.

My lord, I have news to tell you.

HAMLET.

My lord, I have news to tell you. When Roscius was an actor in Rome—

POLONIUS.

The actors are come hither, my lord.

HAMLET.

Buzz, buzz.

POLONIUS.

Upon my honour.

HAMLET.

Then came each actor on his ass—

POLONIUS.

The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited. Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light, for the law of writ and the liberty. These are the only men.

HAMLET.

O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!

POLONIUS.

What treasure had he, my lord?

HAMLET.

Why—

'One fair daughter, and no more,
The which he loved passing well.'

POLONIUS.

[*Aside.*] Still on my daughter.

HAMLET.

Am I not i' th' right, old Jephthah?

POLONIUS.

If you call me Jephthah, my lord, I have a daughter that I love passing well.

HAMLET.

Nay, that follows not.

POLONIUS.

What follows then, my lord?

HAMLET.

Why,

As by lot, God wot,

and then, you know,

It came to pass, as most like it was.

The first row of the pious chanson will show you more. For look where my abridgement comes.

Enter four or five Players.

You are welcome, masters, welcome all. I am glad to see thee well. Welcome, good friends. O, my old friend! Thy face is valanc'd since I saw thee last. Com'st thou to beard me in Denmark? What, my young lady and mistress! By'r lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last, by the altitude of a chopine. Pray God your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not cracked within the ring. Masters, you are all welcome. We'll e'en to't like French falconers, fly at anything we see. We'll have a speech straight. Come, give us a taste of your quality. Come, a passionate speech.

FIRST PLAYER.

What speech, my lord?

HAMLET.

I heard thee speak me a speech once, but it was never acted,

or if it was, not above once, for the play, I remember, pleased not the million, 'twas caviare to the general. But it was—as I received it, and others, whose judgments in such matters cried in the top of mine—an excellent play, well digested in the scenes, set down with as much modesty as cunning. I remember one said there were no sallies in the lines to make the matter savoury, nor no matter in the phrase that might indite the author of affectation, but called it an honest method, as wholesome as sweet, and by very much more handsome than fine. One speech in it, I chiefly loved. 'Twas Aeneas' tale to Dido, and thereabout of it especially where he speaks of Priam's slaughter. If it live in your memory, begin at this line, let me see, let me see:

The rugged Pyrrhus, like th' Hyrcanian beast,—

It is not so: it begins with Pyrrhus—

*The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms,
Black as his purpose, did the night resemble
When he lay couched in the ominous horse,
Hath now this dread and black complexion smear'd
With heraldry more dismal. Head to foot
Now is he total gules, horridly trick'd
With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons,
Bak'd and impasted with the parching streets,
That lend a tyrannous and a damned light
To their vile murders. Roasted in wrath and fire,
And thus o'ersized with coagulate gore,
With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus
Old grandsire Priam seeks.*

So, proceed you.

POLONIUS.

'Fore God, my lord, well spoken, with good accent and good discretion.

FIRST PLAYER.

*Anon he finds him,
Striking too short at Greeks. His antique sword,*

*Rebellious to his arm, lies where it falls,
Repugnant to command. Unequal match'd,
Pyrrhus at Priam drives, in rage strikes wide;
But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword
Th'unnerved father falls. Then senseless Ilium,
Seeming to feel this blow, with flaming top
Stoops to his base, and with a hideous crash
Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear. For lo, his sword,
Which was declining on the milky head
Of reverend Priam, seem'd i' th'air to stick.
So, as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood,
And like a neutral to his will and matter,
Did nothing.*

*But as we often see against some storm,
A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,
The bold winds speechless, and the orb below
As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder
Doth rend the region; so after Pyrrhus' pause,
Aroused vengeance sets him new a-work,
And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall
On Mars's armour, forg'd for proof eterne,
With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword
Now falls on Priam.*

*Out, out, thou strumpet Fortune! All you gods,
In general synod, take away her power;
Break all the spokes and fellies from her wheel,
And bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven,
As low as to the fiends.*

POLONIUS.

This is too long.

HAMLET.

It shall to the barber's, with your beard.—Prythee say on.
He's for a jig or a tale of bawdry, or he sleeps.
Say on; come to Hecuba.

FIRST PLAYER.

But who, O who, had seen the mobled queen,—

HAMLET.

'The mobled queen'?

POLONIUS.

That's good! 'Mobled queen' is good.

FIRST PLAYER.

Run barefoot up and down, threat'ning the flames

With bisson rheum. A clout upon that head

Where late the diadem stood, and for a robe,

About her lank and all o'erteemed loins,

A blanket, in th'alarm of fear caught up—

Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steep'd,

'Gainst Fortune's state would treason have pronounc'd.

But if the gods themselves did see her then,

When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport

In mincing with his sword her husband's limbs,

The instant burst of clamour that she made,—

Unless things mortal move them not at all,—

Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven,

And passion in the gods.

POLONIUS.

Look, where he has not turn'd his colour, and has tears in's eyes.

Pray you, no more.

HAMLET.

'Tis well. I'll have thee speak out the rest of this soon.—Good my lord, will you see the players well bestowed? Do you hear, let them be well used; for they are the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time. After your death you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live.

POLONIUS.

My lord, I will use them according to their desert.

HAMLET.

God's bodikin, man, better. Use every man after his desert, and who should scape whipping? Use them after your own honour

and dignity. The less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty. Take them in.

POLONIUS.

Come, sirs.

HAMLET.

Follow him, friends. We'll hear a play tomorrow.

[Exeunt Polonius with all the Players but the First.]

Dost thou hear me, old friend? Can you play *The Murder of Gonzago*?

FIRST PLAYER.

Ay, my lord.

HAMLET.

We'll ha't tomorrow night. You could for a need study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which I would set down and insert in't, could you not?

FIRST PLAYER.

Ay, my lord.

HAMLET.

Very well. Follow that lord, and look you mock him not.

[Exit First Player.]

[To Rosencrantz and Guildenstern] My good friends, I'll leave you till night. You are welcome to Elsinore.

ROSENCRANTZ.

Good my lord.

[Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.]

HAMLET.

Ay, so, God b' wi' ye. Now I am alone.

O what a rogue and peasant slave am I!

Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit
That from her working all his visage wan'd;
Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing!

For Hecuba?

What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
That he should weep for her? What would he do,
Had he the motive and the cue for passion
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech;
Make mad the guilty, and appal the free,
Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed,
The very faculties of eyes and ears. Yet I,
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,
And can say nothing. No, not for a king
Upon whose property and most dear life
A damn'd defeat was made. Am I a coward?
Who calls me villain, breaks my pate across?
Plucks off my beard and blows it in my face?
Tweaks me by the nose, gives me the lie i' th' throat
As deep as to the lungs? Who does me this?
Ha! 'Swounds, I should take it: for it cannot be
But I am pigeon-liver'd, and lack gall
To make oppression bitter, or ere this
I should have fatted all the region kites
With this slave's offal. Bloody, bawdy villain!
Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!
Oh vengeance!
Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,
That I, the son of a dear father murder'd,
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words
And fall a-cursing like a very drab,
A scullion! Fie upon't! Foh!
About, my brain! I have heard
That guilty creatures sitting at a play,
Have by the very cunning of the scene,
Been struck so to the soul that presently

They have proclaim'd their malefactions.
For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
With most miraculous organ. I'll have these players
Play something like the murder of my father
Before mine uncle. I'll observe his looks;
I'll tent him to the quick. If he but blench,
I know my course. The spirit that I have seen
May be the devil, and the devil hath power
T'assume a pleasing shape, yea, and perhaps
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
As he is very potent with such spirits,
Abuses me to damn me. I'll have grounds
More relative than this. The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.
[Exit.]

21. Hamlet - Act III

ACT III

SCENE I. A room in the Castle.

Enter King, Queen, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

KING.

And can you by no drift of circumstance
Get from him why he puts on this confusion,
Grating so harshly all his days of quiet
With turbulent and dangerous lunacy?

ROSENCRANTZ.

He does confess he feels himself distracted,
But from what cause he will by no means speak.

GUILDENSTERN.

Nor do we find him forward to be sounded,
But with a crafty madness keeps aloof
When we would bring him on to some confession
Of his true state.

QUEEN.

Did he receive you well?

ROSENCRANTZ.

Most like a gentleman.

GUILDENSTERN.

But with much forcing of his disposition.

ROSENCRANTZ.

Niggard of question, but of our demands,
Most free in his reply.

QUEEN.

Did you assay him to any pastime?

ROSENCRANTZ.

Madam, it so fell out that certain players
We o'er-raught on the way. Of these we told him,
And there did seem in him a kind of joy
To hear of it. They are about the court,
And, as I think, they have already order
This night to play before him.

POLONIUS.

'Tis most true;
And he beseech'd me to entreat your Majesties
To hear and see the matter.

KING.

With all my heart; and it doth much content me
To hear him so inclin'd.
Good gentlemen, give him a further edge,
And drive his purpose on to these delights.

ROSENCRANTZ.

We shall, my lord.

[Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.]

KING.

Sweet Gertrude, leave us too,
For we have closely sent for Hamlet hither,
That he, as 'twere by accident, may here
Affront Ophelia.
Her father and myself, lawful espials,
Will so bestow ourselves that, seeing unseen,
We may of their encounter frankly judge,
And gather by him, as he is behav'd,
If't be th'affliction of his love or no
That thus he suffers for.

QUEEN.

I shall obey you.
And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish

That your good beauties be the happy cause
Of Hamlet's wildness: so shall I hope your virtues
Will bring him to his wonted way again,
To both your honours.

OPHELIA.

Madam, I wish it may.

[*Exit Queen.*]

POLONIUS.

Ophelia, walk you here.—Gracious, so please you,
We will bestow ourselves.—[*To Ophelia.*] Read on this book,
That show of such an exercise may colour
Your loneliness.—We are oft to blame in this,
'Tis too much prov'd, that with devotion's visage
And pious action we do sugar o'er
The devil himself.

KING.

[*Aside.*] O 'tis too true!

How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!
The harlot's cheek, beautied with plastering art,
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it
Than is my deed to my most painted word.
O heavy burden!

POLONIUS.

I hear him coming. Let's withdraw, my lord.

[*Exeunt King and Polonius.*]

Enter Hamlet.

HAMLET.

To be, or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die—to sleep,
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to: 'tis a consummation

Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep.
To sleep, perchance to dream—ay, there's the rub,
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life.
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of dispriz'd love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? Who would these fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment,
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action. Soft you now,
The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remember'd.

OPHELIA.

Good my lord,
How does your honour for this many a day?

HAMLET.

I humbly thank you; well, well, well.

OPHELIA.

My lord, I have remembrances of yours

That I have longed long to re-deliver.

I pray you, now receive them.

HAMLET.

No, not I.

I never gave you aught.

OPHELIA.

My honour'd lord, you know right well you did,

And with them words of so sweet breath compos'd

As made the things more rich; their perfume lost,

Take these again; for to the noble mind

Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.

There, my lord.

HAMLET.

Ha, ha! Are you honest?

OPHELIA.

My lord?

HAMLET.

Are you fair?

OPHELIA.

What means your lordship?

HAMLET.

That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty.

OPHELIA.

Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty?

HAMLET.

Ay, truly; for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness. This was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof. I did love you once.

OPHELIA.

Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

HAMLET.

You should not have believed me; for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it. I loved you not.

OPHELIA.

I was the more deceived.

HAMLET.

Get thee to a nunnery. Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent honest; but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me. I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven? We are arrant knaves all, believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery. Where's your father?

OPHELIA.

At home, my lord.

HAMLET.

Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool nowhere but in's own house. Farewell.

OPHELIA.

O help him, you sweet heavens!

HAMLET.

If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry. Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a nunnery, go: farewell. Or if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool; for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery, go; and quickly too. Farewell.

OPHELIA.

O heavenly powers, restore him!

HAMLET.

I have heard of your paintings too, well enough. God hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another. You jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nickname God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance. Go to, I'll no more on't, it hath

made me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages. Those that are married already, all but one, shall live; the rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go.

[Exit.]

OPHELIA.

O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword,
Th'expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
Th'observ'd of all observers, quite, quite down!
And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That suck'd the honey of his music vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,
Like sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh,
That unmatch'd form and feature of blown youth
Blasted with ecstasy. O woe is me,
T'have seen what I have seen, see what I see.

Enter King and Polonius.

KING.

Love? His affections do not that way tend,
Nor what he spake, though it lack'd form a little,
Was not like madness. There's something in his soul
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood,
And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose
Will be some danger, which for to prevent,
I have in quick determination
Thus set it down: he shall with speed to England
For the demand of our neglected tribute:
Haply the seas and countries different,
With variable objects, shall expel
This something settled matter in his heart,
Whereon his brains still beating puts him thus
From fashion of himself. What think you on't?

POLONIUS.

It shall do well. But yet do I believe

The origin and commencement of his grief
Sprung from neglected love. How now, Ophelia?
You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet said,
We heard it all. My lord, do as you please,
But if you hold it fit, after the play,
Let his queen mother all alone entreat him
To show his grief, let her be round with him,
And I'll be plac'd, so please you, in the ear
Of all their conference. If she find him not,
To England send him; or confine him where
Your wisdom best shall think.

KING.

It shall be so.

Madness in great ones must not unwatch'd go.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. A hall in the Castle.

Enter Hamlet and certain Players.

HAMLET.

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you,
trippingly on the tongue. But if you mouth it, as many of your
players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor
do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use
all gently; for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say,
whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a
temperance that may give it smoothness. O, it offends me to
the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a
passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the
groundlings, who, for the most part, are capable of nothing but
inexplicable dumb shows and noise. I would have such a fellow
whipped for o'erdoing Termagant. It out-Herods Herod. Pray
you avoid it.

FIRST PLAYER.

I warrant your honour.

HAMLET.

Be not too tame neither; but let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature; for anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. Now, this overdone, or come tardy off, though it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve; the censure of the which one must in your allowance o'erweigh a whole theatre of others. O, there be players that I have seen play—and heard others praise, and that highly—not to speak it profanely, that, neither having the accent of Christians, nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed that I have thought some of Nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.

FIRST PLAYER.

I hope we have reform'd that indifferently with us, sir.

HAMLET.

O reform it altogether. And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them. For there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too, though in the meantime some necessary question of the play be then to be considered. That's villanous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it. Go make you ready.

[Exeunt Players.]

Enter Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

How now, my lord?

Will the King hear this piece of work?

POLONIUS.

And the Queen too, and that presently.

HAMLET.

Bid the players make haste.

[Exit Polonius.]

Will you two help to hasten them?

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.

We will, my lord.

[Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.]

HAMLET.

What ho, Horatio!

Enter Horatio.

HORATIO.

Here, sweet lord, at your service.

HAMLET.

Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man

As e'er my conversation cop'd withal.

HORATIO.

O my dear lord.

HAMLET.

Nay, do not think I flatter;

For what advancement may I hope from thee,

That no revenue hast, but thy good spirits

To feed and clothe thee? Why should the poor be flatter'd?

No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp,

And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee

Where thrift may follow fawning. Dost thou hear?

Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice,

And could of men distinguish, her election

Hath seal'd thee for herself. For thou hast been

As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing,

A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards

Hast ta'en with equal thanks. And blest are those

Whose blood and judgment are so well co-mingled

That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger

To sound what stop she please. Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,
As I do thee. Something too much of this.
There is a play tonight before the King.
One scene of it comes near the circumstance
Which I have told thee, of my father's death.
I prythee, when thou see'st that act a-foot,
Even with the very comment of thy soul
Observe mine uncle. If his occulted guilt
Do not itself unkennel in one speech,
It is a damned ghost that we have seen;
And my imaginations are as foul
As Vulcan's stithy. Give him heedful note;
For I mine eyes will rivet to his face;
And after we will both our judgments join
In censure of his seeming.

HORATIO.

Well, my lord.

If he steal aught the whilst this play is playing,
And scape detecting, I will pay the theft.

HAMLET.

They are coming to the play. I must be idle.
Get you a place.

Danish march. A flourish. Enter King, Queen, Polonius,
Ophelia, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern and others.

KING.

How fares our cousin Hamlet?

HAMLET.

Excellent, i' faith; of the chameleon's dish: I eat the air, promise-
crammed: you cannot feed capons so.

KING.

I have nothing with this answer, Hamlet; these words are not
mine.

HAMLET.

No, nor mine now. [*To Polonius.*] My lord, you play'd once i' th'university, you say?

POLONIUS.

That did I, my lord, and was accounted a good actor.

HAMLET.

What did you enact?

POLONIUS.

I did enact Julius Caesar. I was kill'd i' th' Capitol. Brutus killed me.

HAMLET.

It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there. Be the players ready?

ROSENCRANTZ.

Ay, my lord; they stay upon your patience.

QUEEN.

Come hither, my dear Hamlet, sit by me.

HAMLET.

No, good mother, here's metal more attractive.

POLONIUS.

[*To the King.*] O ho! do you mark that?

HAMLET.

Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

[*Lying down at Ophelia's feet.*]

OPHELIA.

No, my lord.

HAMLET.

I mean, my head upon your lap?

OPHELIA.

Ay, my lord.

HAMLET.

Do you think I meant country matters?

OPHELIA.

I think nothing, my lord.

HAMLET.

That's a fair thought to lie between maids' legs.

OPHELIA.

What is, my lord?

HAMLET.

Nothing.

OPHELIA.

You are merry, my lord.

HAMLET.

Who, I?

OPHELIA.

Ay, my lord.

HAMLET.

O God, your only jig-maker! What should a man do but be merry? For look you how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father died within's two hours.

OPHELIA.

Nay, 'tis twice two months, my lord.

HAMLET.

So long? Nay then, let the devil wear black, for I'll have a suit of sables. O heavens! die two months ago, and not forgotten yet? Then there's hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half a year. But by'r lady, he must build churches then; or else shall he suffer not thinking on, with the hobby-horse, whose epitaph is 'For, O, for O, the hobby-horse is forgot!'

Trumpets sound. The dumb show enters.

Enter a King and a Queen very lovingly; the Queen embracing him and he her. She kneels, and makes show of protestation unto him. He takes her up, and declines his head upon her neck. Lays him down upon a bank of flowers. She, seeing him asleep, leaves him. Anon comes in a fellow, takes off his crown, kisses it, pours poison in the King's ears, and exits. The Queen returns, finds the King dead, and makes passionate action. The Poisoner with some three or four Mutes, comes in again, seeming to lament with her. The dead body is carried away. The Poisoner woos the Queen with gifts. She seems loth and unwilling awhile, but in the end accepts his love.

[*Exeunt.*]

OPHELIA.

What means this, my lord?

HAMLET.

Marry, this is miching mallico; it means mischief.

OPHELIA.

Belike this show imports the argument of the play.

Enter Prologue.

HAMLET.

We shall know by this fellow: the players cannot keep counsel;
they'll tell all.

OPHELIA.

Will they tell us what this show meant?

HAMLET.

Ay, or any show that you'll show him. Be not you ashamed to
show, he'll not shame to tell you what it means.

OPHELIA.

You are naught, you are naught: I'll mark the play.

PROLOGUE.

*For us, and for our tragedy,
Here stooping to your clemency,
We beg your hearing patiently.*

HAMLET.

Is this a prologue, or the posy of a ring?

OPHELIA.

'Tis brief, my lord.

HAMLET.

As woman's love.

Enter a King and a Queen.

PLAYER KING.

Full thirty times hath Phoebus' cart gone round
Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orb'd ground,
And thirty dozen moons with borrow'd sheen
About the world have times twelve thirties been,

Since love our hearts, and Hymen did our hands
Unite commutual in most sacred bands.

PLAYER QUEEN.

So many journeys may the sun and moon
Make us again count o'er ere love be done.
But, woe is me, you are so sick of late,
So far from cheer and from your former state,
That I distrust you. Yet, though I distrust,
Discomfort you, my lord, it nothing must:
For women's fear and love holds quantity,
In neither aught, or in extremity.
Now what my love is, proof hath made you know,
And as my love is siz'd, my fear is so.
Where love is great, the littlest doubts are fear;
Where little fears grow great, great love grows there.

PLAYER KING.

Faith, I must leave thee, love, and shortly too:
My operant powers their functions leave to do:
And thou shalt live in this fair world behind,
Honour'd, belov'd, and haply one as kind
For husband shalt thou—

PLAYER QUEEN.

O confound the rest.
Such love must needs be treason in my breast.
In second husband let me be accurst!
None wed the second but who kill'd the first.

HAMLET.

[*Aside.*] Wormwood, wormwood.

PLAYER QUEEN.

The instances that second marriage move
Are base respects of thrift, but none of love.
A second time I kill my husband dead,
When second husband kisses me in bed.

PLAYER KING.

I do believe you think what now you speak;

But what we do determine, oft we break.
Purpose is but the slave to memory,
Of violent birth, but poor validity:
Which now, like fruit unripe, sticks on the tree,
But fall unshaken when they mellow be.
Most necessary 'tis that we forget
To pay ourselves what to ourselves is debt.
What to ourselves in passion we propose,
The passion ending, doth the purpose lose.
The violence of either grief or joy
Their own enactures with themselves destroy.
Where joy most revels, grief doth most lament;
Grief joys, joy grieves, on slender accident.
This world is not for aye; nor 'tis not strange
That even our loves should with our fortunes change,
For 'tis a question left us yet to prove,
Whether love lead fortune, or else fortune love.
The great man down, you mark his favourite flies,
The poor advanc'd makes friends of enemies;
And hitherto doth love on fortune tend:
For who not needs shall never lack a friend,
And who in want a hollow friend doth try,
Directly seasons him his enemy.
But orderly to end where I begun,
Our wills and fates do so contrary run
That our devices still are overthrown.
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own.
So think thou wilt no second husband wed,
But die thy thoughts when thy first lord is dead.

PLAYER QUEEN.

Nor earth to me give food, nor heaven light,
Sport and repose lock from me day and night,
To desperation turn my trust and hope,
An anchor's cheer in prison be my scope,
Each opposite that blanks the face of joy,

Meet what I would have well, and it destroy!
Both here and hence pursue me lasting strife,
If, once a widow, ever I be wife.

HAMLET.

[*To Ophelia.*] If she should break it now.

PLAYER KING.

'Tis deeply sworn. Sweet, leave me here awhile.
My spirits grow dull, and fain I would beguile
The tedious day with sleep.

[*Sleeps.*]

PLAYER QUEEN.

Sleep rock thy brain,
And never come mischance between us twain.

[*Exit.*]

HAMLET.

Madam, how like you this play?

QUEEN.

The lady protests too much, methinks.

HAMLET.

O, but she'll keep her word.

KING.

Have you heard the argument? Is there no offence in't?

HAMLET.

No, no, they do but jest, poison in jest; no offence i' th' world.

KING.

What do you call the play?

HAMLET.

The Mousetrap. Marry, how? Tropically. This play is the image of a murder done in Vienna. Gonzago is the Duke's name, his wife Baptista: you shall see anon; 'tis a knavish piece of work: but what o' that? Your majesty, and we that have free souls, it touches us not. Let the gall'd jade wince; our withers are unwrung.

Enter Lucianus.

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the King.

OPHELIA.

You are a good chorus, my lord.

HAMLET.

I could interpret between you and your love, if I could see the puppets dallying.

OPHELIA.

You are keen, my lord, you are keen.

HAMLET.

It would cost you a groaning to take off my edge.

OPHELIA.

Still better, and worse.

HAMLET.

So you mistake your husbands.—Begin, murderer. Pox, leave thy damnable faces, and begin. Come, the croaking raven doth bellow for revenge.

LUCIANUS.

Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time agreeing,
Confederate season, else no creature seeing;
Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected,
With Hecate's ban thrice blasted, thrice infected,
Thy natural magic and dire property
On wholesome life usurp immediately.

[Pours the poison into the sleeper's ears.]

HAMLET.

He poisons him i' th'garden for's estate. His name's Gonzago. The story is extant, and written in very choice Italian. You shall see anon how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife.

OPHELIA.

The King rises.

HAMLET.

What, frightened with false fire?

QUEEN.

How fares my lord?

POLONIUS.

Give o'er the play.

KING.

Give me some light. Away.

All.

Lights, lights, lights.

[Exeunt all but Hamlet and Horatio.]

HAMLET.

Why, let the stricken deer go weep,

The hart ungalled play;

For some must watch, while some must sleep,

So runs the world away.

Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers, if the rest of my fortunes turn Turk with me; with two Provincial roses on my razed shoes, get me a fellowship in a cry of players, sir?

HORATIO.

Half a share.

HAMLET.

A whole one, I.

For thou dost know, O Damon dear,

This realm dismantled was

Of Jove himself, and now reigns here

A very, very—pajock.

HORATIO.

You might have rhymed.

HAMLET.

O good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pound.

Didst perceive?

HORATIO.

Very well, my lord.

HAMLET.

Upon the talk of the poisoning?

HORATIO.

I did very well note him.

HAMLET.

Ah, ha! Come, some music. Come, the recorders.

For if the king like not the comedy,

Why then, belike he likes it not, perdie.

Come, some music.

Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

GUILDENSTERN.

Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word with you.

HAMLET.

Sir, a whole history.

GUILDENSTERN.

The King, sir—

HAMLET.

Ay, sir, what of him?

GUILDENSTERN.

Is in his retirement, marvellous distempered.

HAMLET.

With drink, sir?

GUILDENSTERN.

No, my lord; rather with choler.

HAMLET.

Your wisdom should show itself more richer to signify this to the doctor, for me to put him to his purgation would perhaps plunge him into far more choler.

GUILDENSTERN.

Good my lord, put your discourse into some frame, and start not so wildly from my affair.

HAMLET.

I am tame, sir, pronounce.

GUILDENSTERN.

The Queen your mother, in most great affliction of spirit, hath sent me to you.

HAMLET.

You are welcome.

GUILDENSTERN.

Nay, good my lord, this courtesy is not of the right breed. If it shall please you to make me a wholesome answer, I will do your

mother's commandment; if not, your pardon and my return shall be the end of my business.

HAMLET.

Sir, I cannot.

GUILDENSTERN.

What, my lord?

HAMLET.

Make you a wholesome answer. My wit's diseased. But, sir, such answer as I can make, you shall command; or rather, as you say, my mother. Therefore no more, but to the matter. My mother, you say,—

ROSENCRANTZ.

Then thus she says: your behaviour hath struck her into amazement and admiration.

HAMLET.

O wonderful son, that can so stonish a mother! But is there no sequel at the heels of this mother's admiration?

ROSENCRANTZ.

She desires to speak with you in her closet ere you go to bed.

HAMLET.

We shall obey, were she ten times our mother. Have you any further trade with us?

ROSENCRANTZ.

My lord, you once did love me.

HAMLET.

And so I do still, by these pickers and stealers.

ROSENCRANTZ.

Good my lord, what is your cause of distemper? You do surely bar the door upon your own liberty if you deny your griefs to your friend.

HAMLET.

Sir, I lack advancement.

ROSENCRANTZ.

How can that be, when you have the voice of the King himself for your succession in Denmark?

HAMLET.

Ay, sir, but while the grass grows—the proverb is something musty.

Re-enter the Players with recorders.

O, the recorders. Let me see one.—To withdraw with you, why do you go about to recover the wind of me, as if you would drive me into a toil?

GUILDENSTERN.

O my lord, if my duty be too bold, my love is too unmannerly.

HAMLET.

I do not well understand that. Will you play upon this pipe?

GUILDENSTERN.

My lord, I cannot.

HAMLET.

I pray you.

GUILDENSTERN.

Believe me, I cannot.

HAMLET.

I do beseech you.

GUILDENSTERN.

I know no touch of it, my lord.

HAMLET.

'Tis as easy as lying: govern these ventages with your finger and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music. Look you, these are the stops.

GUILDENSTERN.

But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony. I have not the skill.

HAMLET.

Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass; and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ, yet cannot you make it speak. 'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be played on

than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, you cannot play upon me.

Enter Polonius.

God bless you, sir.

POLONIUS.

My lord, the Queen would speak with you, and presently.

HAMLET.

Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel?

POLONIUS.

By the mass, and 'tis like a camel indeed.

HAMLET.

Methinks it is like a weasel.

POLONIUS.

It is backed like a weasel.

HAMLET.

Or like a whale.

POLONIUS.

Very like a whale.

HAMLET.

Then will I come to my mother by and by.—They fool me to the top of my bent.—I will come by and by.

POLONIUS.

I will say so.

[Exit.]

HAMLET.

By and by is easily said. Leave me, friends.

[Exeunt all but Hamlet.]

'Tis now the very witching time of night,
When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
Contagion to this world. Now could I drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business as the day
Would quake to look on. Soft now, to my mother.
O heart, lose not thy nature; let not ever
The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom:
Let me be cruel, not unnatural.

I will speak daggers to her, but use none;
My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites.
How in my words somever she be shent,
To give them seals never, my soul, consent.

[Exit.]

SCENE III. A room in the Castle.

Enter King, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

KING.

I like him not, nor stands it safe with us
To let his madness range. Therefore prepare you,
I your commission will forthwith dispatch,
And he to England shall along with you.
The terms of our estate may not endure
Hazard so near us as doth hourly grow
Out of his lunacies.

GUILDENSTERN.

We will ourselves provide.
Most holy and religious fear it is
To keep those many many bodies safe
That live and feed upon your Majesty.

ROSENCRANTZ.

The single and peculiar life is bound
With all the strength and armour of the mind,
To keep itself from 'noyance; but much more
That spirit upon whose weal depend and rest
The lives of many. The cease of majesty
Dies not alone; but like a gulf doth draw
What's near it with it. It is a massy wheel
Fix'd on the summit of the highest mount,
To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things
Are mortis'd and adjoin'd; which when it falls,
Each small annexment, petty consequence,

Attends the boist'rous ruin. Never alone
Did the King sigh, but with a general groan.

KING.

Arm you, I pray you, to this speedy voyage;
For we will fetters put upon this fear,
Which now goes too free-footed.

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.

We will haste us.

[Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.]

Enter Polonius.

POLONIUS.

My lord, he's going to his mother's closet.
Behind the arras I'll convey myself
To hear the process. I'll warrant she'll tax him home,
And as you said, and wisely was it said,
'Tis meet that some more audience than a mother,
Since nature makes them partial, should o'erhear
The speech of vantage. Fare you well, my liege,
I'll call upon you ere you go to bed,
And tell you what I know.

KING.

Thanks, dear my lord.

[Exit Polonius.]

O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven;
It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,—
A brother's murder! Pray can I not,
Though inclination be as sharp as will:
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,
And, like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect. What if this cursed hand
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy
But to confront the visage of offence?

And what's in prayer but this twofold force,
To be forestalled ere we come to fall,
Or pardon'd being down? Then I'll look up.
My fault is past. But O, what form of prayer
Can serve my turn? Forgive me my foul murder!
That cannot be; since I am still possess'd
Of those effects for which I did the murder,—
My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.
May one be pardon'd and retain th'offence?
In the corrupted currents of this world
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,
And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law. But 'tis not so above;
There is no shuffling, there the action lies
In his true nature, and we ourselves compell'd
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,
To give in evidence. What then? What rests?
Try what repentance can. What can it not?
Yet what can it, when one cannot repent?
O wretched state! O bosom black as death!
O limed soul, that struggling to be free,
Art more engag'd! Help, angels! Make assay:
Bow, stubborn knees; and heart with strings of steel,
Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe.
All may be well.

[Retires and kneels.]

Enter Hamlet.

HAMLET.

Now might I do it pat, now he is praying.
And now I'll do't. And so he goes to heaven;
And so am I reveng'd. That would be scann'd:
A villain kills my father, and for that
I, his sole son, do this same villain send
To heaven. O, this is hire and salary, not revenge.
He took my father grossly, full of bread,

With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May;
And how his audit stands, who knows save heaven?
But in our circumstance and course of thought,
'Tis heavy with him. And am I then reveng'd,
To take him in the purging of his soul,
When he is fit and season'd for his passage? No.
Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid hent:
When he is drunk asleep; or in his rage,
Or in th'incestuous pleasure of his bed,
At gaming, swearing; or about some act
That has no relish of salvation in't,
Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven,
And that his soul may be as damn'd and black
As hell, whereto it goes. My mother stays.
This physic but prolongs thy sickly days.

[*Exit.*]

The King rises and advances.

KING.

My words fly up, my thoughts remain below.
Words without thoughts never to heaven go.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE IV. Another room in the Castle.

Enter Queen and Polonius.

POLONIUS.

He will come straight. Look you lay home to him,
Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear with,
And that your Grace hath screen'd and stood between
Much heat and him. I'll silence me e'en here.
Pray you be round with him.

HAMLET.

[*Within.*] Mother, mother, mother.

QUEEN.

I'll warrant you, Fear me not.

Withdraw, I hear him coming.

[Polonius goes behind the arras.]

Enter Hamlet.

HAMLET.

Now, mother, what's the matter?

QUEEN.

Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

HAMLET.

Mother, you have my father much offended.

QUEEN.

Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

HAMLET.

Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

QUEEN.

Why, how now, Hamlet?

HAMLET.

What's the matter now?

QUEEN.

Have you forgot me?

HAMLET.

No, by the rood, not so.

You are the Queen, your husband's brother's wife,

And, would it were not so. You are my mother.

QUEEN.

Nay, then I'll set those to you that can speak.

HAMLET.

Come, come, and sit you down, you shall not budge.

You go not till I set you up a glass

Where you may see the inmost part of you.

QUEEN.

What wilt thou do? Thou wilt not murder me?

Help, help, ho!

POLONIUS.

[Behind.] What, ho! help, help, help!

HAMLET.

How now? A rat? [*Draws.*]

Dead for a ducat, dead!

[*Makes a pass through the arras.*]

POLONIUS.

[*Behind.*] O, I am slain!

[*Falls and dies.*]

QUEEN.

O me, what hast thou done?

HAMLET.

Nay, I know not. is it the King?

[*Draws forth Polonius.*]

QUEEN.

O what a rash and bloody deed is this!

HAMLET.

A bloody deed. Almost as bad, good mother,

As kill a king and marry with his brother.

QUEEN.

As kill a king?

HAMLET.

Ay, lady, 'twas my word.—

[*To Polonius.*] Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell!

I took thee for thy better. Take thy fortune,

Thou find'st to be too busy is some danger.—

Leave wringing of your hands. Peace, sit you down,

And let me wring your heart, for so I shall,

If it be made of penetrable stuff;

If damned custom have not braz'd it so,

That it is proof and bulwark against sense.

QUEEN.

What have I done, that thou dar'st wag thy tongue

In noise so rude against me?

HAMLET.

Such an act

That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,

Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,
And sets a blister there. Makes marriage vows
As false as dicers' oaths. O such a deed
As from the body of contraction plucks
The very soul, and sweet religion makes
A rhapsody of words. Heaven's face doth glow,
Yea this solidity and compound mass,
With tristful visage, as against the doom,
Is thought-sick at the act.

QUEEN.

Ay me, what act,
That roars so loud, and thunders in the index?

HAMLET.

Look here upon this picture, and on this,
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.
See what a grace was seated on this brow,
Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself,
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command,
A station like the herald Mercury
New lighted on a heaven-kissing hill:
A combination and a form indeed,
Where every god did seem to set his seal,
To give the world assurance of a man.
This was your husband. Look you now what follows.
Here is your husband, like a mildew'd ear
Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?
Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,
And batten on this moor? Ha! have you eyes?
You cannot call it love; for at your age
The hey-day in the blood is tame, it's humble,
And waits upon the judgment: and what judgment
Would step from this to this? Sense sure you have,
Else could you not have motion; but sure that sense
Is apoplex'd, for madness would not err

Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd
But it reserv'd some quantity of choice
To serve in such a difference. What devil was't
That thus hath cozen'd you at hoodman-blind?
Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,
Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,
Or but a sickly part of one true sense
Could not so mope. O shame! where is thy blush?
Rebellious hell,
If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,
To flaming youth let virtue be as wax,
And melt in her own fire. Proclaim no shame
When the compulsive ardour gives the charge,
Since frost itself as actively doth burn,
And reason panders will.

QUEEN.

O Hamlet, speak no more.
Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul,
And there I see such black and grained spots
As will not leave their tinct.

HAMLET.

Nay, but to live
In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed,
Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love
Over the nasty sty.

QUEEN.

O speak to me no more;
These words like daggers enter in mine ears;
No more, sweet Hamlet.

HAMLET.

A murderer and a villain;
A slave that is not twentieth part the tithe
Of your precedent lord. A vice of kings,
A cutpurse of the empire and the rule,

That from a shelf the precious diadem stole
And put it in his pocket!

QUEEN.

No more.

HAMLET.

A king of shreds and patches!—

Enter Ghost.

Save me and hover o'er me with your wings,
You heavenly guards! What would your gracious figure?

QUEEN.

Alas, he's mad.

HAMLET.

Do you not come your tardy son to chide,
That, laps'd in time and passion, lets go by
The important acting of your dread command?
O say!

GHOST.

Do not forget. This visitation
Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.
But look, amazement on thy mother sits.
O step between her and her fighting soul.
Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works.
Speak to her, Hamlet.

HAMLET.

How is it with you, lady?

QUEEN.

Alas, how is't with you,
That you do bend your eye on vacancy,
And with the incorporal air do hold discourse?
Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep,
And, as the sleeping soldiers in the alarm,
Your bedded hairs, like life in excrements,
Start up and stand an end. O gentle son,
Upon the heat and flame of thy distemper
Sprinkle cool patience. Whereon do you look?

HAMLET.

On him, on him! Look you how pale he glares,
His form and cause conjoin'd, preaching to stones,
Would make them capable.—Do not look upon me,
Lest with this piteous action you convert
My stern effects. Then what I have to do
Will want true colour; tears perchance for blood.

QUEEN.

To whom do you speak this?

HAMLET.

Do you see nothing there?

QUEEN.

Nothing at all; yet all that is I see.

HAMLET.

Nor did you nothing hear?

QUEEN.

No, nothing but ourselves.

HAMLET.

Why, look you there! look how it steals away!
My father, in his habit as he liv'd!
Look where he goes even now out at the portal.

[*Exit Ghost.*]

QUEEN.

This is the very coinage of your brain.
This bodiless creation ecstasy
Is very cunning in.

HAMLET.

Ecstasy!

My pulse as yours doth temperately keep time,
And makes as healthful music. It is not madness
That I have utter'd. Bring me to the test,
And I the matter will re-word; which madness
Would gambol from. Mother, for love of grace,
Lay not that flattering unction to your soul
That not your trespass, but my madness speaks.

It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,
Whilst rank corruption, mining all within,
Infects unseen. Confess yourself to heaven,
Repent what's past, avoid what is to come;
And do not spread the compost on the weeds,
To make them ranker. Forgive me this my virtue;
For in the fatness of these pury times
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg,
Yea, curb and woo for leave to do him good.

QUEEN.

O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

HAMLET.

O throw away the worser part of it,
And live the purer with the other half.
Good night. But go not to mine uncle's bed.
Assume a virtue, if you have it not.
That monster custom, who all sense doth eat,
Of habits evil, is angel yet in this,
That to the use of actions fair and good
He likewise gives a frock or livery
That aptly is put on. Refrain tonight,
And that shall lend a kind of easiness
To the next abstinence. The next more easy;
For use almost can change the stamp of nature,
And either curb the devil, or throw him out
With wondrous potency. Once more, good night,
And when you are desirous to be bles'd,
I'll blessing beg of you. For this same lord
[*Pointing to Polonius.*]
I do repent; but heaven hath pleas'd it so,
To punish me with this, and this with me,
That I must be their scourge and minister.
I will bestow him, and will answer well
The death I gave him. So again, good night.
I must be cruel, only to be kind:

Thus bad begins, and worse remains behind.
One word more, good lady.

QUEEN.

What shall I do?

HAMLET.

Not this, by no means, that I bid you do:
Let the bloat King tempt you again to bed,
Pinch wanton on your cheek, call you his mouse,
And let him, for a pair of reechy kisses,
Or paddling in your neck with his damn'd fingers,
Make you to ravel all this matter out,
That I essentially am not in madness,
But mad in craft. 'Twere good you let him know,
For who that's but a queen, fair, sober, wise,
Would from a paddock, from a bat, a gib,
Such dear concernings hide? Who would do so?
No, in despite of sense and secrecy,
Unpeg the basket on the house's top,
Let the birds fly, and like the famous ape,
To try conclusions, in the basket creep
And break your own neck down.

QUEEN.

Be thou assur'd, if words be made of breath,
And breath of life, I have no life to breathe
What thou hast said to me.

HAMLET.

I must to England, you know that?

QUEEN.

Alack,

I had forgot. 'Tis so concluded on.

HAMLET.

There's letters seal'd: and my two schoolfellows,
Whom I will trust as I will adders fang'd,—
They bear the mandate, they must sweep my way
And marshal me to knavery. Let it work;

For 'tis the sport to have the enginer
Hoist with his own petard, and 't shall go hard
But I will delve one yard below their mines
And blow them at the moon. O, 'tis most sweet,
When in one line two crafts directly meet.
This man shall set me packing.
I'll lug the guts into the neighbour room.
Mother, good night. Indeed, this counsellor
Is now most still, most secret, and most grave,
Who was in life a foolish peating knave.
Come, sir, to draw toward an end with you.
Good night, mother.

[Exit Hamlet dragging out Polonius.]

22. Hamlet - Act IV

ACT IV

SCENE I. A room in the Castle.

Enter King, Queen, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

KING.

There's matter in these sighs. These profound heaves
You must translate. 'tis fit we understand them.
Where is your son?

QUEEN.

Bestow this place on us a little while.

[To Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who go out.]

Ah, my good lord, what have I seen tonight!

KING.

What, Gertrude? How does Hamlet?

QUEEN.

Mad as the sea and wind, when both contend
Which is the mightier. In his lawless fit
Behind the arras hearing something stir,
Whips out his rapier, cries 'A rat, a rat!'
And in this brainish apprehension kills
The unseen good old man.

KING.

O heavy deed!

It had been so with us, had we been there.

His liberty is full of threats to all;

To you yourself, to us, to everyone.

Alas, how shall this bloody deed be answer'd?

It will be laid to us, whose providence

Should have kept short, restrain'd, and out of haunt
This mad young man. But so much was our love
We would not understand what was most fit,
But like the owner of a foul disease,
To keep it from divulging, let it feed
Even on the pith of life. Where is he gone?

QUEEN.

To draw apart the body he hath kill'd,
O'er whom his very madness, like some ore
Among a mineral of metals base,
Shows itself pure. He weeps for what is done.

KING.

O Gertrude, come away!

The sun no sooner shall the mountains touch
But we will ship him hence, and this vile deed
We must with all our majesty and skill
Both countenance and excuse.—Ho, Guildenstern!

Re-enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Friends both, go join you with some further aid:
Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain,
And from his mother's closet hath he dragg'd him.
Go seek him out, speak fair, and bring the body
Into the chapel. I pray you haste in this.

[Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.]

Come, Gertrude, we'll call up our wisest friends,
And let them know both what we mean to do
And what's untimely done, so haply slander,
Whose whisper o'er the world's diameter,
As level as the cannon to his blank,
Transports his poison'd shot, may miss our name,
And hit the woundless air. O, come away!
My soul is full of discord and dismay.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE II. Another room in the Castle.

Enter Hamlet.

HAMLET.

Safely stowed.

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.

[*Within.*] Hamlet! Lord Hamlet!

HAMLET.

What noise? Who calls on Hamlet? O, here they come.

Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

ROSENCRANTZ.

What have you done, my lord, with the dead body?

HAMLET.

Compounded it with dust, whereto 'tis kin.

ROSENCRANTZ.

Tell us where 'tis, that we may take it thence,

And bear it to the chapel.

HAMLET.

Do not believe it.

ROSENCRANTZ.

Believe what?

HAMLET.

That I can keep your counsel, and not mine own. Besides, to be demanded of a sponge—what replication should be made by the son of a king?

ROSENCRANTZ.

Take you me for a sponge, my lord?

HAMLET.

Ay, sir; that soaks up the King's countenance, his rewards, his authorities. But such officers do the King best service in the end: he keeps them, like an ape, in the corner of his jaw; first mouthed, to be last swallowed: when he needs what you have gleaned, it is but squeezing you, and, sponge, you shall be dry again.

ROSENCRANTZ.

I understand you not, my lord.

HAMLET.

I am glad of it. A knavish speech sleeps in a foolish ear.

ROSENCRANTZ.

My lord, you must tell us where the body is and go with us to the King.

HAMLET.

The body is with the King, but the King is not with the body. The King is a thing—

GUILDENSTERN.

A thing, my lord!

HAMLET.

Of nothing. Bring me to him. Hide fox, and all after.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE III. Another room in the Castle.

Enter King, attended.

KING.

I have sent to seek him and to find the body.
How dangerous is it that this man goes loose!
Yet must not we put the strong law on him:
He's lov'd of the distracted multitude,
Who like not in their judgment, but their eyes;
And where 'tis so, th'offender's scourge is weigh'd,
But never the offence. To bear all smooth and even,
This sudden sending him away must seem
Deliberate pause. Diseases desperate grown
By desperate appliance are reliev'd,
Or not at all.

Enter Rosencrantz.

How now? What hath befall'n?

ROSENCRANTZ.

Where the dead body is bestow'd, my lord,
We cannot get from him.

KING.

But where is he?

ROSENCRANTZ.

Without, my lord, guarded, to know your pleasure.

KING.

Bring him before us.

ROSENCRANTZ.

Ho, Guildenstern! Bring in my lord.

Enter Hamlet and Guildenstern.

KING.

Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

HAMLET.

At supper.

KING.

At supper? Where?

HAMLET.

Not where he eats, but where he is eaten. A certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet. We fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots. Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service,—two dishes, but to one table. That's the end.

KING.

Alas, alas!

HAMLET.

A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.

KING.

What dost thou mean by this?

HAMLET.

Nothing but to show you how a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar.

KING.

Where is Polonius?

HAMLET.

In heaven. Send thither to see. If your messenger find him not there, seek him i' th'other place yourself. But indeed, if you find him not within this month, you shall nose him as you go up the stairs into the lobby.

KING.

[To some Attendants.] Go seek him there.

HAMLET.

He will stay till you come.

[Exeunt Attendants.]

KING.

Hamlet, this deed, for thine especial safety,—
Which we do tender, as we dearly grieve
For that which thou hast done,—must send thee hence
With fiery quickness. Therefore prepare thyself;
The bark is ready, and the wind at help,
Th'associates tend, and everything is bent
For England.

HAMLET.

For England?

KING.

Ay, Hamlet.

HAMLET.

Good.

KING.

So is it, if thou knew'st our purposes.

HAMLET.

I see a cherub that sees them. But, come; for England! Farewell,
dear mother.

KING.

Thy loving father, Hamlet.

HAMLET.

My mother. Father and mother is man and wife; man and wife is one flesh; and so, my mother. Come, for England.

[Exit.]

KING.

Follow him at foot. Tempt him with speed aboard;
Delay it not; I'll have him hence tonight.
Away, for everything is seal'd and done
That else leans on th'affair. Pray you make haste.

[Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.]

And England, if my love thou hold'st at aught,—
As my great power thereof may give thee sense,
Since yet thy cicatrice looks raw and red
After the Danish sword, and thy free awe
Pays homage to us,—thou mayst not coldly set
Our sovereign process, which imports at full,
By letters conjuring to that effect,
The present death of Hamlet. Do it, England;
For like the hectic in my blood he rages,
And thou must cure me. Till I know 'tis done,
Howe'er my haps, my joys were ne'er begun.

[Exit.]

SCENE IV. A plain in Denmark.

Enter Fortinbras and Forces marching.

FORTINBRAS.

Go, Captain, from me greet the Danish king.
Tell him that by his license, Fortinbras
Craves the conveyance of a promis'd march
Over his kingdom. You know the rendezvous.
If that his Majesty would aught with us,
We shall express our duty in his eye;
And let him know so.

CAPTAIN.

I will do't, my lord.

FORTINBRAS.

Go softly on.

[Exeunt all but the Captain.]

Enter Hamlet, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern &c.

HAMLET.

Good sir, whose powers are these?

CAPTAIN.

They are of Norway, sir.

HAMLET.

How purpos'd, sir, I pray you?

CAPTAIN.

Against some part of Poland.

HAMLET.

Who commands them, sir?

CAPTAIN.

The nephew to old Norway, Fortinbras.

HAMLET.

Goes it against the main of Poland, sir,

Or for some frontier?

CAPTAIN.

Truly to speak, and with no addition,

We go to gain a little patch of ground

That hath in it no profit but the name.

To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it;

Nor will it yield to Norway or the Pole

A ranker rate, should it be sold in fee.

HAMLET.

Why, then the Polack never will defend it.

CAPTAIN.

Yes, it is already garrison'd.

HAMLET.

Two thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats

Will not debate the question of this straw!

This is th'imposthume of much wealth and peace,
That inward breaks, and shows no cause without
Why the man dies. I humbly thank you, sir.

CAPTAIN.

God b' wi' you, sir.

[*Exit.*]

ROSENCRANTZ.

Will't please you go, my lord?

HAMLET.

I'll be with you straight. Go a little before.

[*Exeunt all but Hamlet.*]

How all occasions do inform against me,
And spur my dull revenge. What is a man
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.
Sure he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and godlike reason
To fust in us unus'd. Now whether it be
Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
Of thinking too precisely on th'event,—
A thought which, quarter'd, hath but one part wisdom
And ever three parts coward,—I do not know
Why yet I live to say this thing's to do,
Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means
To do't. Examples gross as earth exhort me,
Witness this army of such mass and charge,
Led by a delicate and tender prince,
Whose spirit, with divine ambition puff'd,
Makes mouths at the invisible event,
Exposing what is mortal and unsure
To all that fortune, death, and danger dare,
Even for an eggshell. Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument,
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw

When honour's at the stake. How stand I then,
That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd,
Excitements of my reason and my blood,
And let all sleep, while to my shame I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men
That, for a fantasy and trick of fame,
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
Which is not tomb enough and continent
To hide the slain? O, from this time forth,
My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth.
[Exit.]

SCENE V. Elsinore. A room in the Castle.

Enter Queen, Horatio and a Gentleman.

QUEEN.

I will not speak with her.

GENTLEMAN.

She is importunate, indeed distract.

Her mood will needs be pitied.

QUEEN.

What would she have?

GENTLEMAN.

She speaks much of her father; says she hears
There's tricks i' th' world, and hems, and beats her heart,
Spurns enviously at straws, speaks things in doubt,
That carry but half sense. Her speech is nothing,
Yet the unshaped use of it doth move
The hearers to collection; they aim at it,
And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts,
Which, as her winks, and nods, and gestures yield them,
Indeed would make one think there might be thought,
Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily.

'Twere good she were spoken with, for she may strew
Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds.

QUEEN.

Let her come in.

[Exit Gentleman.]

To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is,
Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss.
So full of artless jealousy is guilt,
It spills itself in fearing to be spilt.

Enter Ophelia.

OPHELIA.

Where is the Beauteous Majesty of Denmark?

QUEEN.

How now, Ophelia?

OPHELIA.

[Sings.]

How should I your true love know
From another one?
By his cockle bat and staff
And his sandal shoon.

QUEEN.

Alas, sweet lady, what imports this song?

OPHELIA.

Say you? Nay, pray you mark.

[Sings.]

He is dead and gone, lady,
He is dead and gone,
At his head a grass green turf,
At his heels a stone.

QUEEN.

Nay, but Ophelia—

OPHELIA.

Pray you mark.

[Sings.]

White his shroud as the mountain snow.

Enter King.

QUEEN.

Alas, look here, my lord!

OPHELIA.

[Sings.]

Larded all with sweet flowers;
Which bewept to the grave did go
With true-love showers.

KING.

How do you, pretty lady?

OPHELIA.

Well, God dild you! They say the owl was a baker's daughter.
Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be. God
be at your table!

KING.

Conceit upon her father.

OPHELIA.

Pray you, let's have no words of this; but when they ask you
what it means, say you this:

[Sings.]

Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's day,
All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your window,
To be your Valentine.

Then up he rose and donn'd his clothes,
And dupp'd the chamber door,
Let in the maid, that out a maid
Never departed more.

KING.

Pretty Ophelia!

OPHELIA.

Indeed I, without an oath, I'll make an end on't.

[Sings.]

By Gis and by Saint Charity,
Alack, and fie for shame!

Young men will do't if they come to't;
By Cock, they are to blame.

Quoth she, before you tumbled me,
You promis'd me to wed.
So would I ha' done, by yonder sun,
An thou hadst not come to my bed.

KING.

How long hath she been thus?

OPHELIA.

I hope all will be well. We must be patient. But I cannot choose
but weep, to think they would lay him i' th' cold ground. My
brother shall know of it. And so I thank you for your good
counsel. Come, my coach! Good night, ladies; good night, sweet
ladies; good night, good night.

[Exit.]

KING.

Follow her close; give her good watch, I pray you.

[Exit Horatio.]

O, this is the poison of deep grief; it springs
All from her father's death. O Gertrude, Gertrude,
When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in battalions. First, her father slain;
Next, your son gone; and he most violent author
Of his own just remove; the people muddied,
Thick and and unwholesome in their thoughts and whispers
For good Polonius' death; and we have done but greenly
In hugger-mugger to inter him. Poor Ophelia
Divided from herself and her fair judgment,
Without the which we are pictures or mere beasts.
Last, and as much containing as all these,
Her brother is in secret come from France,
Feeds on his wonder, keeps himself in clouds,
And wants not buzzers to infect his ear
With pestilent speeches of his father's death,
Wherein necessity, of matter beggar'd,

Will nothing stick our person to arraign
In ear and ear. O my dear Gertrude, this,
Like to a murdering piece, in many places
Gives me superfluous death.

[*A noise within.*]

QUEEN.

Alack, what noise is this?

KING.

Where are my Switzers? Let them guard the door.

Enter a Gentleman.

What is the matter?

GENTLEMAN.

Save yourself, my lord.

The ocean, overpeering of his list,
Eats not the flats with more impetuous haste
Than young Laertes, in a riotous head,
O'erbears your offices. The rabble call him lord,
And, as the world were now but to begin,
Antiquity forgot, custom not known,
The ratifiers and props of every word,
They cry 'Choose we! Laertes shall be king!'
Caps, hands, and tongues applaud it to the clouds,
'Laertes shall be king, Laertes king.'

QUEEN.

How cheerfully on the false trail they cry.

O, this is counter, you false Danish dogs.

[*A noise within.*]

KING.

The doors are broke.

Enter Laertes, armed; Danes following.

LAERTES.

Where is this king?—Sirs, stand you all without.

Danes.

No, let's come in.

LAERTES.

I pray you, give me leave.

DANES.

We will, we will.

[They retire without the door.]

LAERTES.

I thank you. Keep the door. O thou vile king,
Give me my father.

QUEEN.

Calmly, good Laertes.

LAERTES.

That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me bastard;
Cries cuckold to my father, brands the harlot
Even here between the chaste unsmirched brow
Of my true mother.

KING.

What is the cause, Laertes,
That thy rebellion looks so giant-like?—
Let him go, Gertrude. Do not fear our person.
There's such divinity doth hedge a king,
That treason can but peep to what it would,
Acts little of his will.—Tell me, Laertes,
Why thou art thus incens'd.—Let him go, Gertrude:—
Speak, man.

LAERTES.

Where is my father?

KING.

Dead.

QUEEN.

But not by him.

KING.

Let him demand his fill.

LAERTES.

How came he dead? I'll not be juggled with.
To hell, allegiance! Vows, to the blackest devil!

Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!
I dare damnation. To this point I stand,
That both the worlds, I give to negligence,
Let come what comes; only I'll be reveng'd
Most thoroughly for my father.

KING.

Who shall stay you?

LAERTES.

My will, not all the world.
And for my means, I'll husband them so well,
They shall go far with little.

KING.

Good Laertes,
If you desire to know the certainty
Of your dear father's death, is't writ in your revenge
That, sweepstake, you will draw both friend and foe,
Winner and loser?

LAERTES.

None but his enemies.

KING.

Will you know them then?

LAERTES.

To his good friends thus wide I'll ope my arms;
And, like the kind life-rendering pelican,
Repast them with my blood.

KING.

Why, now you speak
Like a good child and a true gentleman.
That I am guiltless of your father's death,
And am most sensibly in grief for it,
It shall as level to your judgment 'pear
As day does to your eye.

DANES.

[*Within.*] Let her come in.

LAERTES.

How now! What noise is that?

Re-enter Ophelia, fantastically dressed with straws and flowers.

O heat, dry up my brains. Tears seven times salt,
Burn out the sense and virtue of mine eye.
By heaven, thy madness shall be paid by weight,
Till our scale turn the beam. O rose of May!
Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia!
O heavens, is't possible a young maid's wits
Should be as mortal as an old man's life?
Nature is fine in love, and where 'tis fine,
It sends some precious instance of itself
After the thing it loves.

OPHELIA.

[Sings.]

They bore him barefac'd on the bier,
Hey no nonny, nonny, hey nonny
And on his grave rain'd many a tear.—
Fare you well, my dove!

LAERTES.

Hadst thou thy wits, and didst persuade revenge,
It could not move thus.

OPHELIA.

You must sing 'Down a-down, and you call him a-down-a.' O,
how the wheel becomes it! It is the false steward that stole his
master's daughter.

LAERTES.

This nothing's more than matter.

OPHELIA.

There's rosemary, that's for remembrance; pray love,
remember. And there is pansies, that's for thoughts.

LAERTES.

A document in madness, thoughts and remembrance fitted.

OPHELIA.

There's fennel for you, and columbines. There's rue for you; and here's some for me. We may call it herb of grace o' Sundays. O you must wear your rue with a difference. There's a daisy. I would give you some violets, but they wither'd all when my father died. They say he made a good end.

[Sings.]

For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy.

LAERTES.

Thought and affliction, passion, hell itself
She turns to favour and to prettiness.

OPHELIA.

[Sings.]

And will he not come again?

And will he not come again?

No, no, he is dead,

Go to thy death-bed,

He never will come again.

His beard was as white as snow,

All flaxen was his poll.

He is gone, he is gone,

And we cast away moan.

God ha' mercy on his soul.

And of all Christian souls, I pray God. God b' wi' ye.

[Exit.]

LAERTES.

Do you see this, O God?

KING.

Laertes, I must commune with your grief,

Or you deny me right. Go but apart,

Make choice of whom your wisest friends you will,

And they shall hear and judge 'twixt you and me.

If by direct or by collateral hand

They find us touch'd, we will our kingdom give,

Our crown, our life, and all that we call ours

To you in satisfaction; but if not,

Be you content to lend your patience to us,
And we shall jointly labour with your soul
To give it due content.

LAERTES.

Let this be so;
His means of death, his obscure burial,—
No trophy, sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones,
No noble rite, nor formal ostentation,—
Cry to be heard, as 'twere from heaven to earth,
That I must call't in question.

KING.

So you shall.
And where th'offence is let the great axe fall.
I pray you go with me.
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VI. Another room in the Castle.

Enter Horatio and a Servant.

HORATIO.

What are they that would speak with me?

SERVANT.

Sailors, sir. They say they have letters for you.

HORATIO.

Let them come in.

[*Exit Servant.*]

I do not know from what part of the world
I should be greeted, if not from Lord Hamlet.

Enter Sailors.

FIRST SAILOR.

God bless you, sir.

HORATIO.

Let him bless thee too.

FIRST SAILOR.

He shall, sir, and't please him. There's a letter for you, sir. It comes from th'ambassador that was bound for England; if your name be Horatio, as I am let to know it is.

HORATIO.

[*Reads.*] 'Horatio, when thou shalt have overlooked this, give these fellows some means to the King. They have letters for him. Ere we were two days old at sea, a pirate of very warlike appointment gave us chase. Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we put on a compelled valour, and in the grapple I boarded them. On the instant they got clear of our ship, so I alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with me like thieves of mercy. But they knew what they did; I am to do a good turn for them. Let the King have the letters I have sent, and repair thou to me with as much haste as thou wouldst fly death. I have words to speak in thine ear will make thee dumb; yet are they much too light for the bore of the matter. These good fellows will bring thee where I am. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hold their course for England: of them I have much to tell thee. Farewell.

He that thou knowest thine,

HAMLET.'

Come, I will give you way for these your letters,
And do't the speedier, that you may direct me
To him from whom you brought them.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VII. Another room in the Castle.

Enter King and Laertes.

KING.

Now must your conscience my acquittance seal,
And you must put me in your heart for friend,
Sith you have heard, and with a knowing ear,

That he which hath your noble father slain
Pursu'd my life.

LAERTES.

It well appears. But tell me
Why you proceeded not against these feats,
So crimeful and so capital in nature,
As by your safety, wisdom, all things else,
You mainly were stirr'd up.

KING.

O, for two special reasons,
Which may to you, perhaps, seem much unsinew'd,
But yet to me they are strong. The Queen his mother
Lives almost by his looks; and for myself,—
My virtue or my plague, be it either which,—
She's so conjunctive to my life and soul,
That, as the star moves not but in his sphere,
I could not but by her. The other motive,
Why to a public count I might not go,
Is the great love the general gender bear him,
Who, dipping all his faults in their affection,
Would like the spring that turneth wood to stone,
Convert his gyves to graces; so that my arrows,
Too slightly timber'd for so loud a wind,
Would have reverted to my bow again,
And not where I had aim'd them.

LAERTES.

And so have I a noble father lost,
A sister driven into desperate terms,
Whose worth, if praises may go back again,
Stood challenger on mount of all the age
For her perfections. But my revenge will come.

KING.

Break not your sleeps for that. You must not think
That we are made of stuff so flat and dull
That we can let our beard be shook with danger,

And think it pastime. You shortly shall hear more.

I lov'd your father, and we love ourself,

And that, I hope, will teach you to imagine—

Enter a Messenger.

How now? What news?

MESSENGER.

Letters, my lord, from Hamlet.

This to your Majesty; this to the Queen.

KING.

From Hamlet! Who brought them?

MESSENGER.

Sailors, my lord, they say; I saw them not.

They were given me by Claudio. He receiv'd them

Of him that brought them.

KING.

Laertes, you shall hear them.

Leave us.

[Exit Messenger.]

[Reads.] 'High and mighty, you shall know I am set naked on your kingdom. Tomorrow shall I beg leave to see your kingly eyes. When I shall, first asking your pardon thereunto, recount the occasions of my sudden and more strange return.

HAMLET.'

What should this mean? Are all the rest come back?
Or is it some abuse, and no such thing?

LAERTES.

Know you the hand?

KING.

'Tis Hamlet's character. 'Naked!'

And in a postscript here he says 'alone.'

Can you advise me?

LAERTES.

I am lost in it, my lord. But let him come,
It warms the very sickness in my heart

That I shall live and tell him to his teeth,
'Thus diest thou.'

KING.

If it be so, Laertes,—
As how should it be so? How otherwise?—
Will you be rul'd by me?

LAERTES.

Ay, my lord;
So you will not o'errule me to a peace.

KING.

To thine own peace. If he be now return'd,
As checking at his voyage, and that he means
No more to undertake it, I will work him
To exploit, now ripe in my device,
Under the which he shall not choose but fall;
And for his death no wind shall breathe,
But even his mother shall uncharge the practice
And call it accident.

LAERTES.

My lord, I will be rul'd;
The rather if you could devise it so
That I might be the organ.

KING.

It falls right.
You have been talk'd of since your travel much,
And that in Hamlet's hearing, for a quality
Wherein they say you shine. Your sum of parts
Did not together pluck such envy from him
As did that one, and that, in my regard,
Of the unworthiest siege.

LAERTES.

What part is that, my lord?

KING.

A very riband in the cap of youth,
Yet needful too, for youth no less becomes

The light and careless livery that it wears
Than settled age his sables and his weeds,
Importing health and graveness. Two months since
Here was a gentleman of Normandy,—
I've seen myself, and serv'd against, the French,
And they can well on horseback, but this gallant
Had witchcraft in't. He grew unto his seat,
And to such wondrous doing brought his horse,
As had he been incorps'd and demi-natur'd
With the brave beast. So far he topp'd my thought
That I in forgery of shapes and tricks,
Come short of what he did.

LAERTES.

A Norman was't?

KING.

A Norman.

LAERTES.

Upon my life, Lamond.

KING.

The very same.

LAERTES.

I know him well. He is the brooch indeed
And gem of all the nation.

KING.

He made confession of you,
And gave you such a masterly report
For art and exercise in your defence,
And for your rapier most especially,
That he cried out 'twould be a sight indeed
If one could match you. The scrimers of their nation
He swore had neither motion, guard, nor eye,
If you oppos'd them. Sir, this report of his
Did Hamlet so envenom with his envy
That he could nothing do but wish and beg

Your sudden coming o'er to play with him.

Now, out of this,—

LAERTES.

What out of this, my lord?

KING.

Laertes, was your father dear to you?

Or are you like the painting of a sorrow,

A face without a heart?

LAERTES.

Why ask you this?

KING.

Not that I think you did not love your father,

But that I know love is begun by time,

And that I see, in passages of proof,

Time qualifies the spark and fire of it.

There lives within the very flame of love

A kind of wick or snuff that will abate it;

And nothing is at a like goodness still,

For goodness, growing to a pleurisy,

Dies in his own too much. That we would do,

We should do when we would; for this 'would' changes,

And hath abatements and delays as many

As there are tongues, are hands, are accidents;

And then this 'should' is like a spendthrift sigh

That hurts by easing. But to the quick o' th'ulcer:

Hamlet comes back: what would you undertake

To show yourself your father's son in deed,

More than in words?

LAERTES.

To cut his throat i' th' church.

KING.

No place, indeed, should murder sanctuarize;

Revenge should have no bounds. But good Laertes,

Will you do this, keep close within your chamber.

Hamlet return'd shall know you are come home:

We'll put on those shall praise your excellence,
And set a double varnish on the fame
The Frenchman gave you, bring you in fine together
And wager on your heads. He, being remiss,
Most generous, and free from all contriving,
Will not peruse the foils; so that with ease,
Or with a little shuffling, you may choose
A sword unbated, and in a pass of practice,
Requite him for your father.

LAERTES.

I will do't.
And for that purpose I'll anoint my sword.
I bought an unction of a mountebank
So mortal that, but dip a knife in it,
Where it draws blood no cataplasm so rare,
Collected from all simples that have virtue
Under the moon, can save the thing from death
This is but scratch'd withal. I'll touch my point
With this contagion, that if I gall him slightly,
It may be death.

KING.

Let's further think of this,
Weigh what convenience both of time and means
May fit us to our shape. If this should fail,
And that our drift look through our bad performance.
'Twere better not assay'd. Therefore this project
Should have a back or second, that might hold
If this did blast in proof. Soft, let me see.
We'll make a solemn wager on your cunnings,—
I ha't! When in your motion you are hot and dry,
As make your bouts more violent to that end,
And that he calls for drink, I'll have prepar'd him
A chalice for the nonce; whereon but sipping,
If he by chance escape your venom'd stuck,
Our purpose may hold there.

Enter Queen.

How now, sweet Queen?

QUEEN.

One woe doth tread upon another's heel,
So fast they follow. Your sister's drown'd, Laertes.

LAERTES.

Drown'd! O, where?

QUEEN.

There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
That shows his hoary leaves in the glassy stream.
There with fantastic garlands did she make
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples,
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them.
There on the pendant boughs her coronet weeds
Clamb'ring to hang, an envious sliver broke,
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide,
And mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up,
Which time she chaunted snatches of old tunes,
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and indued
Unto that element. But long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death.

LAERTES.

Alas, then she is drown'd?

QUEEN.

Drown'd, drown'd.

LAERTES.

Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,
And therefore I forbid my tears. But yet
It is our trick; nature her custom holds,
Let shame say what it will. When these are gone,

The woman will be out. Adieu, my lord,
I have a speech of fire, that fain would blaze,
But that this folly douts it.

[Exit.]

KING.

Let's follow, Gertrude;
How much I had to do to calm his rage!
Now fear I this will give it start again;
Therefore let's follow.

[Exeunt.]

23. Hamlet - Act V

ACT V

SCENE I. A churchyard.

Enter two Clowns with spades, &c.

FIRST CLOWN.

Is she to be buried in Christian burial, when she wilfully seeks her own salvation?

SECOND CLOWN.

I tell thee she is, and therefore make her grave straight. The crowner hath sat on her, and finds it Christian burial.

FIRST CLOWN.

How can that be, unless she drowned herself in her own defence?

SECOND CLOWN.

Why, 'tis found so.

FIRST CLOWN.

It must be *se offendendo*, it cannot be else. For here lies the point: if I drown myself wittingly, it argues an act: and an act hath three branches. It is to act, to do, and to perform: argal, she drowned herself wittingly.

SECOND CLOWN.

Nay, but hear you, goodman delver,—

FIRST CLOWN.

Give me leave. Here lies the water; good. Here stands the man; good. If the man go to this water and drown himself, it is, will he nill he, he goes,—mark you that. But if the water come to him and drown him, he drowns not himself. Argal, he that is not guilty of his own death shortens not his own life.

SECOND CLOWN.

But is this law?

FIRST CLOWN.

Ay, marry, is't, crowner's quest law.

SECOND CLOWN.

Will you ha' the truth on't? If this had not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried out o' Christian burial.

FIRST CLOWN.

Why, there thou say'st. And the more pity that great folk should have countenance in this world to drown or hang themselves more than their even Christian. Come, my spade. There is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners, ditchers, and grave-makers: they hold up Adam's profession.

SECOND CLOWN.

Was he a gentleman?

FIRST CLOWN.

He was the first that ever bore arms.

SECOND CLOWN.

Why, he had none.

FIRST CLOWN.

What, art a heathen? How dost thou understand the Scripture? The Scripture says Adam digg'd. Could he dig without arms? I'll put another question to thee. If thou answerest me not to the purpose, confess thyself—

SECOND CLOWN.

Go to.

FIRST CLOWN.

What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?

SECOND CLOWN.

The gallows-maker; for that frame outlives a thousand tenants.

FIRST CLOWN.

I like thy wit well in good faith, the gallows does well. But how does it well? It does well to those that do ill. Now, thou dost ill

to say the gallows is built stronger than the church; argal, the gallows may do well to thee. To't again, come.

SECOND CLOWN.

Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright, or a carpenter?

FIRST CLOWN.

Ay, tell me that, and unyoke.

SECOND CLOWN.

Marry, now I can tell.

FIRST CLOWN.

To't.

SECOND CLOWN.

Mass, I cannot tell.

Enter Hamlet and Horatio, at a distance.

FIRST CLOWN.

Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating; and when you are asked this question next, say 'a grave-maker'. The houses he makes last till doomsday. Go, get thee to Yaughan; fetch me a stoup of liquor.

[Exit Second Clown.]

[Digs and sings.]

In youth when I did love, did love,
Methought it was very sweet;
To contract, O, the time for, a, my behove,
O methought there was nothing meet.

HAMLET.

Has this fellow no feeling of his business, that he sings at grave-making?

HORATIO.

Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.

HAMLET.

'Tis e'en so; the hand of little employment hath the daintier sense.

FIRST CLOWN.

[Sings.]

But age with his stealing steps
Hath claw'd me in his clutch,
And hath shipp'd me into the land,
As if I had never been such.

[Throws up a skull.]

HAMLET.

That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once. How the knave jowls it to th' ground, as if 'twere Cain's jawbone, that did the first murder! This might be the pate of a politician which this ass now o'er-offices, one that would circumvent God, might it not?

HORATIO.

It might, my lord.

HAMLET.

Or of a courtier, which could say 'Good morrow, sweet lord! How dost thou, good lord?' This might be my lord such-a-one, that praised my lord such-a-one's horse when he meant to beg it, might it not?

HORATIO.

Ay, my lord.

HAMLET.

Why, e'en so: and now my Lady Worm's; chapless, and knocked about the mazard with a sexton's spade. Here's fine revolution, an we had the trick to see't. Did these bones cost no more the breeding but to play at loggets with 'em? Mine ache to think on't.

FIRST CLOWN.

[Sings.]

A pickaxe and a spade, a spade,
For and a shrouding-sheet;
O, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet.

[Throws up another skull.]

HAMLET.

There's another. Why may not that be the skull of a lawyer?

Where be his quiddits now, his quillets, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks? Why does he suffer this rude knave now to knock him about the scone with a dirty shovel, and will not tell him of his action of battery? Hum. This fellow might be in's time a great buyer of land, with his statutes, his recognizances, his fines, his double vouchers, his recoveries. Is this the fine of his fines, and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine pate full of fine dirt? Will his vouchers vouch him no more of his purchases, and double ones too, than the length and breadth of a pair of indentures? The very conveyances of his lands will scarcely lie in this box; and must the inheritor himself have no more, ha?

HORATIO.

Not a jot more, my lord.

HAMLET.

Is not parchment made of sheep-skins?

HORATIO.

Ay, my lord, and of calf-skins too.

HAMLET.

They are sheep and calves which seek out assurance in that. I will speak to this fellow.—Whose grave's this, sir?

FIRST CLOWN.

Mine, sir.

[*Sings.*]

O, a pit of clay for to be made

For such a guest is meet.

HAMLET.

I think it be thine indeed, for thou liest in't.

FIRST CLOWN.

You lie out on't, sir, and therefore 'tis not yours.

For my part, I do not lie in't, yet it is mine.

HAMLET.

Thou dost lie in't, to be in't and say it is thine. 'Tis for the dead, not for the quick; therefore thou liest.

FIRST CLOWN.

'Tis a quick lie, sir; 't will away again from me to you.

HAMLET.

What man dost thou dig it for?

FIRST CLOWN.

For no man, sir.

HAMLET.

What woman then?

FIRST CLOWN.

For none neither.

HAMLET.

Who is to be buried in't?

FIRST CLOWN.

One that was a woman, sir; but, rest her soul, she's dead.

HAMLET.

How absolute the knave is! We must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us. By the Lord, Horatio, these three years I have taken note of it, the age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier he galls his kibe.—How long hast thou been a grave-maker?

FIRST CLOWN.

Of all the days i' th' year, I came to't that day that our last King Hamlet o'ercame Fortinbras.

HAMLET.

How long is that since?

FIRST CLOWN.

Cannot you tell that? Every fool can tell that. It was the very day that young Hamlet was born,—he that is mad, and sent into England.

HAMLET.

Ay, marry, why was he sent into England?

FIRST CLOWN.

Why, because he was mad; he shall recover his wits there; or if he do not, it's no great matter there.

HAMLET.

Why?

FIRST CLOWN.

'Twill not be seen in him there; there the men are as mad as he.

HAMLET.

How came he mad?

FIRST CLOWN.

Very strangely, they say.

HAMLET.

How strangely?

FIRST CLOWN.

Faith, e'en with losing his wits.

HAMLET.

Upon what ground?

FIRST CLOWN.

Why, here in Denmark. I have been sexton here, man and boy, thirty years.

HAMLET.

How long will a man lie i' th'earth ere he rot?

FIRST CLOWN.

Faith, if he be not rotten before he die,—as we have many pocky corsers nowadays that will scarce hold the laying in,—he will last you some eight year or nine year. A tanner will last you nine year.

HAMLET.

Why he more than another?

FIRST CLOWN.

Why, sir, his hide is so tann'd with his trade that he will keep out water a great while. And your water is a sore decayer of your whoreson dead body. Here's a skull now; this skull hath lain in the earth three-and-twenty years.

HAMLET.

Whose was it?

FIRST CLOWN.

A whoreson, mad fellow's it was. Whose do you think it was?

HAMLET.

Nay, I know not.

FIRST CLOWN.

A pestilence on him for a mad rogue! A pour'd a flagon of Rhenish on my head once. This same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the King's jester.

HAMLET.

This?

FIRST CLOWN.

E'en that.

HAMLET.

Let me see. [*Takes the skull.*] Alas, poor Yorick. I knew him, Horatio, a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy. He hath borne me on his back a thousand times; and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is! My gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kiss'd I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now, to mock your own grinning? Quite chop-fallen? Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come. Make her laugh at that.—Prythee, Horatio, tell me one thing.

HORATIO.

What's that, my lord?

HAMLET.

Dost thou think Alexander looked o' this fashion i' th'earth?

HORATIO.

E'en so.

HAMLET.

And smelt so? Pah!

[*Throws down the skull.*]

HORATIO.

E'en so, my lord.

HAMLET.

To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not

imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander till he find it
stopping a bung-hole?

HORATIO.

'Twere to consider too curiously to consider so.

HAMLET.

No, faith, not a jot. But to follow him thither with modesty
enough, and likelihood to lead it; as thus. Alexander died,
Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust; the dust
is earth; of earth we make loam; and why of that loam whereto
he was converted might they not stop a beer-barrel?

Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay,

Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.

O, that that earth which kept the world in awe

Should patch a wall t'expel the winter's flaw.

But soft! but soft! aside! Here comes the King.

Enter priests, &c, in procession; the corpse of Ophelia, Laertes
and Mourners following; King, Queen, their Trains, &c.

The Queen, the courtiers. Who is that they follow?

And with such maimed rites? This doth betoken

The corse they follow did with desperate hand

Fordo it own life. 'Twas of some estate.

Couch we awhile and mark.

[Retiring with Horatio.]

LAERTES.

What ceremony else?

HAMLET.

That is Laertes, a very noble youth. Mark.

LAERTES.

What ceremony else?

PRIEST.

Her obsequies have been as far enlarg'd

As we have warranties. Her death was doubtful;

And but that great command o'ersways the order,

She should in ground unsanctified have lodg'd

Till the last trumpet. For charitable prayers,

Shards, flints, and pebbles should be thrown on her.
Yet here she is allowed her virgin rites,
Her maiden strewments, and the bringing home
Of bell and burial.

LAERTES.

Must there no more be done?

PRIEST.

No more be done.

We should profane the service of the dead
To sing sage requiem and such rest to her
As to peace-parted souls.

LAERTES.

Lay her i' th'earth,
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring. I tell thee, churlish priest,
A minist'ring angel shall my sister be
When thou liest howling.

HAMLET.

What, the fair Ophelia?

QUEEN.

[*Scattering flowers.*] Sweets to the sweet. Farewell.
I hop'd thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife;
I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd, sweet maid,
And not have strew'd thy grave.

LAERTES.

O, treble woe
Fall ten times treble on that cursed head
Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense
Depriv'd thee of. Hold off the earth a while,
Till I have caught her once more in mine arms.

[*Leaps into the grave.*]

Now pile your dust upon the quick and dead,
Till of this flat a mountain you have made,
To o'ertop old Pelion or the skyish head
Of blue Olympus.

HAMLET.

[Advancing.]

What is he whose grief
Bears such an emphasis? whose phrase of sorrow
Conjures the wand'ring stars, and makes them stand
Like wonder-wounded hearers? This is I,
Hamlet the Dane.

[Leaps into the grave.]

LAERTES.

[Grappling with him.] The devil take thy soul!

HAMLET.

Thou pray'st not well.
I prythee take thy fingers from my throat;
For though I am not splenative and rash,
Yet have I in me something dangerous,
Which let thy wiseness fear. Away thy hand!

KING.

Pluck them asunder.

QUEEN.

Hamlet! Hamlet!

All.

Gentlemen!

HORATIO.

Good my lord, be quiet.

[The Attendants part them, and they come out of the grave.]

HAMLET.

Why, I will fight with him upon this theme
Until my eyelids will no longer wag.

QUEEN.

O my son, what theme?

HAMLET.

I lov'd Ophelia; forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up my sum. What wilt thou do for her?

KING.

O, he is mad, Laertes.

QUEEN.

For love of God forbear him!

HAMLET.

'Swounds, show me what thou'lt do:

Woul't weep? woul't fight? woul't fast? woul't tear thyself?

Woul't drink up eisel? eat a crocodile?

I'll do't. Dost thou come here to whine?

To outface me with leaping in her grave?

Be buried quick with her, and so will I.

And if thou prate of mountains, let them throw

Millions of acres on us, till our ground,

Singeing his pate against the burning zone,

Make Ossa like a wart. Nay, an thou'lt mouth,

I'll rant as well as thou.

QUEEN.

This is mere madness:

And thus awhile the fit will work on him;

Anon, as patient as the female dove,

When that her golden couplets are disclos'd,

His silence will sit drooping.

HAMLET.

Hear you, sir;

What is the reason that you use me thus?

I lov'd you ever. But it is no matter.

Let Hercules himself do what he may,

The cat will mew, and dog will have his day.

[*Exit.*]

KING.

I pray thee, good Horatio, wait upon him.

[*Exit Horatio.*]

[*To Laertes*]

Strengthen your patience in our last night's speech;

We'll put the matter to the present push.—

Good Gertrude, set some watch over your son.
This grave shall have a living monument.
An hour of quiet shortly shall we see;
Till then in patience our proceeding be.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. A hall in the Castle.

Enter Hamlet and Horatio.

HAMLET.

So much for this, sir. Now let me see the other;
You do remember all the circumstance?

HORATIO.

Remember it, my lord!

HAMLET.

Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting
That would not let me sleep. Methought I lay
Worse than the mutinies in the bilboes. Rashly,
And prais'd be rashness for it,—let us know,
Our indiscretion sometime serves us well,
When our deep plots do pall; and that should teach us
There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.

HORATIO.

That is most certain.

HAMLET.

Up from my cabin,
My sea-gown scarf'd about me, in the dark
Grop'd I to find out them; had my desire,
Finger'd their packet, and in fine, withdrew
To mine own room again, making so bold,
My fears forgetting manners, to unseal
Their grand commission; where I found, Horatio,
Oh royal knavery! an exact command,

Larded with many several sorts of reasons,
Importing Denmark's health, and England's too,
With ho! such bugs and goblins in my life,
That on the supervise, no leisure bated,
No, not to stay the grinding of the axe,
My head should be struck off.

HORATIO.

Is't possible?

HAMLET.

Here's the commission, read it at more leisure.
But wilt thou hear me how I did proceed?

HORATIO.

I beseech you.

HAMLET.

Being thus benetted round with villanies,—
Or I could make a prologue to my brains,
They had begun the play,—I sat me down,
Devis'd a new commission, wrote it fair:
I once did hold it, as our statists do,
A baseness to write fair, and labour'd much
How to forget that learning; but, sir, now
It did me yeoman's service. Wilt thou know
The effect of what I wrote?

HORATIO.

Ay, good my lord.

HAMLET.

An earnest conjuration from the King,
As England was his faithful tributary,
As love between them like the palm might flourish,
As peace should still her wheaten garland wear
And stand a comma 'tween their amities,
And many such-like 'as'es of great charge,
That on the view and know of these contents,
Without debatement further, more or less,

He should the bearers put to sudden death,
Not shriving-time allow'd.

HORATIO.

How was this seal'd?

HAMLET.

Why, even in that was heaven ordinant.
I had my father's signet in my purse,
Which was the model of that Danish seal:
Folded the writ up in the form of the other,
Subscrib'd it: gave't th'impression; plac'd it safely,
The changeling never known. Now, the next day
Was our sea-fight, and what to this was sequent
Thou know'st already.

HORATIO.

So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to't.

HAMLET.

Why, man, they did make love to this employment.
They are not near my conscience; their defeat
Does by their own insinuation grow.
'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes
Between the pass and fell incensed points
Of mighty opposites.

HORATIO.

Why, what a king is this!

HAMLET.

Does it not, thinks't thee, stand me now upon,—
He that hath kill'd my king, and whor'd my mother,
Popp'd in between th'election and my hopes,
Thrown out his angle for my proper life,
And with such cozenage—is't not perfect conscience
To quit him with this arm? And is't not to be damn'd
To let this canker of our nature come
In further evil?

HORATIO.

It must be shortly known to him from England
What is the issue of the business there.

HAMLET.

It will be short. The interim is mine;
And a man's life's no more than to say 'One'.
But I am very sorry, good Horatio,
That to Laertes I forgot myself;
For by the image of my cause I see
The portraiture of his. I'll court his favours.
But sure the bravery of his grief did put me
Into a tow'ring passion.

HORATIO.

Peace, who comes here?

Enter Osric.

OSRIC.

Your lordship is right welcome back to Denmark.

HAMLET.

I humbly thank you, sir. Dost know this waterfly?

HORATIO.

No, my good lord.

HAMLET.

Thy state is the more gracious; for 'tis a vice to know him. He
hath much land, and fertile; let a beast be lord of beasts, and
his crib shall stand at the king's mess; 'tis a chough; but, as I say,
spacious in the possession of dirt.

OSRIC.

Sweet lord, if your lordship were at leisure, I should impart a
thing to you from his Majesty.

HAMLET.

I will receive it with all diligence of spirit. Put your bonnet to his
right use; 'tis for the head.

OSRIC.

I thank your lordship, 'tis very hot.

HAMLET.

No, believe me, 'tis very cold, the wind is northerly.

OSRIC.

It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.

HAMLET.

Methinks it is very sultry and hot for my complexion.

OSRIC.

Exceedingly, my lord; it is very sultry,—as 'twere—I cannot tell how. But, my lord, his Majesty bade me signify to you that he has laid a great wager on your head. Sir, this is the matter,—

HAMLET.

I beseech you, remember,—

[Hamlet moves him to put on his hat.]

OSRIC.

Nay, in good faith; for mine ease, in good faith. Sir, here is newly come to court Laertes; believe me, an absolute gentleman, full of most excellent differences, of very soft society and great showing. Indeed, to speak feelingly of him, he is the card or calendar of gentry; for you shall find in him the continent of what part a gentleman would see.

HAMLET.

Sir, his definement suffers no perdition in you, though I know, to divide him inventorially would dizzy th'arithmetical of memory, and yet but yaw neither, in respect of his quick sail. But, in the verity of extolment, I take him to be a soul of great article and his infusion of such dearth and rareness as, to make true diction of him, his semblable is his mirror and who else would trace him his umbrage, nothing more.

OSRIC.

Your lordship speaks most infallibly of him.

HAMLET.

The concernancy, sir? Why do we wrap the gentleman in our more rawer breath?

OSRIC.

Sir?

HORATIO.

Is't not possible to understand in another tongue? You will do't, sir, really.

HAMLET.

What imports the nomination of this gentleman?

OSRIC.

Of Laertes?

HORATIO.

His purse is empty already, all's golden words are spent.

HAMLET.

Of him, sir.

OSRIC.

I know you are not ignorant,—

HAMLET.

I would you did, sir; yet in faith if you did, it would not much approve me. Well, sir?

OSRIC.

You are not ignorant of what excellence Laertes is,—

HAMLET.

I dare not confess that, lest I should compare with him in excellence; but to know a man well were to know himself.

OSRIC.

I mean, sir, for his weapon; but in the imputation laid on him, by them in his meed he's unfellowed.

HAMLET.

What's his weapon?

OSRIC.

Rapier and dagger.

HAMLET.

That's two of his weapons. But well.

OSRIC.

The King, sir, hath wager'd with him six Barbary horses, against the which he has imponed, as I take it, six French rapiers and poniards, with their assigns, as girdle, hangers, and so. Three of the carriages, in faith, are very dear to fancy, very responsive to the hilts, most delicate carriages, and of very liberal conceit.

HAMLET.

What call you the carriages?

HORATIO.

I knew you must be edified by the margin ere you had done.

OSRIC.

The carriages, sir, are the hangers.

HAMLET.

The phrase would be more german to the matter if we could carry cannon by our sides. I would it might be hangers till then. But on. Six Barbary horses against six French swords, their assigns, and three liberal conceited carriages: that's the French bet against the Danish. Why is this all imponed, as you call it?

OSRIC.

The King, sir, hath laid that in a dozen passes between you and him, he shall not exceed you three hits. He hath laid on twelve for nine. And it would come to immediate trial if your lordship would vouchsafe the answer.

HAMLET.

How if I answer no?

OSRIC.

I mean, my lord, the opposition of your person in trial.

HAMLET.

Sir, I will walk here in the hall. If it please his Majesty, it is the breathing time of day with me. Let the foils be brought, the gentleman willing, and the King hold his purpose, I will win for him if I can; if not, I will gain nothing but my shame and the odd hits.

OSRIC.

Shall I re-deliver you e'en so?

HAMLET.

To this effect, sir; after what flourish your nature will.

OSRIC.

I commend my duty to your lordship.

HAMLET.

Yours, yours.

[*Exit Osric.*]

He does well to commend it himself, there are no tongues else for's turn.

HORATIO.

This lapwing runs away with the shell on his head.

HAMLET.

He did comply with his dug before he suck'd it. Thus has he,—and many more of the same bevy that I know the drossy age dotes on,— only got the tune of the time and outward habit of encounter; a kind of yeasty collection, which carries them through and through the most fanned and winnowed opinions; and do but blow them to their trial, the bubbles are out,

Enter a Lord.

LORD.

My lord, his Majesty commended him to you by young Osric, who brings back to him that you attend him in the hall. He sends to know if your pleasure hold to play with Laertes or that you will take longer time.

HAMLET.

I am constant to my purposes, they follow the King's pleasure. If his fitness speaks, mine is ready. Now or whensoever, provided I be so able as now.

LORD.

The King and Queen and all are coming down.

HAMLET.

In happy time.

LORD.

The Queen desires you to use some gentle entertainment to Laertes before you fall to play.

HAMLET.

She well instructs me.

[*Exit Lord.*]

HORATIO.

You will lose this wager, my lord.

HAMLET.

I do not think so. Since he went into France, I have been in continual practice. I shall win at the odds. But thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart: but it is no matter.

HORATIO.

Nay, good my lord.

HAMLET.

It is but foolery; but it is such a kind of gain-giving as would perhaps trouble a woman.

HORATIO.

If your mind dislike anything, obey it. I will forestall their repair hither, and say you are not fit.

HAMLET.

Not a whit, we defy augury. There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all. Since no man has aught of what he leaves, what is't to leave betimes?

Enter King, Queen, Laertes, Lords, Osric and Attendants with foils &c.

KING.

Come, Hamlet, come, and take this hand from me.

[The King puts Laertes's hand into Hamlet's.]

HAMLET.

Give me your pardon, sir. I have done you wrong;

But pardon't as you are a gentleman.

This presence knows, and you must needs have heard,

How I am punish'd with sore distraction.

What I have done

That might your nature, honour, and exception

Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.

Was't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes? Never Hamlet.

If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,

And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,

Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it.

Who does it, then? His madness. If't be so,
Hamlet is of the faction that is wrong'd;
His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.
Sir, in this audience,
Let my disclaiming from a purpos'd evil
Free me so far in your most generous thoughts
That I have shot my arrow o'er the house
And hurt my brother.

LAERTES.

I am satisfied in nature,
Whose motive in this case should stir me most
To my revenge. But in my terms of honour
I stand aloof, and will no reconciliation
Till by some elder masters of known honour
I have a voice and precedent of peace
To keep my name ungor'd. But till that time
I do receive your offer'd love like love,
And will not wrong it.

HAMLET.

I embrace it freely,
And will this brother's wager frankly play.—
Give us the foils; come on.

LAERTES.

Come, one for me.

HAMLET.

I'll be your foil, Laertes; in mine ignorance
Your skill shall like a star i' th' darkest night,
Stick fiery off indeed.

LAERTES.

You mock me, sir.

HAMLET.

No, by this hand.

KING.

Give them the foils, young Osric. Cousin Hamlet,
You know the wager?

HAMLET.

Very well, my lord.

Your Grace has laid the odds o' the weaker side.

KING.

I do not fear it. I have seen you both;

But since he is better'd, we have therefore odds.

LAERTES.

This is too heavy. Let me see another.

HAMLET.

This likes me well. These foils have all a length?

[They prepare to play.]

OSRIC.

Ay, my good lord.

KING.

Set me the stoups of wine upon that table.

If Hamlet give the first or second hit,

Or quit in answer of the third exchange,

Let all the battlements their ordnance fire;

The King shall drink to Hamlet's better breath,

And in the cup an union shall he throw

Richer than that which four successive kings

In Denmark's crown have worn. Give me the cups;

And let the kettle to the trumpet speak,

The trumpet to the cannoneer without,

The cannons to the heavens, the heavens to earth,

'Now the King drinks to Hamlet.' Come, begin.

And you, the judges, bear a wary eye.

HAMLET.

Come on, sir.

LAERTES.

Come, my lord.

[They play.]

HAMLET.

One.

LAERTES.

No.

HAMLET.

Judgment.

OSRIC.

A hit, a very palpable hit.

LAERTES.

Well; again.

KING.

Stay, give me drink. Hamlet, this pearl is thine;

Here's to thy health.

[Trumpets sound, and cannon shot off within.]

Give him the cup.

HAMLET.

I'll play this bout first; set it by awhile.

[They play.]

Come. Another hit; what say you?

LAERTES.

A touch, a touch, I do confess.

KING.

Our son shall win.

QUEEN.

He's fat, and scant of breath.

Here, Hamlet, take my napkin, rub thy brows.

The Queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet.

HAMLET.

Good madam.

KING.

Gertrude, do not drink.

QUEEN.

I will, my lord; I pray you pardon me.

KING.

[Aside.] It is the poison'd cup; it is too late.

HAMLET.

I dare not drink yet, madam. By and by.

QUEEN.

Come, let me wipe thy face.

LAERTES.

My lord, I'll hit him now.

KING.

I do not think't.

LAERTES.

[*Aside.*] And yet 'tis almost 'gainst my conscience.

HAMLET.

Come for the third, Laertes. You do but dally.

I pray you pass with your best violence.

I am afeard you make a wanton of me.

LAERTES.

Say you so? Come on.

[*They play.*]

OSRIC.

Nothing neither way.

LAERTES.

Have at you now.

[*Laertes wounds Hamlet; then, in scuffling, they change rapiers, and Hamlet wounds Laertes.*]

KING.

Part them; they are incens'd.

HAMLET.

Nay, come again!

[*The Queen falls.*]

OSRIC.

Look to the Queen there, ho!

HORATIO.

They bleed on both sides. How is it, my lord?

OSRIC.

How is't, Laertes?

LAERTES.

Why, as a woodcock to my own springe, Osric.

I am justly kill'd with mine own treachery.

HAMLET.

How does the Queen?

KING.

She swoons to see them bleed.

QUEEN.

No, no, the drink, the drink! O my dear Hamlet!

The drink, the drink! I am poison'd.

[Dies.]

HAMLET.

O villainy! Ho! Let the door be lock'd:

Treachery! Seek it out.

[Laertes falls.]

LAERTES.

It is here, Hamlet. Hamlet, thou art slain.

No medicine in the world can do thee good.

In thee there is not half an hour of life;

The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,

Unbated and envenom'd. The foul practice

Hath turn'd itself on me. Lo, here I lie,

Never to rise again. Thy mother's poison'd.

I can no more. The King, the King's to blame.

HAMLET.

The point envenom'd too!

Then, venom, to thy work.

[Stabs the King.]

OSRIC and LORDS.

Treason! treason!

KING.

O yet defend me, friends. I am but hurt.

HAMLET.

Here, thou incestuous, murderous, damned Dane,

Drink off this potion. Is thy union here?

Follow my mother.

[King dies.]

LAERTES.

He is justly serv'd.

It is a poison temper'd by himself.

Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet.

Mine and my father's death come not upon thee,

Nor thine on me.

[Dies.]

HAMLET.

Heaven make thee free of it! I follow thee.

I am dead, Horatio. Wretched Queen, adieu.

You that look pale and tremble at this chance,

That are but mutes or audience to this act,

Had I but time,—as this fell sergeant, death,

Is strict in his arrest,—O, I could tell you,—

But let it be. Horatio, I am dead,

Thou liv'st; report me and my cause aright

To the unsatisfied.

HORATIO.

Never believe it.

I am more an antique Roman than a Dane.

Here's yet some liquor left.

HAMLET.

As th'art a man,

Give me the cup. Let go; by Heaven, I'll have't.

O good Horatio, what a wounded name,

Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me.

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,

Absent thee from felicity awhile,

And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,

To tell my story.

[March afar off, and shot within.]

What warlike noise is this?

OSRIC.

Young Fortinbras, with conquest come from Poland,

To the ambassadors of England gives

This warlike volley.

HAMLET.

O, I die, Horatio.

The potent poison quite o'er-crows my spirit:

I cannot live to hear the news from England,

But I do prophesy th'election lights

On Fortinbras. He has my dying voice.

So tell him, with the occurrents more and less,

Which have solicited. The rest is silence.

[*Dies.*]

HORATIO.

Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince,

And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.

Why does the drum come hither?

[*March within.*]

Enter Fortinbras, the English Ambassadors and others.

FORTINBRAS.

Where is this sight?

HORATIO.

What is it you would see?

If aught of woe or wonder, cease your search.

FORTINBRAS.

This quarry cries on havoc. O proud death,

What feast is toward in thine eternal cell,

That thou so many princes at a shot

So bloodily hast struck?

FIRST AMBASSADOR.

The sight is dismal;

And our affairs from England come too late.

The ears are senseless that should give us hearing,

To tell him his commandment is fulfill'd,

That Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead.

Where should we have our thanks?

HORATIO.

Not from his mouth,

Had it th'ability of life to thank you.

He never gave commandment for their death.
But since, so jump upon this bloody question,
You from the Polack wars, and you from England
Are here arriv'd, give order that these bodies
High on a stage be placed to the view,
And let me speak to th' yet unknowing world
How these things came about. So shall you hear
Of carnal, bloody and unnatural acts,
Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,
Of deaths put on by cunning and forc'd cause,
And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
Fall'n on the inventors' heads. All this can I
Truly deliver.

FORTINBRAS.

Let us haste to hear it,
And call the noblest to the audience.
For me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune.
I have some rights of memory in this kingdom,
Which now to claim my vantage doth invite me.

HORATIO.

Of that I shall have also cause to speak,
And from his mouth whose voice will draw on more.
But let this same be presently perform'd,
Even while men's minds are wild, lest more mischance
On plots and errors happen.

FORTINBRAS.

Let four captains
Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage,
For he was likely, had he been put on,
To have prov'd most royally; and for his passage,
The soldiers' music and the rites of war
Speak loudly for him.
Take up the bodies. Such a sight as this
Becomes the field, but here shows much amiss.
Go, bid the soldiers shoot.

[A dead march.]

[Exeunt, bearing off the bodies, after which a peal of ordnance is shot off.]

PART VII

LIFE IS A DREAM

24. Life is a Dream - Act I

LIFE IS A DREAM

By Pedro Calderon De La Barca

Translated by Edward Fitzgerald

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Basilio King of Poland.

Segismund his Son.

Astolfo his Nephew.

Estrella his Niece.

Clotaldo a General in Basilio's Service.

Rosaura a Muscovite Lady.

Fife her Attendant.

Chamberlain, Lords in Waiting, Officers,
Soldiers, etc., in Basilio's Service.

ACT I

SCENE I

A pass of rocks, over which a storm is rolling away, and the sun setting: in the foreground, half-way down, a fortress.

(Enter first from the topmost rock Rosaura, as from horseback, in man's attire; and, after her, Fife.)

ROSAURA.

There, four-footed Fury, blast
Engender'd brute, without the wit
Of brute, or mouth to match the bit
Of man—art satisfied at last?
Who, when thunder roll'd aloof,
Tow'rd the spheres of fire your ears
Pricking, and the granite kicking
Into lightning with your hoof,
Among the tempest-shatter'd crags
Shattering your luckless rider
Back into the tempest pass'd?
There then lie to starve and die,
Or find another Phaeton
Mad-mettled as yourself; for I,
Wearied, worried, and for-done,
Alone will down the mountain try,
That knits his brows against the sun.

FIFE (as to his mule).

There, thou mis-begotten thing,
Long-ear'd lightning, tail'd tornado,
Griffin-hoof-in hurricano,
(I might swear till I were almost
Hoarse with roaring Asonante)
Who forsooth because our betters
Would begin to kick and fling
You forthwith your noble mind
Must prove, and kick me off behind,
Tow'rd the very centre whither
Gravity was most inclined.
There where you have made your bed

In it lie; for, wet or dry,
Let what will for me betide you,
Burning, blowing, freezing, hailing;
Famine waste you: devil ride you:
Tempest baste you black and blue:
(To Rosaura.)
There! I think in downright railing
I can hold my own with you.

ROS.

Ah, my good Fife, whose merry loyal pipe,
Come weal, come woe, is never out of tune
What, you in the same plight too?

FIFE.

Ay; And madam—sir—hereby desire,
When you your own adventures sing
Another time in lofty rhyme,
You don't forget the trusty squire
Who went with you Don-quixoting.

ROS.

Well, my good fellow—to leave Pegasus
Who scarce can serve us than our horses worse—
They say no one should rob another of
The single satisfaction he has left
Of singing his own sorrows; one so great,
So says some great philosopher, that trouble
Were worth encount'ring only for the sake
Of weeping over—what perhaps you know
Some poet calls the 'luxury of woe.'

FIFE.

Had I the poet or philosopher
In the place of her that kick'd me off to ride,
I'd test his theory upon his hide.
But no bones broken, madam—sir, I mean?—

ROS.

A scratch here that a handkerchief will heal—
And you?—

FIFE.

A scratch in *quiddity*, or kind:
But not in 'quo'—my wounds are all behind.
But, as you say, to stop this strain,
Which, somehow, once one's in the vein,
Comes clattering after—there again!—
What are we twain—deuce take't!—we two,
I mean, to do—drench'd through and through—
Oh, I shall choke of rhymes, which I believe
Are all that we shall have to live on here.

ROS.

What, is our victual gone too?—

FIFE.

Ay, that brute
Has carried all we had away with her,
Clothing, and cate, and all.

ROS.

And now the sun,
Our only friend and guide, about to sink
Under the stage of earth.

FIFE.

And enter Night,
With Capa y Espada—and—pray heaven!
With but her lanthorn also.

ROS.

Ah, I doubt
To-night, if any, with a dark one—or
Almost burnt out after a month's consumption.
Well! well or ill, on horseback or afoot,
This is the gate that lets me into Poland;
And, sorry welcome as she gives a guest
Who writes his own arrival on her rocks
In his own blood—

Yet better on her stony threshold die,
Than live on unrevenged in Muscovy.

FIFE.

Oh, what a soul some women have—I mean
Some men—

ROS.

Oh, Fife, Fife, as you love me, Fife,
Make yourself perfect in that little part,
Or all will go to ruin!

FIFE.

Oh, I will,
Please God we find some one to try it on.
But, truly, would not any one believe
Some fairy had exchanged us as we lay
Two tiny foster-children in one cradle?

ROS.

Well, be that as it may, Fife, it reminds me
Of what perhaps I should have thought before,
But better late than never—You know I love you,
As you, I know, love me, and loyally
Have follow'd me thus far in my wild venture.
Well! now then—having seen me safe thus far
Safe if not wholly sound—over the rocks
Into the country where my business lies
Why should not you return the way we came,
The storm all clear'd away, and, leaving me
(Who now shall want you, though not thank you, less,
Now that our horses gone) this side the ridge,
Find your way back to dear old home again;
While I—Come, come!—
What, weeping my poor fellow?

FIFE.

Leave you here
Alone—my Lady—Lord! I mean my Lord—
In a strange country—among savages—

Oh, now I know—you would be rid of me
For fear my stumbling speech—

ROS.

Oh, no, no, no!—

I want you with me for a thousand sakes
To which that is as nothing—I myself
More apt to let the secret out myself
Without your help at all—Come, come, cheer up!
And if you sing again, ‘Come weal, come woe,’
Let it be that; for we will never part
Until you give the signal.

FIFE.

‘Tis a bargain.

ROS.

Now to begin, then. ‘Follow, follow me,
‘You fairy elves that be.’

FIFE.

Ay, and go on—

Something of ‘following darkness like a dream,’
For that we’re after.

ROS.

No, after the sun;
Trying to catch hold of his glittering skirts
That hang upon the mountain as he goes.

FIFE.

Ah, he’s himself past catching—as you spoke
He heard what you were saying, and—just so—
Like some scared water-bird,
As we say in my country, *dove* below.

ROS.

Well, we must follow him as best we may.
Poland is no great country, and, as rich
In men and means, will but few acres spare
To lie beneath her barrier mountains bare.

We cannot, I believe, be very far
From mankind or their dwellings.

FIFE.

Send it so!
And well provided for man, woman, and beast.
No, not for beast. Ah, but my heart begins
To yearn for her—

ROS.

Keep close, and keep your feet
From serving you as hers did.

FIFE.

As for beasts,
If in default of other entertainment,
We should provide them with ourselves to eat—
Bears, lions, wolves—

ROS.

Oh, never fear.

FIFE.

Or else,
Default of other beasts, beastlier men,
Cannibals, Anthropophagi, bare Poles
Who never knew a tailor but by taste.

ROS.

Look, look! Unless my fancy misconceive
With twilight—down among the rocks there, Fife—
Some human dwelling, surely—
Or think you but a rock torn from the rocks
In some convulsion like to-day's, and perch'd
Quaintly among them in mock-masonry?

FIFE.

Most likely that, I doubt.

ROS.

No, no—for look!
A square of darkness opening in it—

FIFE.

Oh, I don't half like such openings!—

ROS.

Like the loom

Of night from which she spins her outer gloom—

FIFE.

Lord, Madam, pray forbear this tragic vein

In such a time and place—

ROS.

And now again

Within that square of darkness, look! a light

That feels its way with hesitating pulse,

As we do, through the darkness that it drives

To blacken into deeper night beyond.

FIFE.

In which could we follow that light's example,

As might some English Bardolph with his nose,

We might defy the sunset—Hark, a chain!

ROS.

And now a lamp, a lamp! And now the hand

That carries it.

FIFE.

Oh, Lord! that dreadful chain!

ROS.

And now the bearer of the lamp; indeed

As strange as any in Arabian tale,

So giant-like, and terrible, and grand,

Spite of the skin he's wrapt in.

FIFE.

Why, 'tis his own:

Oh, 'tis some wild man of the woods; I've heard

They build and carry torches—

ROS.

Never Ape

Bore such a brow before the heavens as that—
Chain'd as you say too!—

FIFE.

Oh, that dreadful chain!

ROS.

And now he sets the lamp down by his side,
And with one hand clench'd in his tangled hair
And with a sigh as if his heart would break—

(During this Segismund has entered from the fortress, with a torch.)

SEGISMUND.

Once more the storm has roar'd itself away,
Splitting the crags of God as it retires;
But sparing still what it should only blast,
This guilty piece of human handiwork,
And all that are within it. Oh, how oft,
How oft, within or here abroad, have I
Waited, and in the whisper of my heart
Pray'd for the slanting hand of heaven to strike
The blow myself I dared not, out of fear
Of that Hereafter, worse, they say, than here,
Plunged headlong in, but, till dismissal waited,
To wipe at last all sorrow from men's eyes,
And make this heavy dispensation clear.
Thus have I borne till now, and still endure,
Crouching in sullen impotence day by day,
Till some such out-burst of the elements
Like this rouses the sleeping fire within;
And standing thus upon the threshold of
Another night about to close the door
Upon one wretched day to open it
On one yet wretcheder because one more;—
Once more, you savage heavens, I ask of you—
I, looking up to those relentless eyes
That, now the greater lamp is gone below,

Begin to muster in the listening skies;
In all the shining circuits you have gone
About this theatre of human woe,
What greater sorrow have you gazed upon
Than down this narrow chink you witness still;
And which, did you yourselves not fore-devise,
You registered for others to fulfil!

FIFE.

This is some Laureate at a birthday ode;
No wonder we went rhyming.

ROS.

Hush! And now
See, starting to his feet, he strides about
Far as his tether'd steps—

SEG.

And if the chain
You help'd to rivet round me did contract
Since guiltless infancy from guilt in act;
Of what in aspiration or in thought
Guilty, but in resentment of the wrong
That wreaks revenge on wrong I never wrought
By excommunication from the free
Inheritance that all created life,
Beside myself, is born to—from the wings
That range your own immeasurable blue,
Down to the poor, mute, scale-imprison'd things,
That yet are free to wander, glide, and pass
About that under-sapphire, whereinto
Yourselves transfusing you yourselves englass!

ROS.

What mystery is this?

FIFE.

Why, the man's mad:
That's all the mystery. That's why he's chain'd—
And why—

SEG.

Nor Nature's guiltless life alone—
But that which lives on blood and rapine; nay,
Charter'd with larger liberty to slay
Their guiltless kind, the tyrants of the air
Soar zenith-upward with their screaming prey,
Making pure heaven drop blood upon the stage
Of under earth, where lion, wolf, and bear,
And they that on their treacherous velvet wear
Figure and constellation like your own,
With their still living slaughter bound away
Over the barriers of the mountain cage,
Against which one, blood-guiltless, and endued
With aspiration and with aptitude
Transcending other creatures, day by day
Beats himself mad with unavailing rage!

FIFE.

Why, that must be the meaning of my mule's
Rebellion—

ROS.

Hush!

SEG.

But then if murder be
The law by which not only conscience-blind
Creatures, but man too prospers with his kind;
Who leaving all his guilty fellows free,
Under your fatal auspice and divine
Compulsion, leagued in some mysterious ban
Against one innocent and helpless man,
Abuse their liberty to murder mine:
And sworn to silence, like their masters mute
In heaven, and like them twirling through the mask
Of darkness, answering to all I ask,
Point up to them whose work they execute!

ROS.

Ev'n as I thought, some poor unhappy wretch,
By man wrong'd, wretched, unrevenged, as I!
Nay, so much worse than I, as by those chains
Clipt of the means of self-revenge on those
Who lay on him what they deserve. And I,
Who taunted Heaven a little while ago
With pouring all its wrath upon my head—
Alas! like him who caught the cast-off husk
Of what another bragg'd of feeding on,
Here's one that from the refuse of my sorrows
Could gather all the banquet he desires!
Poor soul, poor soul!

FIFE.

Speak lower—he will hear you.

ROS.

And if he should, what then? Why, if he would,
He could not harm me—Nay, and if he could,
Methinks I'd venture something of a life
I care so little for—

SEG.

Who's that? Clotaldo? Who are you, I say,
That, venturing in these forbidden rocks,
Have lighted on my miserable life,
And your own death?

ROS.

You would not hurt me, surely?

SEG.

Not I; but those that, iron as the chain
In which they slay me with a lingering death,
Will slay you with a sudden—Who are you?

ROS.

A stranger from across the mountain there,
Who, having lost his way in this strange land
And coming night, drew hither to what seem'd
A human dwelling hidden in these rocks,

And where the voice of human sorrow soon
Told him it was so.

SEG.

Ay? But nearer—nearer—
That by this smoky supplement of day
But for a moment I may see who speaks
So pitifully sweet.

FIFE.

Take care! take care!

ROS.

Alas, poor man, that I, myself so helpless,
Could better help you than by barren pity,
And my poor presence—

SEG.

Oh, might that be all!
But that—a few poor moments—and, alas!
The very bliss of having, and the dread
Of losing, under such a penalty
As every moment's having runs more near,
Stifles the very utterance and resource
They cry for quickest; till from sheer despair
Of holding thee, methinks myself would tear
To pieces—

FIFE.

There, his word's enough for it.

SEG.

Oh, think, if you who move about at will,
And live in sweet communion with your kind,
After an hour lost in these lonely rocks
Hunger and thirst after some human voice
To drink, and human face to feed upon;
What must one do where all is mute, or harsh,
And ev'n the naked face of cruelty
Were better than the mask it works beneath?—
Across the mountain then! Across the mountain!

What if the next world which they tell one of
Be only next across the mountain then,
Though I must never see it till I die,
And you one of its angels?

ROS.

Alas; alas!

No angel! And the face you think so fair,
'Tis but the dismal frame-work of these rocks
That makes it seem so; and the world I come from—
Alas, alas, too many faces there
Are but fair vizors to black hearts below,
Or only serve to bring the wearer woe!
But to yourself—If haply the redress
That I am here upon may help to yours.
I heard you tax the heavens with ordering,
And men for executing, what, alas!
I now behold. But why, and who they are
Who do, and you who suffer—

SEG. (pointing upwards).

Ask of them,
Whom, as to-night, I have so often ask'd,
And ask'd in vain.

ROS.

But surely, surely—

SEG.

Hark!

The trumpet of the watch to shut us in.
Oh, should they find you!—Quick! Behind the rocks!
To-morrow—if to-morrow—

ROS. (flinging her sword toward him).

Take my sword!

(Rosaura and Fife hide in the rocks; Enter Clotaldo)

CLOTALDO.

These stormy days you like to see the last of
Are but ill opiates, Segismund, I think,

For night to follow: and to-night you seem
More than your wont disorder'd. What! A sword?
Within there!

(Enter Soldiers with black vizors and torches)

FIFE.

Here's a pleasant masquerade!

CLO.

Whosever watch this was
Will have to pay head-reckoning. Meanwhile,
This weapon had a wearer. Bring him here,
Alive or dead.

SEG.

Clotaldo! good Clotaldo!—

CLO. (to Soldiers who enclose Segismund; others
searching the rocks).

You know your duty.

SOLDIERS (bringing in Rosaura and Fife).

Here are two of them,
Whoever more to follow—

CLO.

Who are you,
That in defiance of known proclamation
Are found, at night-fall too, about this place?

FIFE.

Oh, my Lord, she—I mean he—

ROS.

Silence, Fife,
And let me speak for both.—Two foreign men,
To whom your country and its proclamations
Are equally unknown; and had we known,
Ourselves not masters of our lawless beasts
That, terrified by the storm among your rocks,
Flung us upon them to our cost.

FIFE.

My mule—

CLO.

Foreigners? Of what country?

ROS.

Muscovy.

CLO.

And whither bound?

ROS.

Hither—if this be Poland;

But with no ill design on her, and therefore

Taking it ill that we should thus be stopt

Upon her threshold so uncivilly.

CLO.

Whither in Poland?

ROS.

To the capital.

CLO.

And on what errand?

ROS.

Set me on the road,

And you shall be the nearer to my answer.

CLO. (aside).

So resolute and ready to reply,

And yet so young—and—

(Aloud.)

Well,—

Your business was not surely with the man

We found you with?

ROS.

He was the first we saw,—

And strangers and benighted, as we were,

As you too would have done in a like case,

Accosted him at once.

CLO.

Ay, but this sword?

ROS.

I flung it toward him.

CLO.

Well, and why?

ROS.

And why? But to revenge himself on those who thus
Injuriouly misuse him.

CLO.

So—so—so!

'Tis well such resolution wants a beard

And, I suppose, is never to attain one.

Well, I must take you both, you and your sword,
Prisoners.

FIFE. (offering a cudgel).

Pray take mine, and welcome, sir;

I'm sure I gave it to that mule of mine
To mighty little purpose.

ROS.

Mine you have;

And may it win us some more kindness
Than we have met with yet.

CLO (examining the sword).

More mystery!

How came you by this weapon?

ROS.

From my father.

CLO.

And do you know whence he?

ROS.

Oh, very well:

From one of this same Polish realm of yours,
Who promised a return, should come the chance,
Of courtesies that he received himself
In Muscovy, and left this pledge of it—
Not likely yet, it seems, to be redeem'd.

CLO (aside).

Oh, wondrous chance—or wondrous Providence!
The sword that I myself in Muscovy,
When these white hairs were black, for keepsake left
Of obligation for a like return
To him who saved me wounded as I lay
Fighting against his country; took me home;
Tended me like a brother till recover'd,
Perchance to fight against him once again
And now my sword put back into my hand
By his—if not his son—still, as so seeming,
By me, as first devoir of gratitude,
To seem believing, till the wearer's self
See fit to drop the ill-dissembling mask.
(Aloud.)

Well, a strange turn of fortune has arrested
The sharp and sudden penalty that else
Had visited your rashness or mischance:
In part, your tender youth too—pardon me,
And touch not where your sword is not to answer—
Commends you to my care; not your life only,
Else by this misadventure forfeited;
But ev'n your errand, which, by happy chance,
Chimes with the very business I am on,
And calls me to the very point you aim at.

ROS.

The capital?

CLO.

Ay, the capital; and ev'n
That capital of capitals, the Court:
Where you may plead, and, I may promise, win
Pardon for this, you say unwilling, trespass,
And prosecute what else you have at heart,
With me to help you forward all I can;
Provided all in loyalty to those

To whom by natural allegiance
I first am bound to.

ROS.

As you make, I take
Your offer: with like promise on my side
Of loyalty to you and those you serve,
Under like reservation for regards
Nearer and dearer still.

CLO.

Enough, enough;
Your hand; a bargain on both sides. Meanwhile,
Here shall you rest to-night. The break of day
Shall see us both together on the way.

ROS.

Thus then what I for misadventure blamed,
Directly draws me where my wishes aim'd.

(Exeunt.)

SCENE II.

The Palace at Warsaw

Enter on one side Astolfo, Duke of Muscovy, with his train: and,
on the other, the Princess Estrella, with hers.

ASTOLFO.

My royal cousin, if so near in blood,
Till this auspicious meeting scarcely known,
Till all that beauty promised in the bud
Is now to its consummate blossom blown,
Well met at last; and may—

ESTRELLA.

Enough, my Lord,

Of compliment devised for you by some
Court tailor, and, believe me, still too short
To cover the designful heart below.

AST.

Nay, but indeed, fair cousin—

EST.

Ay, let Deed

Measure your words, indeed your flowers of speech
Ill with your iron equipage atone;
Irony indeed, and wordy compliment.

AST.

Indeed, indeed, you wrong me, royal cousin,
And fair as royal, misinterpreting
What, even for the end you think I aim at,
If false to you, were fatal to myself.

EST.

Why, what else means the glittering steel, my Lord,
That bristles in the rear of these fine words?
What can it mean, but, failing to cajole,
To fight or force me from my just pretension?

AST.

Nay, might I not ask ev'n the same of you,
The nodding helmets of whose men-at-arms
Out-crest the plumage of your lady court?

EST.

But to defend what yours would force from me.

AST.

Might not I, lady, say the same of mine?
But not to come to battle, ev'n of words,
With a fair lady, and my kinswoman;
And as averse to stand before your face,
Defenceless, and condemn'd in your disgrace,
Till the good king be here to clear it all—
Will you vouchsafe to hear me?

EST.

As you will.

AST.

You know that, when about to leave this world,
Our royal grandsire, King Alfonso, left
Three children; one a son, Basilio,
Who wears—long may he wear! the crown of Poland;
And daughters twain: of whom the elder was
Your mother, Clorilena, now some while
Exalted to a more than mortal throne;
And Recisunda, mine, the younger sister,
Who, married to the Prince of Muscovy,
Gave me the light which may she live to see
Herself for many, many years to come.
Meanwhile, good King Basilio, as you know,
Deep in abstruser studies than this world,
And busier with the stars than lady's eyes,
Has never by a second marriage yet
Replaced, as Poland ask'd of him, the heir
An early marriage brought and took away;
His young queen dying with the son she bore him;
And in such alienation grown so old
As leaves no other hope of heir to Poland
Than his two sisters' children; you, fair cousin,
And me; for whom the Commons of the realm
Divide themselves into two several factions;
Whether for you, the elder sister's child;
Or me, born of the younger, but, they say,
My natural prerogative of man
Outweighing your priority of birth.
Which discord growing loud and dangerous,
Our uncle, King Basilio, doubly sage
In prophesying and providing for
The future, as to deal with it when come,
Bids us here meet to-day in solemn council

Our several pretensions to compose.
And, but the martial out-burst that proclaims
His coming, makes all further parley vain,
Unless my bosom, by which only wise
I prophesy, now wrongly prophesies,
By such a happy compact as I dare
But glance at till the Royal Sage declare.

(Trumpets, etc. Enter King Basilio with his Council.)

ALL.

The King! God save the King!

ESTRELLA (Kneeling.)

Oh, Royal Sir!—

ASTOLFO (Kneeling.)

God save your Majesty—

KING.

Rise both of you,
Rise to my arms, Astolfo and Estrella;
As my two sisters' children always mine,
Now more than ever, since myself and Poland
Solely to you for our succession look'd.
And now give ear, you and your several factions,
And you, the Peers and Princes of this realm,
While I reveal the purport of this meeting
In words whose necessary length I trust
No unsuccessful issue shall excuse.
You and the world who have surnamed me "Sage"
Know that I owe that title, if my due,
To my long meditation on the book
Which ever lying open overhead—
The book of heaven, I mean—so few have read;
Whose golden letters on whose sapphire leaf,
Distinguishing the page of day and night,
And all the revolution of the year;
So with the turning volume where they lie
Still changing their prophetic syllables,

They register the destinies of men:
Until with eyes that, dim with years indeed,
Are quicker to pursue the stars than rule them,
I get the start of Time, and from his hand
The wand of tardy revelation draw.
Oh, had the self-same heaven upon his page
Inscribed my death ere I should read my life
And, by fore-casting of my own mischance,
Play not the victim but the suicide
In my own tragedy!—But you shall hear.
You know how once, as kings must for their people,
And only once, as wise men for themselves,
I woo'd and wedded: know too that my Queen
In childing died; but not, as you believe,
With her, the son she died in giving life to.
For, as the hour of birth was on the stroke,
Her brain conceiving with her womb, she dream'd
A serpent tore her entrail. And too surely
(For evil omen seldom speaks in vain)
The man-child breaking from that living tomb
That makes our birth the antitype of death,
Man-grateful, for the life she gave him paid
By killing her: and with such circumstance
As suited such unnatural tragedy;
He coming into light, if light it were
That darken'd at his very horoscope,
When heaven's two champions—sun and moon I mean—
Suffused in blood upon each other fell
In such a raging duel of eclipse
As hath not terrified the universe
Since that which wept in blood the death of Christ:
When the dead walk'd, the waters turn'd to blood,
Earth and her cities totter'd, and the world
Seem'd shaken to its last paralysis.
In such a paroxysm of dissolution

That son of mine was born; by that first act
Heading the monstrous catalogue of crime,
I found fore-written in his horoscope;
As great a monster in man's history
As was in nature his nativity;
So savage, bloody, terrible, and impious,
Who, should he live, would tear his country's entrails,
As by his birth his mother's; with which crime
Beginning, he should clench the dreadful tale
By trampling on his father's silver head.
All which fore-reading, and his act of birth
Fate's warrant that I read his life aright;
To save his country from his mother's fate,
I gave abroad that he had died with her
His being slew; with midnight secrecy
I had him carried to a lonely tower
Hewn from the mountain-barriers of the realm,
And under strict anathema of death
Guarded from men's inquisitive approach,
Save from the trusty few one needs must trust;
Who while his fasten'd body they provide
With salutary garb and nourishment,
Instruct his soul in what no soul may miss
Of holy faith, and in such other lore
As may solace his life-imprisonment,
And tame perhaps the Savage prophesied
Toward such a trial as I aim at now,
And now demand your special hearing to.
What in this fearful business I have done,
Judge whether lightly or maliciously,—
I, with my own and only flesh and blood,
And proper lineal inheritor!
I swear, had his foretold atrocities
Touch'd me alone. I had not saved myself
At such a cost to him; but as a king,—

A Christian king,—I say, advisedly,
Who would devote his people to a tyrant
Worse than Caligula fore-chronicled?
But even this not without grave mis-giving,
Lest by some chance mis-reading of the stars,
Or mis-direction of what rightly read,
I wrong my son of his prerogative,
And Poland of her rightful sovereign.
For, sure and certain prophets as the stars,
Although they err not, he who reads them may;
Or rightly reading—seeing there is One
Who governs them, as, under Him, they us,
We are not sure if the rough diagram
They draw in heaven and we interpret here,
Be sure of operation, if the Will
Supreme, that sometimes for some special end
The course of providential nature breaks
By miracle, may not of these same stars
Cancel his own first draft, or overrule
What else fore-written all else overrules.
As, for example, should the Will Almighty
Permit the Free-will of particular man
To break the meshes of else strangling fate—
Which Free-will, fearful of foretold abuse,
I have myself from my own son fore-closed
From ever possible self-extrication;
A terrible responsibility,
Not to the conscience to be reconciled
Unless opposing almost certain evil
Against so slight contingency of good.
Well—thus perplex'd, I have resolved at last
To bring the thing to trial: whereunto
Here have I summon'd you, my Peers, and you
Whom I more dearly look to, failing him,
As witnesses to that which I propose;

And thus propose the doing it. Clotaldo,
Who guards my son with old fidelity,
Shall bring him hither from his tower by night
Lockt in a sleep so fast as by my art
I rivet to within a link of death,
But yet from death so far, that next day's dawn
Shall wake him up upon the royal bed,
Complete in consciousness and faculty,
When with all princely pomp and retinue
My loyal Peers with due obeisance
Shall hail him Segismund, the Prince of Poland.
Then if with any show of human kindness
He fling discredit, not upon the stars,
But upon me, their misinterpreter,
With all apology mistaken age
Can make to youth it never meant to harm,
To my son's forehead will I shift the crown
I long have wish'd upon a younger brow;
And in religious humiliation,
For what of worn-out age remains to me,
Entreat my pardon both of Heaven and him
For tempting destinies beyond my reach.
But if, as I misdoubt, at his first step
The hoof of the predicted savage shows;
Before predicted mischief can be done,
The self-same sleep that loosed him from the chain
Shall re-consign him, not to loose again.
Then shall I, having lost that heir direct,
Look solely to my sisters' children twain
Each of a claim so equal as divides
The voice of Poland to their several sides,
But, as I trust, to be entwined ere long
Into one single wreath so fair and strong
As shall at once all difference atone,
And cease the realm's division with their own.

Cousins and Princes, Peers and Councillors,
Such is the purport of this invitation,
And such is my design. Whose furtherance
If not as Sovereign, if not as Seer,
Yet one whom these white locks, if nothing else,
to patient acquiescence consecrate,
I now demand and even supplicate.

AST.

Such news, and from such lips, may well suspend
The tongue to loyal answer most attuned;
But if to me as spokesman of my faction
Your Highness looks for answer; I reply
For one and all—Let Segismund, whom now
We first hear tell of as your living heir,
Appear, and but in your sufficient eye
Approve himself worthy to be your son,
Then we will hail him Poland's rightful heir.
What says my cousin?

EST.

Ay, with all my heart.
But if my youth and sex upbraid me not
That I should dare ask of so wise a king—

KING.

Ask, ask, fair cousin! Nothing, I am sure,
Not well consider'd; nay, if 'twere, yet nothing
But pardonable from such lips as those.

EST.

Then, with your pardon, Sir—if Segismund,
My cousin, whom I shall rejoice to hail
As Prince of Poland too, as you propose,
Be to a trial coming upon which
More, as I think, than life itself depends,
Why, Sir, with sleep-disorder'd senses brought
To this uncertain contest with his stars?

KING.

Well ask'd indeed! As wisely be it answer'd!
Because it is uncertain, see you not?
For as I think I can discern between
The sudden flaws of a sleep-startled man,
And of the savage thing we have to dread;
If but bewilder'd, dazzled, and uncouth,
As might the sanest and the civilest
In circumstance so strange—nay, more than that,
If moved to any out-break short of blood,
All shall be well with him; and how much more,
If 'mid the magic turmoil of the change,
He shall so calm a resolution show
As scarce to reel beneath so great a blow!
But if with savage passion uncontroll'd
He lay about him like the brute foretold,
And must as suddenly be caged again;
Then what redoubled anguish and despair,
From that brief flash of blissful liberty
Remitted—and for ever—to his chain!
Which so much less, if on the stage of glory
Enter'd and exited through such a door
Of sleep as makes a dream of all between.

EST.

Oh kindly answer, Sir, to question that
To charitable courtesy less wise
Might call for pardon rather! I shall now
Gladly, what, uninstructed, loyally
I should have waited.

AST.

Your Highness doubts not me,
Nor how my heart follows my cousin's lips,
Whatever way the doubtful balance fall,
Still loyal to your bidding.

OMNES.

So say all.

KING.

I hoped, and did expect, of all no less—
And sure no sovereign ever needed more
From all who owe him love or loyalty.
For what a strait of time I stand upon,
When to this issue not alone I bring
My son your Prince, but e'en myself your King:
And, whichsoever way for him it turn,
Of less than little honour to myself.
For if this coming trial justify
My thus withholding from my son his right,
Is not the judge himself justified in
The father's shame? And if the judge proved wrong,
My son withholding from his right thus long,
Shame and remorse to judge and father both:
Unless remorse and shame together drown'd
In having what I flung for worthless found.
But come—already weary with your travel,
And ill refresh'd by this strange history,
Until the hours that draw the sun from heaven
Unite us at the customary board,
Each to his several chamber: you to rest;
I to contrive with old Clotaldo best
The method of a stranger thing than old
Time has a yet among his records told.
Exeunt.

25. Life is a Dream - Act II

ACT II

SCENE I

A Throne-room in the Palace. Music within.

(Enter King and Clotaldo, meeting a Lord in waiting)

KING.

You, for a moment beckon'd from your office,
Tell me thus far how goes it. In due time
The potion left him?

LORD.

At the very hour
To which your Highness temper'd it. Yet not
So wholly but some lingering mist still hung
About his dawning senses—which to clear,
We fill'd and handed him a morning drink
With sleep's specific antidote suffused;
And while with princely raiment we invested
What nature surely modell'd for a Prince—
All but the sword—as you directed—

KING.

Ay—

LORD.

If not too loudly, yet emphatically
Still with the title of a Prince address'd him.

KING.

How bore he that?

LORD.

With all the rest, my liege,

I will not say so like one in a dream

As one himself misdoubting that he dream'd.

KING.

So far so well, Clotaldo, either way,

And best of all if tow'rd the worse I dread.

But yet no violence?

LORD.

At most, impatience;

Wearied perhaps with importunities

We yet were bound to offer.

KING.

Oh, Clotaldo!

Though thus far well, yet would myself had drunk

The potion he revives from! such suspense

Crowds all the pulses of life's residue

Into the present moment; and, I think,

Whichever way the trembling scale may turn,

Will leave the crown of Poland for some one

To wait no longer than the setting sun!

CLO.

Courage, my liege! The curtain is undrawn,

And each must play his part out manfully,

Leaving the rest to heaven.

KING.

Whose written words

If I should misinterpret or transgress!

But as you say—

(To the Lord, who exit.)

You, back to him at once;

Clotaldo, you, when he is somewhat used

To the new world of which they call him Prince,

Where place and face, and all, is strange to him,
With your known features and familiar garb
Shall then, as chorus to the scene, accost him,
And by such earnest of that old and too
Familiar world, assure him of the new.
Last in the strange procession, I myself
Will by one full and last development
Complete the plot for that catastrophe
That he must put to all; God grant it be
The crown of Poland on his brows!—Hark! hark!—
Was that his voice within!—Now louder—Oh,
Clotaldo, what! so soon begun to roar!—
Again! above the music—But betide
What may, until the moment, we must hide.

(Exeunt King and Clotaldo.)

SEGISMUND (within).

Forbear! I stifle with your perfume! Cease
Your crazy salutations! peace, I say
Begone, or let me go, ere I go mad
With all this babble, mummary, and glare,
For I am growing dangerous—Air! room! air!—
(He rushes in. Music ceases.)

Oh but to save the reeling brain from wreck
With its bewilder'd senses!

(He covers his eyes for a while.)

What! E'en now

That Babel left behind me, but my eyes
Pursued by the same glamour, that—unless
Alike bewitch'd too—the confederate sense
Vouches for palpable: bright-shining floors
That ring hard answer back to the stamp'd heel,
And shoot up airy columns marble-cold,
That, as they climb, break into golden leaf
And capital, till they embrace aloft
In clustering flower and fruitage over walls

Hung with such purple curtain as the West
Fringes with such a gold; or over-laid
With sanguine-glowing semblances of men,
Each in his all but living action busied,
Or from the wall they look from, with fix'd eyes
Pursuing me; and one most strange of all
That, as I pass'd the crystal on the wall,
Look'd from it—left it—and as I return,
Returns, and looks me face to face again—
Unless some false reflection of my brain,
The outward semblance of myself—Myself?
How know that tawdry shadow for myself,
But that it moves as I move; lifts his hand
With mine; each motion echoing so close
The immediate suggestion of the will
In which myself I recognize—Myself!—
What, this fantastic Segismund the same
Who last night, as for all his nights before,
Lay down to sleep in wolf-skin on the ground
In a black turret which the wolf howl'd round,
And woke again upon a golden bed,
Round which as clouds about a rising sun,
In scarce less glittering caparison,
Gather'd gay shapes that, underneath a breeze
Of music, handed him upon their knees
The wine of heaven in a cup of gold,
And still in soft melodious under-song
Hailing me Prince of Poland!—'Segismund,'
They said, 'Our Prince! The Prince of Poland!' and
Again, 'Oh, welcome, welcome, to his own,
'Our own Prince Segismund—'
Oh, but a blast—
One blast of the rough mountain air! one look
At the grim features—
(He goes to the window.)

What they disvizer'd also! shatter'd chaos
Cast into stately shape and masonry,
Between whose channel'd and perspective sides
Compact with rooted towers, and flourishing
To heaven with gilded pinnacle and spire,
Flows the live current ever to and fro
With open aspect and free step!—Clotaldo!
Clotaldo!—calling as one scarce dares call
For him who suddenly might break the spell
One fears to walk without him—Why, that I,
With unencumber'd step as any there,
Go stumbling through my glory—feeling for
That iron leading-string—ay, for myself—
For that fast-anchor'd self of yesterday,
Of yesterday, and all my life before,
Ere drifted clean from self-identity
Upon the fluctuation of to-day's
Mad whirling circumstance!—And, fool, why not?
If reason, sense, and self-identity
Obliterated from a worn-out brain,
Art thou not maddest striving to be sane,
And catching at that Self of yesterday
That, like a leper's rags, best flung away!
Or if not mad, then dreaming—dreaming?—well—
Dreaming then—Or, if self to self be true,
Not mock'd by that, but as poor souls have been
By those who wrong'd them, to give wrong new relish?
Or have those stars indeed they told me of
As masters of my wretched life of old,
Into some happier constellation roll'd,
And brought my better fortune out on earth
Clear as themselves in heaven!—Prince Segismund
They call'd me—and at will I shook them off—
Will they return again at my command

Again to call me so?—Within there! You!
Segismund calls—Prince Segismund—
(He has seated himself on the throne.
Enter Chamberlain, with lords in waiting.)

CHAMB.

I rejoice
That unadvised of any but the voice
Of royal instinct in the blood, your Highness
Has ta'en the chair that you were born to fill.

SEG.

The chair?

CHAMB.

The royal throne of Poland, Sir,
Which may your Royal Highness keep as long
As he that now rules from it shall have ruled
When heaven has call'd him to itself.

SEG.

When he?—

CHAMB.

Your royal father, King Basilio, Sir.

SEG.

My royal father—King Basilio.
You see I answer but as Echo does,
Not knowing what she listens or repeats.
This is my throne—this is my palace—Oh,
But this out of the window?—

CHAMB.

Warsaw, Sir,
Your capital—

SEG.

And all the moving people?

CHAMB.

Your subjects and your vassals like ourselves.

SEG.

Ay, ay—my subjects—in my capital—

Warsaw—and I am Prince of it—You see
It needs much iteration to strike sense
Into the human echo.

CHAMB.

Left awhile
In the quick brain, the word will quickly to
Full meaning blow.

SEG.

You think so?

CHAMB.

And meanwhile
Lest our obsequiousness, which means no worse
Than customary honour to the Prince
We most rejoice to welcome, trouble you,
Should we retire again? or stand apart?
Or would your Highness have the music play
Again, which meditation, as they say,
So often loves to float upon?

SEG.

The music?
No—yes—perhaps the trumpet—
(Aside)

Yet if that
Brought back the troop!

A LORD.

The trumpet! There again
How trumpet-like spoke out the blood of Poland!

CHAMB.

Before the morning is far up, your Highness
Will have the trumpet marshalling your soldiers
Under the Palace windows.

SEG.

Ah, my soldiers—
My soldiers—not black-vizor'd?—

CHAMB.

Sir?

SEG.

No matter.

But—one thing—for a moment—in your ear—

Do you know one Clotaldo?

CHAMB.

Oh, my Lord,

He and myself together, I may say,

Although in different vocations,

Have silver'd in your royal father's service;

And, as I trust, with both of us a few

White hairs to fall in yours.

SEG.

Well said, well said!

Basilio, my father—well—Clotaldo

Is he my kinsman too?

CHAMB.

Oh, my good Lord,

A General simply in your Highness' service,

Than whom your Highness has no trustier.

SEG.

Ay, so you said before, I think. And you

With that white wand of yours—

Why, now I think on't, I have read of such

A silver-hair'd magician with a wand,

Who in a moment, with a wave of it,

Turn'd rags to jewels, clowns to emperors,

By some benigner magic than the stars

Spirited poor good people out of hand

From all their woes; in some enchanted sleep

Carried them off on cloud or dragon-back

Over the mountains, over the wide Deep,

And set them down to wake in Fairyland.

CHAMB.

Oh, my good Lord, you laugh at me—and I
Right glad to make you laugh at such a price:
You know me no enchanter: if I were,
I and my wand as much as your Highness',
As now your chamberlain—

SEG.

My chamberlain?—
And these that follow you?—

CHAMB.

On you, my Lord,
Your Highness' lords in waiting.

SEG.

Lords in waiting.
Well, I have now learn'd to repeat, I think,
If only but by rote—This is my palace,
And this my throne—which unadvised—And that
Out of the window there my Capital;
And all the people moving up and down
My subjects and my vassals like yourselves,
My chamberlain—and lords in waiting—and
Clotaldo—and Clotaldo?—
You are an aged, and seem a reverend man—
You do not—though his fellow-officer—
You do not mean to mock me?

CHAMB.

Oh, my Lord!

SEG.

Well then—If no magician, as you say,
Yet setting me a riddle, that my brain,
With all its senses whirling, cannot solve,
Yourself or one of these with you must answer—
How I—that only last night fell asleep
Not knowing that the very soil of earth
I lay down—chain'd—to sleep upon was Poland—
Awake to find myself the Lord of it,

With Lords, and Generals, and Chamberlains,
And ev'n my very Gaoler, for my vassals!

Enter suddenly Clotaldo

CLOTALDO.

Stand all aside

That I may put into his hand the clue
To lead him out of this amazement. Sir,
Vouchsafe your Highness from my bended knee
Receive my homage first.

SEG.

Clotaldo! What,

At last—his old self—undisguised where all
Is masquerade—to end it!—You kneeling too!
What! have the stars you told me long ago
Laid that old work upon you, added this,
That, having chain'd your prisoner so long,
You loose his body now to slay his wits,
Dragging him—how I know not—whither scarce
I understand—dressing him up in all
This frippery, with your dumb familiars
Disvizard'd, and their lips unlock'd to lie,
Calling him Prince and King, and, madman-like,
Setting a crown of straw upon his head?

CLO.

Would but your Highness, as indeed I now
Must call you—and upon his bended knee
Never bent Subject more devotedly—
However all about you, and perhaps
You to yourself incomprehensiblest,
But rest in the assurance of your own
Sane waking senses, by these witnesses
Attested, till the story of it all,
Of which I bring a chapter, be reveal'd,
Assured of all you see and hear as neither
Madness nor mockery—

SEG.

What then?

CLO.

All it seems:

This palace with its royal garniture;
This capital of which it is the eye,
With all its temples, marts, and arsenals;
This realm of which this city is the head,
With all its cities, villages, and tilth,
Its armies, fleets, and commerce; all your own;
And all the living souls that make them up,
From those who now, and those who shall, salute you,
Down to the poorest peasant of the realm,
Your subjects—Who, though now their mighty voice
Sleeps in the general body unapprized,
Wait but a word from those about you now
To hail you Prince of Poland, Segismund.

SEG.

All this is so?

CLO.

As sure as anything
Is, or can be.

SEG.

You swear it on the faith
You taught me—elsewhere?—

CLO (kissing the hilt of his sword).
Swear it upon this Symbol,
and champion of the holy faith
I wear it to defend.

SEG (to himself).
My eyes have not deceived me, nor my ears,
With this transfiguration, nor the strain
Of royal welcome that arose and blew,
Breathed from no lying lips, along with it.
For here Clotaldo comes, his own old self,

Who, if not Lie and phantom with the rest—

(Aloud)

Well, then, all this is thus.

For have not these fine people told me so,

And you, Clotaldo, sworn it? And the Why

And Wherefore are to follow by and bye!

And yet—and yet—why wait for that which you

Who take your oath on it can answer—and

Indeed it presses hard upon my brain—

What I was asking of these gentlemen

When you came in upon us; how it is

That I—the Segismund you know so long

No longer than the sun that rose to-day

Rose—and from what you know—

Rose to be Prince of Poland?

CLO.

So to be

Acknowledged and entreated, Sir.

SEG.

So be

Acknowledged and entreated—

Well—But if now by all, by some at least

So known—if not entreated—heretofore—

Though not by you—For, now I think again,

Of what should be your attestation worth,

You that of all my questionable subjects

Who knowing what, yet left me where I was,

You least of all, Clotaldo, till the dawn

Of this first day that told it to myself?

CLO.

Oh, let your Highness draw the line across

Fore-written sorrow, and in this new dawn

Bury that long sad night.

SEG.

Not ev'n the Dead,

Call'd to the resurrection of the blest,
Shall so directly drop all memory
Of woes and wrongs foregone!

CLO.

But not resent—
Purged by the trial of that sorrow past
For full fruition of their present bliss.

SEG.

But leaving with the Judge what, till this earth
Be cancell'd in the burning heavens, He leaves
His earthly delegates to execute,
Of retribution in reward to them
And woe to those who wrong'd them—Not as you,
Not you, Clotaldo, knowing not—And yet
Ev'n to the guiltiest wretch in all the realm,
Of any treason guilty short of that,
Stern usage—but assuredly not knowing,
Not knowing 'twas your sovereign lord, Clotaldo,
You used so sternly.

CLO.

Ay, sir; with the same
Devotion and fidelity that now
Does homage to him for my sovereign.

SEG.

Fidelity that held his Prince in chains!

CLO.

Fidelity more fast than had it loosed him—

SEG.

Ev'n from the very dawn of consciousness
Down at the bottom of the barren rocks,
Where scarce a ray of sunshine found him out,
In which the poorest beggar of my realm
At least to human-full proportion grows—
Me! Me—whose station was the kingdom's top
To flourish in, reaching my head to heaven,

And with my branches overshadowing
The meaner growth below!

CLO.

Still with the same
Fidelity—

SEG.

To me!—

CLO.

Ay, sir, to you,
Through that divine allegiance upon which
All Order and Authority is based;
Which to revolt against—

SEG.

Were to revolt
Against the stars, belike!

CLO.

And him who reads them;
And by that right, and by the sovereignty
He wears as you shall wear it after him;
Ay, one to whom yourself—
Yourself, ev'n more than any subject here,
Are bound by yet another and more strong
Allegiance—King Basilio—your Father—

SEG.

Basilio—King—my father!—

CLO.

Oh, my Lord,
Let me beseech you on my bended knee,
For your own sake—for Poland's—and for his,
Who, looking up for counsel to the skies,
Did what he did under authority
To which the kings of earth themselves are subject,
And whose behest not only he that suffers,
But he that executes, not comprehends,
But only He that orders it—

SEG.

The King—

My father!—Either I am mad already,
Or that way driving fast—or I should know
That fathers do not use their children so,
Or men were loosed from all allegiance
To fathers, kings, and heaven that order'd all.
But, mad or not, my hour is come, and I
Will have my reckoning—Either you lie,
Under the skirt of sinless majesty
Shrouding your treason; or if *that* indeed,
Guilty itself, take refuge in the stars
That cannot hear the charge, or disavow—
You, whether doer or deviser, who
Come first to hand, shall pay the penalty
By the same hand you owe it to—
(Seizing Clotaldo's sword and about to strike him.)

(Enter Rosaura suddenly.)

ROSAURA.

Fie, my Lord—forbear,
What! a young hand raised against silver hair!—
(She retreats through the crowd.)

SEG.

Stay! stay! What come and vanish'd as before—
I scarce remember how—but—
(Voices within. Room for Astolfo, Duke of Muscovy!)
(Enter Astolfo)

ASTOLFO.

Welcome, thrice welcome, the auspicious day,
When from the mountain where he darkling lay,
The Polish sun into the firmament
Sprung all the brighter for his late ascent,
And in meridian glory—

SEG.

Where is he?

Why must I ask this twice?—

A LORD.

The Page, my Lord?

I wonder at his boldness—

SEG.

But I tell you

He came with Angel written in his face

As now it is, when all was black as hell

About, and none of you who now—he came,

And Angel-like flung me a shining sword

To cut my way through darkness; and again

Angel-like wrests it from me in behalf

Of one—whom I will spare for sparing him:

But he must come and plead with that same voice

That pray'd for me—in vain.

CHAMB.

He is gone for,

And shall attend your pleasure, sir. Meanwhile,

Will not your Highness, as in courtesy,

Return your royal cousin's greeting?

SEG.

Whose?

CHAMB.

Astolfo, Duke of Muscovy, my Lord,

Saluted, and with gallant compliment

Welcomed you to your royal title.

SEG. (to Astolfo).

Oh—

You knew of this then?

AST.

Knew of what, my Lord?

SEG.

That I was Prince of Poland all the while,

And you my subject?

AST.

Pardon me, my Lord,
But some few hours ago myself I learn'd
Your dignity; but, knowing it, no more
Than when I knew it not, your subject.

SEG.

What then?

AST.

Your Highness' chamberlain ev'n now has told you;
Astolfo, Duke of Muscovy,
Your father's sister's son; your cousin, sir:
And who as such, and in his own right Prince,
Expects from you the courtesy he shows.

CHAMB.

His Highness is as yet unused to Court,
And to the ceremonious interchange
Of compliment, especially to those
Who draw their blood from the same royal fountain.

SEG.

Where is the lad? I weary of all this—
Prince, cousins, chamberlains, and compliments—
Where are my soldiers? Blow the trumpet, and
With one sharp blast scatter these butterflies
And bring the men of iron to my side,
With whom a king feels like a king indeed!

(Voices within. Within there! room for the Princess Estrella!)

(Enter Estrella with Ladies.)

ESTRELLA.

Welcome, my Lord, right welcome to the throne
That much too long has waited for your coming:
And, in the general voice of Poland, hear
A kinswoman and cousin's no less sincere.

SEG.

Ay, this is welcome-worth indeed,
And cousin cousin-worth! Oh, I have thus

Over the threshold of the mountain seen,
Leading a bevy of fair stars, the moon
Enter the court of heaven—My kinswoman!
My cousin! But my subject?—

EST.

If you please
To count your cousin for your subject, sir,
You shall not find her a disloyal.

SEG.

Oh,
But there are twin stars in that heavenly face,
That now I know for having over-ruled
Those evil ones that darken'd all my past
And brought me forth from that captivity
To be the slave of her who set me free.

EST.

Indeed, my Lord, these eyes have no such power
Over the past or present: but perhaps
They brighten at your welcome to supply
The little that a lady's speech commends;
And in the hope that, let whichever be
The other's subject, we may both be friends.

SEG.

Your hand to that—But why does this warm hand
Shoot a cold shudder through me?

EST.

In revenge
For likening me to that cold moon, perhaps.

SEG.

Oh, but the lip whose music tells me so
Breathes of a warmer planet, and that lip
Shall remedy the treason of the hand!
(He catches to embrace her.)

EST.

Release me, sir!

CHAMB.

And pardon me, my Lord.
This lady is a Princess absolute,
As Prince he is who just saluted you,
And claims her by affiance.

SEG.

Hence, old fool,
For ever thrusting that white stick of yours
Between me and my pleasure!

AST.

This cause is mine.
Forbear, sir—

SEG.

What, sir mouth-piece, you again?

AST.

My Lord, I waive your insult to myself
In recognition of the dignity
You yet are new to, and that greater still
You look in time to wear. But for this lady—
Whom, if my cousin now, I hope to claim
Henceforth by yet a nearer, dearer name—

SEG.

And what care I? She is my cousin too:
And if you be a Prince—well, am not I
Lord of the very soil you stand upon?
By that, and by that right beside of blood
That like a fiery fountain hitherto
Pent in the rock leaps toward her at her touch,
Mine, before all the cousins in Muscovy!
You call me Prince of Poland, and yourselves
My subjects—traitors therefore to this hour,
Who let me perish all my youth away
Chain'd there among the mountains; till, forsooth,
Terrified at your treachery foregone,
You spirit me up here, I know not how,

Popinjay-like invest me like yourselves,
Choke me with scent and music that I loathe,
And, worse than all the music and the scent,
With false, long-winded, fulsome compliment,
That 'Oh, you are my subjects!' and in word
Reiterating still obedience,
Thwart me in deed at every step I take:
When just about to wreak a just revenge
Upon that old arch-traitor of you all,
Filch from my vengeance him I hate; and him
I loved—the first and only face—till this—
I cared to look on in your ugly court—
And now when palpably I grasp at last
What hitherto but shadow'd in my dreams—
Affiances and interferences,
The first who dares to meddle with me more—
Princes and chamberlains and counsellors,
Touch her who dares!—

AST.

That dare I—

SEG. (seizing him by the throat).

You dare!

CHAMB.

My Lord!—

A LORD.

His strength's a lion's—

(Voices within. The King! The King!—)

(Enter King.)

A LORD.

And on a sudden how he stands at gaze
As might a wolf just fasten'd on his prey,
Glaring at a suddenly encounter'd lion.

KING.

And I that hither flew with open arms
To fold them round my son, must now return

To press them to an empty heart again!

(He sits on the throne.)

SEG.

That is the King?—My father?

(After a long pause.)

I have heard

That sometimes some blind instinct has been known

To draw to mutual recognition those

Of the same blood, beyond all memory

Divided, or ev'n never met before.

I know not how this is—perhaps in brutes

That live by kindlier instincts—but I know

That looking now upon that head whose crown

Pronounces him a sovereign king, I feel

No setting of the current in my blood

Tow'rd him as sire. How is't with you, old man,

Tow'rd him they call your son?—

KING.

Alas! Alas!

SEG.

Your sorrow, then?

KING.

Beholding what I do.

SEG.

Ay, but how know this sorrow that has grown

And moulded to this present shape of man,

As of your own creation?

KING.

Ev'n from birth.

SEG.

But from that hour to this, near, as I think,

Some twenty such renewals of the year

As trace themselves upon the barren rocks,

I never saw you, nor you me—unless,

Unless, indeed, through one of those dark masks

Through which a son might fail to recognize
The best of fathers.

KING.

Be that as you will:

But, now we see each other face to face,
Know me as you I know; which did I not,
By whatsoever signs, assuredly
You were not here to prove it at my risk.

SEG.

You are my father.

And is it true then, as Clotaldo swears,
'Twas you that from the dawning birth of one
Yourself brought into being,—you, I say,
Who stole his very birthright; not alone
That secondary and peculiar right
Of sovereignty, but even that prime
Inheritance that all men share alike,
And chain'd him—chain'd him!—like a wild beast's whelp.
Among as savage mountains, to this hour?
Answer if this be thus.

KING.

Oh, Segismund,
In all that I have done that seems to you,
And, without further hearing, fairly seems,
Unnatural and cruel—'twas not I,
But One who writes His order in the sky
I dared not misinterpret nor neglect,
Who knows with what reluctance—

SEG.

Oh, those stars,
Those stars, that too far up from human blame
To clear themselves, or careless of the charge,
Still bear upon their shining shoulders all
The guilt men shift upon them!

KING.

Nay, but think:

Not only on the common score of kind,
But that peculiar count of sovereignty—
If not behind the beast in brain as heart,
How should I thus deal with my innocent child,
Doubly desired, and doubly dear when come,
As that sweet second-self that all desire,
And princes more than all, to root themselves
By that succession in their people's hearts,
Unless at that superior Will, to which
Not kings alone, but sovereign nature bows?

SEG.

And what had those same stars to tell of me
That should compel a father and a king
So much against that double instinct?

KING.

That,
Which I have brought you hither, at my peril,
Against their written warning, to disprove,
By justice, mercy, human kindliness.

SEG.

And therefore made yourself their instrument
To make your son the savage and the brute
They only prophesied?—Are you not afraid,
Lest, irrespective as such creatures are
Of such relationship, the brute you made
Revenge the man you marr'd—like sire, like son.
To do by you as you by me have done?

KING.

You never had a savage heart from me;
I may appeal to Poland.

SEG.

Then from whom?
If pure in fountain, poison'd by yourself
When scarce begun to flow.—To make a man

Not, as I see, degraded from the mould
I came from, nor compared to those about,
And then to throw your own flesh to the dogs!—
Why not at once, I say, if terrified
At the prophetic omens of my birth,
Have drown'd or stifled me, as they do whelps
Too costly or too dangerous to keep?

KING.

That, living, you might learn to live, and rule
Yourself and Poland.

SEG.

By the means you took
To spoil for either?

KING.

Nay, but, Segismund!
You know not—cannot know—happily wanting
The sad experience on which knowledge grows,
How the too early consciousness of power
Spoils the best blood; nor whether for your long
Constrain'd disinheritance (which, but for me,
Remember, and for my relenting love
Bursting the bond of fate, had been eternal)
You have not now a full indemnity;
Wearing the blossom of your youth unspent
In the voluptuous sunshine of a court,
That often, by too early blossoming,
Too soon deflowers the rose of royalty.

SEG.

Ay, but what some precocious warmth may spill,
May not an early frost as surely kill?

KING.

But, Segismund, my son, whose quick discourse
Proves I have not extinguish'd and destroy'd
The Man you charge me with extinguishing,
However it condemn me for the fault

Of keeping a good light so long eclipsed,
Reflect! This is the moment upon which
Those stars, whose eyes, although we see them not,
By day as well as night are on us still,
Hang watching up in the meridian heaven
Which way the balance turns; and if to you—
As by your dealing God decide it may,
To my confusion!—let me answer it
Unto yourself alone, who shall at once
Approve yourself to be your father's judge,
And sovereign of Poland in his stead,
By justice, mercy, self-sobriety,
And all the reasonable attributes
Without which, impotent to rule himself,
Others one cannot, and one must not rule;
But which if you but show the blossom of—
All that is past we shall but look upon
As the first out-fling of a generous nature
Rioting in first liberty; and if
This blossom do but promise such a flower
As promises in turn its kindly fruit:
Forthwith upon your brows the royal crown,
That now weighs heavy on my aged brows,
I will devolve; and while I pass away
Into some cloister, with my Maker there
To make my peace in penitence and prayer,
Happily settle the disorder'd realm
That now cries loudly for a lineal heir.

SEG.

And so—

When the crown falters on your shaking head,
And slips the sceptre from your palsied hand,
And Poland for her rightful heir cries out;
When not only your stol'n monopoly
Fails you of earthly power, but 'cross the grave

The judgment-trumpet of another world
Calls you to count for your abuse of this;
Then, oh then, terrified by the double danger,
You drag me from my den—
Boast not of giving up at last the power
You can no longer hold, and never rightly
Held, but in fee for him you robb'd it from;
And be assured your Savage, once let loose,
Will not be caged again so quickly; not
By threat or adulation to be tamed,
Till he have had his quarrel out with those
Who made him what he is.

KING.

Beware! Beware!
Subdue the kindled Tiger in your eye,
Nor dream that it was sheer necessity
Made me thus far relax the bond of fate,
And, with far more of terror than of hope
Threaten myself, my people, and the State.
Know that, if old, I yet have vigour left
To wield the sword as well as wear the crown;
And if my more immediate issue fail,
Not wanting scions of collateral blood,
Whose wholesome growth shall more than compensate
For all the loss of a distorted stem.

SEG.

That will I straightway bring to trial—Oh,
After a revelation such as this,
The Last Day shall have little left to show
Of righted wrong and villainy requited!
Nay, Judgment now beginning upon earth,
Myself, methinks, in sight of all my wrongs,
Appointed heaven's avenging minister,
Accuser, judge, and executioner
Sword in hand, cite the guilty—First, as worst,

The usurper of his son's inheritance;
Him and his old accomplice, time and crime
Inveterate, and unable to repay
The golden years of life they stole away.
What, does he yet maintain his state, and keep
The throne he should be judged from? Down with him,
That I may trample on the false white head
So long has worn my crown! Where are my soldiers?
Of all my subjects and my vassals here
Not one to do my bidding? Hark! A trumpet!
The trumpet—

(He pauses as the trumpet sounds as in Act I,
and masked Soldiers gradually fill in behind the Throne.)

KING (rising before his throne).

Ay, indeed, the trumpet blows
A memorable note, to summon those
Who, if forthwith you fall not at the feet
Of him whose head you threaten with the dust,
Forthwith shall draw the curtain of the Past
About you; and this momentary gleam
Of glory that you think to hold life-fast,
So coming, so shall vanish, as a dream.

SEG.

He prophesies; the old man prophesies;
And, at his trumpet's summons, from the tower
The leash-bound shadows loosen'd after me
My rising glory reach and over-lour—
But, reach not I my height, he shall not hold,
But with me back to his own darkness!

(He dashes toward the throne and is enclosed by the
soldiers.)

Traitors!

Hold off! Unhand me!—Am not I your king?
And you would strangle him!—
But I am breaking with an inward Fire

Shall scorch you off, and wrap me on the wings
Of conflagration from a kindled pyre
Of lying prophecies and prophet-kings
Above the extinguish'd stars—Reach me the sword
He flung me—Fill me such a bowl of wine
As that you woke the day with—

KING.

And shall close,—
But of the vintage that Clotaldo knows.

(Exeunt.)

26. Life is a Dream - Act III

ACT III

SCENE I.

The Tower, etc., as in Act I. Scene I.
(Segismund, as at first, and Clotaldo.)

CLOTALDO.

Princes and princesses, and counsellors
Fluster'd to right and left—my life made at—
But that was nothing
Even the white-hair'd, venerable King
Seized on—Indeed, you made wild work of it;
And so discover'd in your outward action,
Flinging your arms about you in your sleep,
Grinding your teeth—and, as I now remember,
Woke mouthing out judgment and execution,
On those about you.

SEG.

Ay, I did indeed.

CLO.

Ev'n now your eyes stare wild; your hair stands up—
Your pulses throb and flutter, reeling still
Under the storm of such a dream—

SEG.

A dream!

That seem'd as swearable reality
As what I wake in now.

CLO.

Ay—wondrous how
Imagination in a sleeping brain
Out of the uncontingent senses draws
Sensations strong as from the real touch;
That we not only laugh aloud, and drench
With tears our pillow; but in the agony
Of some imaginary conflict, fight
And struggle—ev'n as you did; some, 'tis thought,
Under the dreamt-of stroke of death have died.

SEG.

And what so very strange too—In that world
Where place as well as people all was strange,
Ev'n I almost as strange unto myself,
You only, you, Clotaldo—you, as much
And palpably yourself as now you are,
Came in this very garb you ever wore,
By such a token of the past, you said,
To assure me of that seeming present.

CLO.

Ay?

SEG.

Ay; and even told me of the very stars
You tell me here of—how in spite of them,
I was enlarged to all that glory.

CLO.

Ay, By the false spirits' nice contrivance thus
A little truth oft leavens all the false,
The better to delude us.

SEG.

For you know
'Tis nothing but a dream?

CLO.

Nay, you yourself

Know best how lately you awoke from that

You know you went to sleep on?—

Why, have you never dreamt the like before?

SEG.

Never, to such reality.

CLO.

Such dreams

Are oftentimes the sleeping exhalations

Of that ambition that lies smouldering

Under the ashes of the lowest fortune;

By which, when reason slumbers, or has lost

The reins of sensible comparison,

We fly at something higher than we are—

Scarce ever dive to lower—to be kings,

Or conquerors, crown'd with laurel or with gold,

Nay, mounting heaven itself on eagle wings.

Which, by the way, now that I think of it,

May furnish us the key to this high flight

That royal Eagle we were watching, and

Talking of as you went to sleep last night.

SEG.

Last night? Last night?

CLO.

Ay, do you not remember

Envyng his immunity of flight,

As, rising from his throne of rock, he sail'd

Above the mountains far into the West,

That burn'd about him, while with poisoning wings

He darkled in it as a burning brand

Is seen to smoulder in the fire it feeds?

SEG.

Last night—last night—Oh, what a day was that

Between that last night and this sad To-day!

CLO.

And yet, perhaps,
Only some few dark moments, into which
Imagination, once lit up within
And unconditional of time and space,
Can pour infinities.

SEG.

And I remember
How the old man they call'd the King, who wore
The crown of gold about his silver hair,
And a mysterious girdle round his waist,
Just when my rage was roaring at its height,
And after which it all was dark again,
Bid me beware lest all should be a dream.

CLO.

Ay—there another specialty of dreams,
That once the dreamer 'gins to dream he dreams,
His foot is on the very verge of waking.

SEG.

Would it had been upon the verge of death
That knows no waking—
Lifting me up to glory, to fall back,
Stunn'd, crippled—wretcheder than ev'n before.

CLO.

Yet not so glorious, Segismund, if you
Your visionary honour wore so ill
As to work murder and revenge on those
Who meant you well.

SEG.

Who meant me!—me! their Prince
Chain'd like a felon—

CLO.

Stay, stay—Not so fast,
You dream'd the Prince, remember.

SEG.

Then in dream
Revenge'd it only.

CLO.

True. But as they say
Dreams are rough copies of the waking soul
Yet uncorrected of the higher Will,
So that men sometimes in their dreams confess
An unsuspected, or forgotten, self;
One must beware to check—ay, if one may,
Stifle ere born, such passion in ourselves
As makes, we see, such havoc with our sleep,
And ill reacts upon the waking day.
And, by the bye, for one test, Segismund,
Between such swearable realities—
Since Dreaming, Madness, Passion, are akin
In missing each that salutary rein
Of reason, and the guiding will of man:
One test, I think, of waking sanity
Shall be that conscious power of self-control,
To curb all passion, but much most of all
That evil and vindictive, that ill squares
With human, and with holy canon less,
Which bids us pardon ev'n our enemies,
And much more those who, out of no ill will,
Mistakenly have taken up the rod
Which heaven, they think, has put into their hands.

SEG.

I think I soon shall have to try again—
Sleep has not yet done with me.

CLO.

Such a sleep.
Take my advice—'tis early yet—the sun
Scarce up above the mountain; go within,
And if the night deceived you, try anew
With morning; morning dreams they say come true.

SEG.

Oh, rather pray for me a sleep so fast
As shall obliterate dream and waking too.

(Exit into the tower.)

CLO.

So sleep; sleep fast: and sleep away those two
Night-potions, and the waking dream between
Which dream thou must believe; and, if to see
Again, poor Segismund! that dream must be.—
And yet, and yet, in these our ghostly lives,
Half night, half day, half sleeping, half awake,
How if our waking life, like that of sleep,
Be all a dream in that eternal life
To which we wake not till we sleep in death?
How if, I say, the senses we now trust
For date of sensible comparison,—
Ay, ev'n the Reason's self that dates with them,
Should be in essence or intensity
Hereafter so transcended, and awake
To a perceptive subtlety so keen
As to confess themselves befool'd before,
In all that now they will avouch for most?
One man—like this—but only so much longer
As life is longer than a summer's day,
Believed himself a king upon his throne,
And play'd at hazard with his fellows' lives,
Who cheaply dream'd away their lives to him.
The sailor dream'd of tossing on the flood:
The soldier of his laurels grown in blood:
The lover of the beauty that he knew
Must yet dissolve to dusty residue:
The merchant and the miser of his bags
Of finger'd gold; the beggar of his rags:
And all this stage of earth on which we seem
Such busy actors, and the parts we play'd,

Substantial as the shadow of a shade,
And Dreaming but a dream within a dream!

FIFE.

Was it not said, sir,
By some philosopher as yet unborn,
That any chimney-sweep who for twelve hours
Dreams himself king is happy as the king
Who dreams himself twelve hours a chimney-sweep?

CLO.

A theme indeed for wiser heads than yours
To moralize upon—How came you here?—

FIFE.

Not of my own will, I assure you, sir.
No matter for myself: but I would know
About my mistress—I mean, master—

CLO.

Oh, Now I remember—Well, your master-mistress
Is well, and deftly on its errand speeds,
As you shall—if you can but hold your tongue.
Can you?

FIFE.

I'd rather be at home again.

CLO.

Where you shall be the quicker if while here
You can keep silence.

FIFE.

I may whistle, then?
Which by the virtue of my name I do,
And also as a reasonable test
Of waking sanity—

CLO.

Well, whistle then;
And for another reason you forgot,
That while you whistle, you can chatter not.
Only remember—if you quit this pass—

FIFE.

(His rhymes are out, or he had call'd it spot)—

CLO.

A bullet brings you to.

I must forthwith to court to tell the King

The issue of this lamentable day,

That buries all his hope in night.

(To FIFE.)

Farewell. Remember.

FIFE.

But a moment—but a word!

When shall I see my mis—mas—

CLO.

Be content:

All in good time; and then, and not before,

Never to miss your master any more.

(Exit.)

FIFE.

Such talk of dreaming—dreaming—I begin

To doubt if I be dreaming I am Fife,

Who with a lad who call'd herself a boy

Because—I doubt there's some confusion here—

He wore no petticoat, came on a time

Riding from Muscovy on half a horse,

Who must have dreamt she was a horse entire,

To cant me off upon my hinder face

Under this tower, wall-eyed and musket-tongued,

With sentinels a-pacing up and down,

Crying All's well when all is far from well,

All the day long, and all the night, until

I dream—if what is dreaming be not waking—

Of bells a-tolling and processions rolling

With candles, crosses, banners, San-benitos,

Of which I wear the flamy-finingest,

Through streets and places throng'd with fiery faces

To some back platform—
Oh, I shall take a fire into my hand
With thinking of my own dear Muscovy—
Only just over that Sierra there,
By which we tumbled headlong into—No-land.
Now, if without a bullet after me,
I could but get a peep of my old home
Perhaps of my own mule to take me there—
All's still—perhaps the gentlemen within
Are dreaming it is night behind their masks—
God send 'em a good nightmare!—Now then—Hark!
Voices—and up the rocks—and armed men
Climbing like cats—Puss in the corner then.

(He hides.)

(Enter Soldiers cautiously up the rocks.)

CAPTAIN.

This is the frontier pass, at any rate,
Where Poland ends and Muscovy begins.

SOLDIER.

We must be close upon the tower, I know,
That half way up the mountain lies ensconced.

CAPT.

How know you that?

SOL.

He told me so—the Page
Who put us on the scent.

SOL. 2.

And, as I think,
Will soon be here to run it down with us.

CAPT.

Meantime, our horses on these ugly rocks
Useless, and worse than useless with their clatter—
Leave them behind, with one or two in charge,
And softly, softly, softly.

SOLDIERS.

—There it is!
—There what?
—The tower—the fortress—
—That the tower!—
—That mouse-trap! We could pitch it down the rocks
With our own hands.
—The rocks it hangs among
Dwarf its proportions and conceal its strength;
Larger and stronger than you think.
—No matter;
No place for Poland's Prince to be shut up in.
At it at once!

CAPT.

No—no—I tell you wait—
Till those within give signal. For as yet
We know not who side with us, and the fort
Is strong in man and musket.

SOL.

Shame to wait
For odds with such a cause at stake.

CAPT.

Because
Of such a cause at stake we wait for odds—
For if not won at once, for ever lost:
For any long resistance on their part
Would bring Basilio's force to succour them
Ere we had rescued him we come to rescue.
So softly, softly, softly, still—

A SOLDIER (discovering Fife).

Hilloa!

SOLDIERS.

—Hilloa! Here's some one skulking—
—Seize and gag him!
—Stab him at once, say I: the only way
To make all sure.

—Hold, every man of you!
And down upon your knees!—Why, 'tis the Prince!
—The Prince!—
—Oh, I should know him anywhere,
And anyhow disguised.
—But the Prince is chain'd.
—And of a loftier presence—
—'Tis he, I tell you;
Only bewilder'd as he was before.
God save your Royal Highness! On our knees
Beseech you answer us!

FIFE.

Just as you please.
Well—'tis this country's custom, I suppose,
To take a poor man every now and then
And set him ON the throne; just for the fun
Of tumbling him again into the dirt.
And now my turn is come. 'Tis very pretty.

SOL.

His wits have been distemper'd with their drugs.
But do you ask him, Captain.

CAPT.

On my knees,
And in the name of all who kneel with me,
I do beseech your Highness answer to
Your royal title.

FIFE.

Still, just as you please.
In my own poor opinion of myself—
But that may all be dreaming, which it seems
Is very much the fashion in this country
No Polish prince at all, but a poor lad
From Muscovy; where only help me back,
I promise never to contest the crown

Of Poland with whatever gentleman
You fancy to set up.

SOLDIERS.

—From Muscovy?

—A spy then—

—Of Astolfo's—

—Spy! a spy

—Hang him at once!

FIFE.

No, pray don't dream of that!

SOL.

How dared you then set yourself up for our Prince Segismund?

FIFE.

/ set up!—/ like that

When 'twas yourselves be-siegesminded me.

CAPT.

No matter—Look!—The signal from the tower.

Prince Segismund!

SOL. (from the tower).

Prince Segismund!

CAPT.

All's well. Clotaldo safe secured?—

SOL. (from the tower).

No—by ill luck,

Instead of coming in, as we had look'd for,

He sprang on horse at once, and off at gallop.

CAPT.

To Court, no doubt—a blunder that—And yet

Perchance a blunder that may work as well

As better forethought. Having no suspicion

So will he carry none where his not going

Were of itself suspicious. But of those

Within, who side with us?

SOL.

Oh, one and all
To the last man, persuaded or compell'd.

CAPT.

Enough: whatever be to be retrieved
No moment to be lost. For though Clotaldo
Have no revolt to tell of in the tower,
The capital will soon awake to ours,
And the King's force come blazing after us.
Where is the Prince?

SOL.

Within; so fast asleep
We woke him not ev'n striking off the chain
We had so cursedly help bind him with,
Not knowing what we did; but too ashamed
Not to undo ourselves what we had done.

CAPT.

No matter, nor by whosoever hands,
Provided done. Come; we will bring him forth
Out of that stony darkness here abroad,
Where air and sunshine sooner shall disperse
The sleepy fume which they have drugg'd him with.

(They enter the tower, and thence bring out Segismund
asleep on a
pallet, and set him in the middle of the stage.)

CAPT.

Still, still so dead asleep, the very noise
And motion that we make in carrying him
Stirs not a leaf in all the living tree.

SOLDIERS.

If living—But if by some inward blow
For ever and irrevocably fell'd
By what strikes deeper to the root than sleep?
—He's dead! He's dead! They've kill'd him—
—No—he breathes—
And the heart beats—and now he breathes again

Deeply, as one about to shake away
The load of sleep.

CAPT.

Come, let us all kneel round,
And with a blast of warlike instruments,
And acclamation of all loyal hearts,
Rouse and restore him to his royal right,
From which no royal wrong shall drive him more.

(They all kneel round his bed: trumpets, drums, etc.)

SOLDIERS.

—Segismund! Segismund! Prince Segismund!
—King Segismund! Down with Basilio!
—Down with Astolfo! Segismund our King! etc.
—He stares upon us wildly. He cannot speak.
—I said so—driv'n him mad.
—Speak to him, Captain.

CAPTAIN.

Oh Royal Segismund, our Prince and King,
Look on us—listen to us—answer us,
Your faithful soldiery and subjects, now
About you kneeling, but on fire to rise
And cleave a passage through your enemies,
Until we seat you on your lawful throne.
For though your father, King Basilio,
Now King of Poland, jealous of the stars
That prophesy his setting with your rise,
Here holds you ignominiously eclipsed,
And would Astolfo, Duke of Muscovy,
Mount to the throne of Poland after him;
So will not we, your loyal soldiery
And subjects; neither those of us now first
Apprised of your existence and your right:
Nor those that hitherto deluded by
Allegiance false, their vizors now fling down,
And craving pardon on their knees with us

For that unconscious disloyalty,
Offer with us the service of their blood;
Not only we and they; but at our heels
The heart, if not the bulk, of Poland follows
To join their voices and their arms with ours,
In vindicating with our lives our own
Prince Segismund to Poland and her throne.

SOLDIERS.

—Segismund, Segismund, Prince Segismund!

—Our own King Segismund, etc.

(They all rise.)

SEG.

Again? So soon?—What, not yet done with me?
The sun is little higher up, I think,
Than when I last lay down,
To bury in the depth of your own sea
You that infest its shallows.

CAPT.

Sir!

SEG.

And now,
Not in a palace, not in the fine clothes
We all were in; but here, in the old place,
And in our old accoutrement—
Only your vizors off, and lips unlock'd
To mock me with that idle title—

CAPT.

Nay,

Indeed no idle title, but your own,
Then, now, and now for ever. For, behold,
Ev'n as I speak, the mountain passes fill
And bristle with the advancing soldiery
That glitters in your rising glory, sir;
And, at our signal, echo to our cry,
'Segismund, King of Poland!' etc.

(Shouts, trumpets, etc.)

SEG.

Oh, how cheap

The muster of a countless host of shadows,

As impotent to do with as to keep!

All this they said before—to softer music.

CAPT.

Soft music, sir, to what indeed were shadows,

That, following the sunshine of a Court,

Shall back be brought with it—if shadows still,

Yet to substantial reckoning.

SEG.

They shall?

The white-hair'd and white-wanded chamberlain,

So busy with his wand too—the old King

That I was somewhat hard on—he had been

Hard upon me—and the fine feather'd Prince

Who crow'd so loud—my cousin,—and another,

Another cousin, we will not bear hard on—

And—But Clotaldo?

CAPT.

Fled, my lord, but close

Pursued; and then—

SEG.

Then, as he fled before,

And after he had sworn it on his knees,

Came back to take me—where I am!—No more,

No more of this! Away with you! Begone!

Whether but visions of ambitious night

That morning ought to scatter, or grown out

Of night's proportions you invade the day

To scare me from my little wits yet left,

Begone! I know I must be near awake,

Knowing I dream; or, if not at my voice,

Then vanish at the clapping of my hands,

Or take this foolish fellow for your sport:
Dressing me up in visionary glories,
Which the first air of waking consciousness
Scatters as fast as from the almander—
That, waking one fine morning in full flower,
One rougher insurrection of the breeze
Of all her sudden honour disadorns
To the last blossom, and she stands again
The winter-naked scare-crow that she was!

CAPT.

I know not what to do, nor what to say,
With all this dreaming; I begin to doubt
They have driv'n him mad indeed, and he and we
Are lost together.

A SOLDIER (to Captain).

Stay, stay; I remember—
Hark in your ear a moment.
(Whispers.)

CAPT.

So—so—so?—

Oh, now indeed I do not wonder, sir,
Your senses dazzle under practices
Which treason, shrinking from its own device,
Would now persuade you only was a dream;
But waking was as absolute as this
You wake in now, as some who saw you then,
Prince as you were and are, can testify:
Not only saw, but under false allegiance
Laid hands upon—

SOLDIER 1.

I, to my shame!

SOLDIER 2.

And I!

CAPT.

Who, to wipe out that shame, have been the first

To stir and lead us—Hark!

(Shouts, trumpets, etc.)

A SOLDIER.

Our forces, sir,

Challenging King Basilio's, now in sight,

And bearing down upon us.

CAPT.

Sir, you hear;

A little hesitation and delay,

And all is lost—your own right, and the lives

Of those who now maintain it at that cost;

With you all saved and won; without, all lost.

That former recognition of your right

Grant but a dream, if you will have it so;

Great things forecast themselves by shadows great:

Or will you have it, this like that dream too,

People, and place, and time itself, all dream

Yet, being in't, and as the shadows come

Quicker and thicker than you can escape,

Adopt your visionary soldiery,

Who, having struck a solid chain away,

Now put an airy sword into your hand,

And harnessing you piece-meal till you stand

Amidst us all complete in glittering,

If unsubstantial, steel—

ROSAURA (without).

The Prince! The Prince!

CAPT.

Who calls for him?

SOL.

The Page who spurr'd us hither,

And now, dismounted from a foaming horse—

(Enter Rosaura)

ROSAURA.

Where is—but where I need no further ask

Where the majestic presence, all in arms,
Mutely proclaims and vindicates himself.

FIFE.

My darling Lady-lord—

ROS.

My own good Fife,
Keep to my side—and silence!—Oh, my Lord,
For the third time behold me here where first
You saw me, by a happy misadventure
Losing my own way here to find it out
For you to follow with these loyal men,
Adding the moment of my little cause
To yours; which, so much mightier as it is,
By a strange chance runs hand in hand with mine;
The self-same foe who now pretends your right,
Withholding mine—that, of itself alone,
I know the royal blood that runs in you
Would vindicate, regardless of your own:
The right of injured innocence; and, more,
Spite of this epicene attire, a woman's;
And of a noble stock I will not name
Till I, who brought it, have retrieved the shame.
Whom Duke Astolfo, Prince of Muscovy,
With all the solemn vows of wedlock won,
And would have wedded, as I do believe,
Had not the cry of Poland for a Prince
Call'd him from Muscovy to join the prize
Of Poland with the fair Estrella's eyes.
I, following him hither, as you saw,
Was cast upon these rocks; arrested by
Clotaldo: who, for an old debt of love
He owes my family, with all his might
Served, and had served me further, till my cause
Clash'd with his duty to his sovereign,
Which, as became a loyal subject, sir,

(And never sovereign had a loyaller,)
Was still his first. He carried me to Court,
Where, for the second time, I crossed your path;
Where, as I watch'd my opportunity,
Suddenly broke this public passion out;
Which, drowning private into public wrong,
Yet swiftlier sweeps it to revenge along.

SEG.

Oh God, if this be dreaming, charge it not
To burst the channel of enclosing sleep
And drown the waking reason! Not to dream
Only what dreamt shall once or twice again
Return to buzz about the sleeping brain
Till shaken off for ever—
But reassailing one so quick, so thick—
The very figure and the circumstance
Of sense-confess'd reality foregone
In so-call'd dream so palpably repeated,
The copy so like the original,
We know not which is which; and dream so-call'd
Itself inweaving so inextricably
Into the tissue of acknowledged truth;
The very figures that empeople it
Returning to assert themselves no phantoms
In something so much like meridian day,
And in the very place that not my worst
And veriest disenchanter shall deny
For the too well-remember'd theatre
Of my long tragedy—Strike up the drums!
If this be Truth, and all of us awake,
Indeed a famous quarrel is at stake:
If but a Vision I will see it out,
And, drive the Dream, I can but join the rout.

CAPT.

And in good time, sir, for a palpable

Touchstone of truth and rightful vengeance too,
Here is Clotaldo taken.

SOLDIERS.

In with him!

In with the traitor!

(Clotaldo brought in.)

SEG.

Ay, Clotaldo, indeed—

Himself—in his old habit—his old self—

What! back again, Clotaldo, for a while

To swear me this for truth, and afterwards

All for a dreaming lie?

CLO.

Awake or dreaming,

Down with that sword, and down these traitors theirs,

Drawn in rebellion 'gainst their Sovereign.

SEG. (about to strike).

Traitor! Traitor yourself!—

But soft—soft—soft!—

You told me, not so very long ago,

Awake or dreaming—I forget—my brain

Is not so clear about it—but I know

One test you gave me to discern between,

Which mad and dreaming people cannot master;

Or if the dreamer could, so best secure

A comfortable waking—Was't not so?

(To Rosaura).

Needs not your intercession now, you see,

As in the dream before—

Clotaldo, rough old nurse and tutor too

That only traitor wert, to me if true—

Give him his sword; set him on a fresh horse;

Conduct him safely through my rebel force;

And so God speed him to his sovereign's side!

Give me your hand; and whether all awake

Or all a-dreaming, ride, Clotaldo, ride—

Dream-swift—for fear we dreams should overtake.

(A Battle may be supposed to take place; after which)

27. Life is a Dream - Act IV

ACT IV

SCENE I

A wooded pass near the field of battle: drums, trumpets, firing, etc. Cries of "God save Basilio! Segismund," etc.

(Enter Fife, running.)

FIFE.

God save them both, and save them all! say I!—
Oh—what hot work!—Whichever way one turns
The whistling bullet at one's ears—I've drifted
Far from my mad young—master—whom I saw
Tossing upon the very crest of battle,
Beside the Prince—God save her first of all!
With all my heart I say and pray—and so
Commend her to His keeping—bang!—bang!—bang!
And for myself—scarce worth His thinking of—
I'll see what I can do to save myself
Behind this rock, until the storm blows over.

(Skirmishes, shouts, firing, etc. After some time enter King Basilio, Astolfo, and Clotaldo)

KING.

The day is lost!

AST.

Do not despair—the rebels—

KING.

Alas! the vanquish'd only are the rebels.

CLOTALDO.

Ev'n if this battle lost us, 'tis but one
Gain'd on their side, if you not lost in it;
Another moment and too late: at once
Take horse, and to the capital, my liege,
Where in some safe and holy sanctuary
Save Poland in your person.

AST.

Be persuaded:

You know your son: have tasted of his temper;
At his first onset threatening unprovoked
The crime predicted for his last and worst.
How whetted now with such a taste of blood,
And thus far conquest!

KING.

Ay, and how he fought!
Oh how he fought, Astolfo; ranks of men
Falling as swathes of grass before the mower;
I could but pause to gaze at him, although,
Like the pale horseman of the Apocalypse,
Each moment brought him nearer—Yet I say,
I could but pause and gaze on him, and pray
Poland had such a warrior for her king.

AST.

The cry of triumph on the other side
Gains ground upon us here—there's but a moment
For you, my liege, to do, for me to speak,
Who back must to the field, and what man may
Do, to retrieve the fortune of the day.
(Firing.)

FIFE (falling forward, shot).

Oh, Lord, have mercy on me.

KING.

What a shriek—

Oh, some poor creature wounded in a cause
Perhaps not worth the loss of one poor life!—
So young too—and no soldier—

FIFE.

A poor lad,
Who choosing play at hide and seek with death,
Just hid where death just came to look for him;
For there's no place, I think, can keep him out,
Once he's his eye upon you. All grows dark—
You glitter finely too—Well—we are dreaming
But when the bullet's off—Heaven save the mark!
So tell my mister—mastress—
(Dies.)

KING.

Oh God! How this poor creature's ignorance
Confounds our so-call'd wisdom! Even now
When death has stopt his lips, the wound through which
His soul went out, still with its bloody tongue
Preaching how vain our struggle against fate!
(Voices within).

After them! After them! This way! This way!
The day is ours—Down with Basilio, etc.

AST.

Fly, sir—

KING.

And slave-like flying not out-ride
The fate which better like a King abide!
(Enter Segismund, Rosaura, Soldiers, etc.)
SEG.

Where is the King?

KING (prostrating himself).

Behold him,—by this late
Anticipation of resistless fate,
Thus underneath your feet his golden crown,

And the white head that wears it, laying down,
His fond resistance hope to expiate.

SEG.

Princes and warriors of Poland—you
That stare on this unnatural sight aghast,
Listen to one who, Heaven-inspired to do
What in its secret wisdom Heaven forecast,
By that same Heaven instructed prophet-wise
To justify the present in the past.
What in the sapphire volume of the skies
Is writ by God's own finger misleads none,
But him whose vain and misinstructed eyes,
They mock with misinterpretation,
Or who, mistaking what he rightly read,
Ill commentary makes, or misapplies
Thinking to shirk or thwart it. Which has done
The wisdom of this venerable head;
Who, well provided with the secret key
To that gold alphabet, himself made me,
Himself, I say, the savage he fore-read
Fate somehow should be charged with; nipp'd the growth
Of better nature in constraint and sloth,
That only bring to bear the seed of wrong
And turn'd the stream to fury whose out-burst
Had kept his lawful channel uncoerced,
And fertilized the land he flow'd along.
Then like to some unskilful duellist,
Who having over-reached himself pushing too hard
His foe, or but a moment off his guard—
What odds, when Fate is one's antagonist!—
Nay, more, this royal father, self-dismay'd
At having Fate against himself array'd,
Upon himself the very sword he knew
Should wound him, down upon his bosom drew,
That might well handled, well have wrought; or, kept

Undrawn, have harmless in the scabbard slept.
But Fate shall not by human force be broke,
Nor foil'd by human feint; the Secret learn'd
Against the scholar by that master turn'd
Who to himself reserves the master-stroke.
Witness whereof this venerable Age,
Thrice crown'd as Sire, and Sovereign, and Sage,
Down to the very dust dishonour'd by
The very means he tempted to defy
The irresistible. And shall not I,
Till now the mere dumb instrument that wrought
The battle Fate has with my father fought,
Now the mere mouth-piece of its victory
Oh, shall not I, the champions' sword laid down,
Be yet more shamed to wear the teacher's gown,
And, blushing at the part I had to play,
Down where that honour'd head I was to lay
By this more just submission of my own,
The treason Fate has forced on me atone?

KING.

Oh, Segismund, in whom I see indeed,
Out of the ashes of my self-extinction
A better self revive; if not beneath
Your feet, beneath your better wisdom bow'd,
The Sovereignty of Poland I resign,
With this its golden symbol; which if thus
Saved with its silver head inviolate,
Shall nevermore be subject to decline;
But when the head that it alights on now
Falls honour'd by the very foe that must,
As all things mortal, lay it in the dust,
Shall star-like shift to his successor's brow.

(Shouts, trumpets, etc. God save King Segismund!)

SEG.

For what remains—

As for my own, so for my people's peace,
Astolfo's and Estrella's plighted hands
I disunite, and taking hers to mine,
His to one yet more dearly his resign.
(Shouts, etc. God save Estrella, Queen of Poland!)

SEG (to Clotaldo).

You

That with unflinching duty to your King,
Till countermanded by the mightier Power,
Have held your Prince a captive in the tower,
Henceforth as strictly guard him on the throne
No less my people's keeper than my own.
You stare upon me all, amazed to hear
The word of civil justice from such lips
As never yet seem'd tuned to such discourse.
But listen—In that same enchanted tower,
Not long ago I learn'd it from a dream
Expounded by this ancient prophet here;
And which he told me, should it come again,
How I should bear myself beneath it; not
As then with angry passion all on fire,
Arguing and making a distemper'd soul;
But ev'n with justice, mercy, self-control,
As if the dream I walk'd in were no dream,
And conscience one day to account for it.
A dream it was in which I thought myself,
And you that hail'd me now then hail'd me King,
In a brave palace that was all my own,
Within, and all without it, mine; until,
Drunk with excess of majesty and pride,
Methought I tower'd so high and swell'd so wide,
That of myself I burst the glittering bubble,
That my ambition had about me blown,
And all again was darkness. Such a dream
As this in which I may be walking now;

Dispensing solemn justice to you shadows,
Who make believe to listen; but anon,
With all your glittering arms and equipage,
King, princes, captains, warriors, plume and steel,
Ay, ev'n with all your airy theatre,
May flit into the air you seem to rend
With acclamation, leaving me to wake
In the dark tower; or dreaming that I wake
From this that waking is; or this and that
Both waking or both dreaming; such a doubt
Confounds and clouds our mortal life about.
And, whether wake or dreaming, this I know,
How dream-wise human glories come and go;
Whose momentary tenure not to break,
Walking as one who knows he soon may wake,
So fairly carry the full cup, so well
Disorder'd insolence and passion quell,
That there be nothing after to upbraid
Dreamer or doer in the part he play'd,
Whether To-morrow's dawn shall break the spell,
Or the Last Trumpet of the eternal Day,
When Dreaming with the Night shall pass away.
(Exeunt.)