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**TURNER'S AMERICAN STAGE.**

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**FRANCIS THE FIRST.**

*A TRAGEDY, IN FIVE ACTS:*

AS PERFORMED AT THE

THEATRE ROYAL, COVENT GARDEN,

BY

*Frances Ann Kemble.*



PHILADELPHIA:

W. TURNER, 244, RACE STREET.

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1832.

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.



<p>Francis the First, <i>King of France</i>,</p> <p>Charles of Bourbon, } <i>Princes of the Blood</i>,</p> <p>Charles of Alençon, }</p> <p>Chabannes, } <i>old Generals</i>,</p> <p>Vendôme, }</p> <p>Laval, } <i>French Nobles</i>,</p> <p>Lautrec, }</p> <p>Bonnivet, }</p> <p>Varennnes, }</p> <p>Clement Marot, <i>a Poet</i>,</p> <p>Triboulet, <i>the King's Jester</i>,</p> <p>Gonzales, <i>a Monk</i>,</p>	<p>Mr. J. Mason.</p> <p>Mr. C. Kemble.</p> <p>Mr. Diddear.</p> <p>Mr. Egerton.</p> <p>Mr. Evans.</p> <p>Mr. G. Bennett.</p> <p>Mr. Baker.</p> <p>Mr. Duruset.</p> <p>Mr. Sutton.</p> <p>Mr. Abbot.</p> <p>Mr. Keeley.</p> <p>Mr. Warde.</p>
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Nobles, Pages, Guards, Heralds, Soldiers, &c.

### WOMEN.

<p>Louisa of Savoy, <i>the King's Mother</i>,</p> <p>Margaret of Valois, <i>her Daughter</i>,</p> <p>Françoise de Foix, <i>Lautrec's Sister</i>,</p> <p>Florise, <i>her Attendant</i>,</p>	<p>Miss Fanny Kemble</p> <p>Miss Taylor.</p> <p>Miss E. Tree.</p> <p>Miss Lee.</p>
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Ladies of the Court.

822  
K313f  
1832

## THE TRAGEDY OF FRANCIS THE FIRST

Has been pronounced by the London Quarterly Review, one of the most extraordinary works of the present age, and the arrival of Miss KEMBLE in the United States, renders its publication peculiarly appropriate.

### FANNY KEMBLE,

The rising hope and promise of the drama—the bud—the blossom—the half-blown “rose and expectancy” of the theatrical world—the pledge to the rising generation, that, in their time, at least, Juliet shall not lie buried in the tomb of the Capulets, or Belvidera’s sorrows be entrusted entirely to regularly broken in, thorough-paced, tragedy hacks. I am well nigh tired of the mechanical woes and shallow agonies of every-day tragedy—of picturesque and passionless attitudinizing—of storms of grief, according to the stage directions—“cross to R. H. and burst into tears;”—of violent beating of the cold and insensible breast, and knocking of the clenched hand upon the empty head. I am tired of the mere pantomime of the art, without feeling or common sense—tired of vehemence and impetuosity, instead of passion; and particularly tired of hearing such easy work characterised as the “flashes and out-breakings of genius.” To me, gross and habitual exaggeration seems to pervade nearly all the tragic exhibitions on the stage; and if this be so, it is sufficient evidence of the absence of feeling. Genuine feeling never exaggerates. Those who are really touched by the parts they assume, may, from that very cause, be so little master of themselves as to fail in giving a finished portrait of the character they have undertaken to represent; but they never, by any chance, fall into the opposite fault of “o’erstepping the modesty of nature,” and becoming more violent than the hero or heroine of the scene would have been in reality.

Now, Miss Kemble does not exaggerate. I have watched her closely, and have never, according to my notions of things, seen, either in look, voice, or action, the slightest attempt to impose upon the audience by extravagance to extract, as it were, their sympathies by force, and storm them into approval. She is not yet, in some respects, so "effective" an actress as others of infinitely less ability—that is, she does not so well understand how to produce a sensation by "points" and "situations." She has yet much to learn and something to unlearn; but she has that within her which cannot be taught, though, parrot-like, it may be imitated—genuine passion, delicacy and feeling: and all that is necessary for her to do to become a great actress is, in acquiring the necessary business and technicalities of the stage, to preserve pure and undefiled those rare qualities. This is no easy task. Acting is an art in which the noblest results have to be effected by the most unromantic means. It is to be hoped that Miss Kemble will become a *great actress*, and that the artificial education, of which she has yet much to receive, will not destroy the natural beauty and freshness of her mind. At present her personations are rather distinguished by feminine sweetness and delicacy and quick and violent transitions of passion, than by sustained force and grandeur; but there is something occasionally in the tone of her voice—in her dark expressive eye and fine forehead, that speaks of the future Queen Katherine and wife of Macbeth. Her Juliet, with some faults, is a delightful, affectionate, warm-hearted piece of acting; and she is decidedly the least mawkish and truly loving and loveable Belvidera I have ever seen. The closing scene of madness, where others fail, is her greatest triumph. The tones of her voice, when playfully threatening Jaffier, might almost touch the heart of a money-scrivener. She is the only Belvidera I have beheld play this scene twice. They all contrive to make it either excessively repulsive or ludicrous, and somehow or other manage to bring to the mind a very vivid picture of Tilburina in the Critic; while their invariably going home in the midst of their distresses, and after a partial touch of insanity, to put off their black velvets, and put on their white muslins to go completely mad in, because, as that lady says, "it is a rule," by no means tends to do away with this unfortunate association of ideas. Miss Kemble is at present the sole hope of the English public in tragedy. She must not disappoint them, for, if she does, there is no one else on whom they can turn their eyes.



# FRANCIS THE FIRST.



## ACT I.

### SCENE I.—A COURT OF THE LOUVRE.

*Enter Vendôme and Chabannes, meeting the Duke of Alençon.*

*Ven.* Good morrow to my lord of Alençon !

*Alen.* Good morrow, noble sir. My lord Chabannes,

You are right welcome back to court again :  
I pray you, Vendôme, is the King return'd  
From tennis yet ?

*Ven.* My lord, as I pass'd through  
The gallery I saw the royal train  
Dismount, and now the King holds private con-  
verse

With the Queen's confessor : a moment since,  
I saw them both enter the Queen's apartment,  
In very earnest and impassion'd talk ;  
And as I think, the duke de Bourbon's name  
Full many a time escaped their anxious lips.

*Cha.* The Queen's confessor !—what ! old Fa-  
ther Jérôme ?

*Alen.* Oh no ! old Father Jérôme, rest his soul,  
Is dead. This man (between ourselves I speak it,)  
To me, seems rather a mysterious minister,  
And secret instrument, than a confessor.

*Ven.* Strange to say, he is a Spaniard,  
 And, stranger yet, he hath not been at court  
 But a brief space, which renders his estate  
 (Being so trusted by the Queen) a riddle,  
 Whereat we guess in vain. She is not wont  
 To doff her wariness on slight acquaintance;  
 Yet is this monk for ever with her; holding  
 In full possession her most secret counsels.

*Cha.* To me, my lords, who newly am returned  
 To court, all this seems passing strange indeed;  
 With greater wonder, though, Vendôme, I learn  
 De Bourbon is recall'd from Italy.

*Alen.* 'Tis not the absent only are amazed,  
 You do but share the wonder of the town;  
 All note the strange event, none know the cause;  
 And we have yet to learn what fault or folly—

*Ven.* Your pardon, sir, but 'tis not very like  
 That the young hero, who at Marignan  
 Did deeds of war and wisdom so combine,  
 That nothing short a kingdom could reward  
 His merit, now should fail in either point—

*Alen.* This problem, sir,  
 Surpasses my poor wit; and all I know  
 Is, that the duke is coming home again;  
 And that an eager expectation runs  
 Before his path, to see how he will bear  
 This sudden mandate, and how be received  
 At court.

*Cha.* Look, here comes one in haste: methinks,  
 That should be my old friend and comrade,  
 Triboulet.

*Enter Triboulet.*

*Tri.* Gentles, beseech ye leave me passing room.  
 Most worshipful sir, I am right glad to see you!

*Cha.* That is a joy reciprocal.

Good fool, how hast thou fared, since last we parted?

*Tri.* Indifferent well, my lord; I thank ye, very indifferent; but still as well as may be, considering tides and times, and things as they were, and things as they are, and sundry other things—heigh ho!

*Cha.* What! melancholy, eh! poor fellow?

*Tri.* Oh! sir, very melancholy. I should think I was dying in right earnest, an it were not—

*Alen.* That he eats like a pig, and sleeps like a dormouse.

*Tri.* Sir, your comparisons are very beastly, and that's the best that can be said of them.

*Alen.* The best is bad, and far from civil then.

*Tri.* The farther from civil, the nearer to your speech.

*Cha.* There, never anger thee at truth, good fool:—

But tell me where that foul fiend Melancholy Hath driven the damask of thy rosy cheeks?

*Ven.* Marry, it needs no search—into his nose; Which juts from out the mainland of his face, Like some peak'd promontory, on whose verge The beacon light its warning blaze advances.

*Alen.* Well, but what makes thee sad?

*Tri.* E'en that which makes you glad.

*Alen.* And what is that, sir fool?

*Tri.* The Lord High Constable's return, sir duke. (*D'Alençon turns on his heel and walks up the stage with Vendôme.*)

*Cha.* My lord of Alençon, you have your answer;—

And why doth that affect thee?

*Tri.* Why, sir, thus:

The duke de Bourbon is a worthy gentleman,  
Fine fighter, wise statesman, and great fool—

*Cha.* How now, sir Triboulet, a fool!—a man  
who gives  
His blood—

*Tri.* To the earth.

*Cha.* And his counsel—

*Tri.* To the air.

*Cha.* For his country—

*Tri.* No, for that (*snaps his fingers;*) why how  
ye stare, is it not so?—And doth not the event  
prove that he *was* a fool?

*Cha.* (*aside*) O wisdom! thou hast kissed the  
lips of idiots,  
And gemm'd the motley with thy precious pearls!  
(*Alençon and Vendôme appear to be observing  
some one in the distance—they come forward.*)

*Alen.* Oh yes, 'tis he! now by this living light,  
There is no nauseous reptile crawls the earth  
That I so loathe as this same Bonnivet!

*Cha.* Is that De Bonnivet, that plumed thing!  
So sparkling and so brave in his attire,  
Who treads disdainfully the upholding earth?

*Tri.* Oh, that he hath done long on all his up-  
holders.

*Cha.* Is that the brother of King Francis' tutor,  
Whom I remember well a page at court?

*Alen.* Sir, he is now the King's prime minister.

*Cha.* Sir?—tut—impossible!

*Tri.* He means the Queen's prime minister.

*Ven.* Why, aye, that's something nearer to  
the mark.

*Enter De Bonnivet—he bows haughtily to them—  
they return his salute in the same manner.*

*Tri.* (*staring in his face*) He hath a very bright

eye, and a very high brow, and very handsome teeth—(*While he says this, De Bonnivet threateningly obliges him to retreat step by step until he gets behind Vendôme, when he adds,*)—By reason of all which no woman need miscarry that looks at him.

*De Bon.* (*Aiming a blow at Triboulet with his glove*) Hold thy fool's tongue!

*Tri.* (*Showing himself from behind Alençon*) That we may listen to thine? Now, for aught I know, thou may'st be the more learned of the two, seeing thy brother was pedagogue—(*De Bonnivet draws his sword, and rushes upon Triboulet—Vendôme and Chabannes hold him back. D'Alençon places himself before Triboulet.*)

*Ven.* For manhood, sir, put up your sword: he knows not what he says.

*Cha.* He is a fool! an idiot!

*Tri.* The King's fool, sir, the King's fool, and no idiot!

*Bon.* King's fool or not, he shall not fool't with me,

Or, by the Lord! I'll make him find his brains.

*Tri.* Sir, if you knock them out, I bequeath them to you; You're poor in such commodities.

*Bon.* Unhand me!—

*Enter Margaret de Valois, followed by Clement.*

*Mar.* How now, what coil is here! my lords  
I thought not

To meet foul discord in such company.

Gentlemen, if a lady's voice hath power

To win your hands from their ungentle purpose,

Pray you put up your swords—Why so, I thank ye.

And now, what may I ask, in this assembly  
Was cause of such affray?

*Tri.* My wit, sweet mistress.

*Mar.* Truly such origin doth honor to your  
quarrel.

And if whole nations fought for ten long years  
For no more cause than a light woman's love,  
We well may pardon, nay approve, four heroes  
Who fall to fighting on a jester's words.

*Alen.* Madam, *your* words are sharp, and came  
they not

From lips, where soft sweet smiles have made  
their home,

They would, indeed, be terrible : but now,  
We even bless reproachful oracles  
That breathe from such a shrine.

*Tri.* (*aside to him*) Oh, excellent!

Where didst thou con that dainty speech, I pray  
thee? (*Alençon pushes him angrily away—  
Margaret bows to Vendôme, and extends  
her hand to Chabannes.*)

*Mar.* Most worthy sir, you're welcome back  
again

To our fair court.

*Cha.* Lady, can you rejoice

To see grey hairs come bowing in your train?  
Doth spring cry welcome to the hoary winter?

*Mar.* Oh, sir, your winter so hath crown'd itself  
With bays and laurels—glorious evergreens,  
Still smiling in the sunshine of fair fame,  
That 'tis but like a second, longer spring;  
Born of the growth of years, destin'd to flourish  
As bright and fresh for ever.

But say, Chabannes,

Will not the tourney that my brother holds

To day, in honor of the Duke's return,  
Be favor'd by your presence?

*Cha.* Gracious Madam,  
We all intend, as I believe to be there.  
I to look on, and criticise as age  
Ever will do, drawing comparisons,  
'Twixt that which is, and that which has been once.

*Mar.* Envious comparisons! say, are they not?  
Surely the world alters not every day,  
That they who play'd their parts but some score  
years  
Gone by, should cry out, 'How the times are al-  
ter'd?'—

I do appeal to thy philosophy.  
Say, is it so, Chabannes?

*Cha.* In sober truth, then, in philosophy,  
Since thus your Grace commands, I do believe  
That at our feet the tide of time flows on  
In strong and rapid course; nor is one current  
Or rippling eddy liker to the rest,  
Than is one age unto its predecessor:  
Men still are men, the stream is still a stream,  
Through every change of changeful tide and time;  
And 'tis, I fear, only our partial eye  
That lends a brighter sunbeam to the wave  
On which we launch'd our own advent'rous bark.

*Mar.* Oh fair confession! Come thou with me,  
sir fool,  
I've business for thee in the banquet hall:  
You, gentlemen, farewell, until the tourney;  
'Till then, all good attend you, and I pray  
Keep the king's peace, an it be possible.

[*Exeunt* Margaret, Clement, and Triboulet  
on one side—the rest on the other.]

## SCENE II.—THE QUEEN MOTHER'S APARTMENT.

*The Queen enters precipitately.*

*Queen.* So—I am glad Gonzales is not here; I would not even he should see me thus.—  
Now out upon this beating heart, these temples,  
That throb and burn so.—I must remember me.—  
Mother of France, and well nigh Queen of it,  
I'll even bear my love as royally,  
As I have borne my pow'r—the time is near,  
Oh very near, when he will kneel again  
Before my feet;—the conqueror to the conquer'd!—  
I am asham'd of this ill-timed relapse,—  
This soft unnerving power which thus enthrals  
me.—

*Enter Gonzales.*

Thou are right welcome, by my word, Gonzales!  
Where be those parchments?

*Gon.* Noble madam, here.

*Queen.* Hast thou drawn out the plan of the  
possessions?

*Gon.* So please your grace, I have:—Pardon  
me, madam,

I fear you are not well; your cheek is pale,  
And your lip quivers—is your highness ill?

*Queen.* Hush! 'twas a trumpet, was it not?—  
and now—

Surely it is the tramp of horses' hoofs  
That beat the ground thus hurriedly and loud;—  
I pray thee, father, throw the casement wide—  
The air is stifling. (*Throws herself into a chair.*)

*Gon.* I never saw you thus o'ercome before:  
*You tremble, madam.*



*Queen.* (*rising*) Do I so, indeed?  
I thank thee for that word—it hath reviv'd me:  
I'm very well—I do not tremble now;—  
It hath a wondrous virtue! Pray thee, father,  
What think the people of Bourbon's return?

*Gon.* Madam, the summer clouds  
That flit across the heav'ns are not more various,  
More strange, and different in shape and colour,  
Than are th' opinions born from his recall.

*Queen.* But thou—but thou—  
Accustom'd as thou art to thread the mazes  
Of dark intriguing policy—how think'st *thou*?

*Gon.* Accustom'd, as your highness should  
have said,  
To read the will and wisdom of your eyes,  
And watch, for your commands, each meaning  
look,

If I might say it—madam—I should think  
That much indeed lay in this mystery;  
For your eye speaks strange things.

*Queen.* How sayest thou—  
This hand is passing fair, is't not, Gonzales?

*Gon.* Madam!—'tis not for me to estimate  
The hand that kings have priz'd above their  
kingdom.

*Queen.* Psha! fool! Oh, rather say the hand  
that held  
The sovereign rule over their kingdoms. Now,  
Mark me attentively. This woman's hand,  
That but this moment trembled with alarm,—  
This fair frail hand hath firmly held the reins  
Of this vast empire for full many a year:  
This hand hath given peace and war to Europe,—  
This hand hath plac'd my son upon his throne,—  
This hand hath held him there,—this hand it was  
That sign'd the warrant for Bourbon's recall.

*Gon.* Amazement!

*Queen.* Ay! this woman's hand, led by a woman's heart.

Now hear me, thou; for to thy secrecy  
I will confide what none, save only thee,  
*Have known—must know.* Note well the latter  
word!

It is because I love the Duke de Bourbon  
That I have called him from his government,  
To lift him to the dizziest height of pow'r  
This hand can grant, or kingdom can confer.

*Gon.* And will you tell him of your love?

*Queen.* I will.

Nay, answer not,—I have resolved on it,—  
Thou wouldst but waste thy words, and anger me.  
I never yet knew friend nor minister  
But they were ever readier to advise  
Than act.

*Gon.* Now, madam, by the holy mass  
You shall not find it so. I've not forgot  
My fame and honours where bestowed by you;  
And rather take them back,—nay, life itself,—  
Than taunt me with unwillingness to serve you.

*Queen.* Why, so! I did but jest. In sooth,  
Gonzales,

I know thou art as good, in a bad way,  
As any faithful son of the Holy Church  
Need be.

*Gon.* But does the King—

*Queen.* Out, bungler! out!

The King was very dutiful, and well  
Believ'd what I so strenuously assur'd.  
I told him that the duke de Bourbon's power  
Was growing strongly in the Milanese;  
Urged his return; and show'd him how, when  
distant,

The high ambition of the Bourbon's mind  
Was far less check'd than here, beneath the  
shadow

Of the throne, and so he was recalled—

[*Trumpets without—shouts of “DE BOURBON!”*  
And now he is arriv'd—hark how the trumpets  
Bray themselves hoarse with sounding welcome  
to him!

Oh, could I join my voice to yonder cry,  
By heav'ns I think its tones would rend the welkin  
With repetition of the hero's name! [exit.

*Gon.* In love with Bourbon! By this living light  
My mission here is well nigh bootless, then.  
Now might I back to Spain, since Charles' objects  
Are all defeated by this woman's passion,  
Were there not yet another task, the dearest,  
The labor that is life—mine own revenge!  
Lie still, thou thirsty spirit, that within  
Call'st for the blood that *shall* allay thy craving!  
Down, down with thee, until the hour be come  
When I can fling this monkish treachery by,  
Rush on my prey, and let my soul's hot flame  
Liek up his blood, and quench it in his life!  
Time, and the all-enduring soul, that never  
Shrinks from the trial, be my speed! and nought  
My hope, my spur, my instrument, my end,  
Save hate—eternal hate—immeasurable hate!  
[exit.

SCENE III.—PRINCESS MARGARET'S CHAMBER.

*Enter Margaret and Triboulet.*

*Mar.* It is the hour of tournay. Triboulet,  
Go thou unto the Queen, and tell her grace,

That if it please her, I'll attend her thither.

[*exit* Triboulet.

He is returned! he will be there! and yet  
 Though meeting, after long eventful absence,—  
 We shall not in our meeting be half blest:  
 A dizzy, whirling throng will be around us.  
 'Mid whose loud jar the still small voice of love,  
 Whose accents breathe their soft enchantment  
 best

In whisper'd sighs, or but half-whisper'd words,  
 Will die unheard. Oh that we thus should meet!  
 But, then, there is love's eye to flash his thought  
 Into a language, whose rich eloquence  
 Beggars all voice; our eyes at least may meet,  
 And change, like messengers, the loving freight  
 That either heart sends forth.

*Enter* Clement Marot.

*Cle.* So please you, madam,  
 The Queen hath bid me say that she will not  
 Grace with her sight the tournament to-day;  
 And as I came from her apartment hither,  
 I met the King, who bade me bear you word  
 He cannot yet unto the lists, but you,  
 And your fair train, had best ride quickly there,  
 And let the tilt commence; he will not tarry,  
 But join ye ere the first three blows are struck.

[*exit* Clement.

*Mar.* 'Tis well, I will obey.—'Tis very strange  
 How much I fear my mother should perceive  
 De Bourbon's love for me—I know not why—  
 I dare not tell it her,—she is a fearful spirit,  
 And stands so proudly over all her sex,  
 She surely ne'er hath known what 'tis to love.

[*exit*.

## SCENE IV.—THE LISTS.

*Enter Lautrec and Laval meeting.*

*Lau.* Well met by this good light, Laval; will not

The Queen attend this tournament to-day?

*Lav.* No sir, she's closeted with his grim holiness.

*Lau.* That Spanish monk?

*Lav.* The walking mystery.

That man, to my mind, hath a villainous look!

I never met his eyes but they were glaring

Like some hyæna's, or the devil's own.

Once I remember that the Queen had sent

Me on some mission to this confessor,—

By chance, the Princess Margaret, by whose side  
He stood, let fall a jewel from her finger;

Both stoop'd; and as we bent, our hands encountered—

He started back as though a serpent stung him;—

By'r Lady, but I would not be the man

To wrong that surly monk—is it not strange,

That when I gaze on him, it seems as though

I knew him, and had seen him oft before?

*Lau.* Nay, in thy dreams it must have been,  
Laval;

But leave this theme, and tell me what it is

Thou would'st with me?

*Lav.* This is no fitting place

To speak what I would say at greater length,

But love prompts me (once more) to urge my suit—

My unanswer'd suit.

*Lau.* Once more I tell thee, then,

My sister shall be thine, I have said it.—Alençon!

*Enter Alençon.*

*Lav.* Thou'st tarried long at tennis.

*Alen.* Why, the King  
Still loiter'd on with racket in his hand,  
And Bonnivet, vaunting their mutual prowess.

*Lau.* 'Tis much past noon.

*Alen.* He will be here anon,  
For as I rode, I pass'd him with his train ;  
The gath'ring crowd thronging and clamouring  
Around him, stunning him with benedictions,  
And stifling him with love and fumes of garlick !  
He, with the air he knows so well to don,  
With cap in hand, and his thick chesnut hair  
Fann'd from his forehead, bowing to his saddle,  
Smiling and nodding, cursing at them too  
For hindering his progress—while his eye,  
His eagle eye, well vers'd in such discernment,  
Rov'd through the crowd ; and ever lighted, where  
Some pretty ancle, clad in woollen hose,  
Peep'd from beneath a short round petticoat ;  
Or where some wealthy burgher's buxom dame  
Deck'd out in all her high-day splendour, stood  
Shewing her gossips the gold chain, which lay  
Cradled upon a bosom, whiter far  
Than the pure lawn that kerchieft it.  
Now is not the joust begun?—his Majesty—

*Lau.* Nay, it began when first his order reach'd  
us ;

Already hath one combat been decided  
'Twixt Jouy and De Varennes ; wilt thou, Laval,  
Try fortune in the lists ?

*Lav.* Oh, not to-day,—  
Not before her, beneath whose eyes defeat  
Were worse than death,—no, not to-day.

*Lau.* Nay, then, De Varennes shall not loiter there

Longer in proud expectance of a rival,—  
 I will encounter him. Herald! what ho!  
 There is my gauntlet—bear to De Varennes  
 A fair defiance! Bid my page lead round  
 My charger, let your trumpets sound a blast,  
 And raise the escutcheon of our ancient house.

[*Exit into the Lists.*

(*Shouts and acclamations without, and trumpets.*)

*Enter* Francis, Chabannes, Vendôme, Bonnivet,  
 Clement, Marot, Triboulet, and Courtiers.

*Omnes.* Long live the King! Long live great  
 Francis!

*Fran.* Now are we heartily ashamed to think  
 That we have robb'd our excellent good people  
 Of any portion of the day's rejoicing;—  
 We fear we're somewhat past th' appointed time:

*Tri.* An hour or so, not more.

*Fran.* Curse on that ceaseless clock—thy  
 tongue!

*Tri.* It goes right, though, for once.

*Fran.* If we have caus'd the joust to be retarded,  
 Our faithful subjects will forgive th' offence  
 In favour of the cause—their own dear interests  
 Having withheld us in deep council from  
 Their well beloved presence, which to us  
 Is like the sunshine of a summer's day—  
 We were detained by weighty matters.

*Tri.* Ay,

A tennis-ball, was't not? There, never frown,  
 I'll spare thee—I'll be silent.

*Fran.* On with the combats!

Chabannes, 'tis long since such a joust has been Honour'd by your good presence.

*Cha.* True, my liege.

But see ! the gates unclose—Lautrec is conqueror.  
[*Shouts and trumpets. Françoise de Foix rises, leans forward with every mark of intense interest.*

*Fran.* De Bonnivet, who is yon lady ? look—  
In front of the Princess's balcony ?  
Is she not passing fair ?

*Bon.* Indeed, my liege,  
She's very fair. I do not know her, though.  
(*To Laval*) Who is yon lady, leaning forth,  
Laval ?

*Lav.* Count Lautrec's sister.

*Fran.* Had a limner's hand  
Traced such a heavenly brow, and such a lip,  
I would have sworn the knave had dreamt it all  
In some fair vision of some fairer world,  
See how she stands, all shrined in loveliness ;  
Her white hands clasped ; her clust'ring locks  
thrown back  
From her high forehead ; and in those bright eyes  
Tears ! radiant emanations ! drops of light !  
That fall from those surpassing orbs as though  
The starry eyes of heav'n wept silver dew.

(*To Laval*) Is yonder lady married, sir ?

*Lav.* My liege,  
Not yet ; but her hand is bound in promise—  
She is affianced.

*Fran.* And to whom ?

*Lav.* To me, sire.

*Fran.* Indeed ! (*Aside to Bonnivet.*)

Methinks I was too passionate in my praise,  
Eh ? Bonnivet—and yet how fair she is !

[*Trumpets and shouts.*



*Enter Lautrec, from the Lists.*

*Bon.* The time is well nigh spent,  
And yet no stir of arms in token yet  
Of any other knight, whose envious prowess  
Disputes the prize which Lautrec else may claim.

*Fran.* Let him not claim it, though, for 'tis not  
his ;

And, by this light, *shall* not be his, while I  
Can strike one blow for it. Behold, Count Lautrec,  
Another combatant awaits thee, here !—  
Another bids thee halt on triumph's threshold,  
And strive once more for victory. What, ho !  
Unfurl our royal standard to the wind,  
And let our fleur-de-lys, that oft have shadow'd  
The bloody battle field, bloom o'er the tourney.

*Lau.* The King ! I yield !

*Fran.* Not so, sir, if you please ;  
We'd shew that we can run a lance as well  
As any other gentleman : come on !

[*Exeunt Lautrec and the King.*

*Fran.* How bravely does war's plumed majesty  
Become him, as he vaults upon his steed !  
His crimson crest waving upon the air  
Like Victory's ruddy favours ! on they go—  
Now quakes the earth beneath their chargers'  
hoofs,

That whirl around, taking their 'vantage space ;  
Now each fierce steed bends on his haunches down,  
Ready to rush his headlong course ; each knight  
Springs from his seat, and rising in the stirrups,  
Directs his rested lance ; on, on, they go,  
Flashing and thund'ring ! Ah ! the King's un-  
horsed.

[*Shouts within the Lists—“Long live the King !”*

*Enter Bonnivet and others.*

*Bon.* Madam, your loyal fears outran your eyes,  
Count Lautrec fell, but he received no hurt;  
The King is conqueror!

*Tri.* Ay, so I thought;  
Fortune's a true courtier.

*Cle.* Now out on thee, unmannerly—

*Tri.* I meant to say courtiers are—

*Lav.* How now, jackanapes?

*Tri.* Well, well, what I meant to say is, that  
I never yet saw King worsted in fight.

*Bon.* Surely not because—

*Tri.* Umph! because broken pates are better  
than broken fortunes, and ye know it full well!

[*Enter Francis, followed by Lautrec, Herald, Pages, and Esquires: Margaret, Françoise, and Ladies, descend and advance; the King kneels to Margaret, who throws a gold chain round his neck.*

END OF ACT I.



## ACT II.

SCENE I.—AN APARTMENT OF THE PRINCESS  
MARGARET.

*Enter De Bourbon, followed by Margaret.*

*Bour.* A plague upon their tournaments, I say.

*Mar.* Nay then, De Bourbon, by my woman's  
word

This must not be; oh, say it shall not be!

Say thou wilt rein this hot, impatient mood,

For thy own sake——no, for mine, for mine, I  
meant :

Are we not twined together in our love?  
What wonder then, it speaking of myself,  
Thy name was on my lips?—for my sake, Bourbon!

*Bour.* If thou wilt bid me journey to the moon  
Upon a moth's wing, or wilt send me forth,  
Belted and spurred, to fight some score of  
devils,—

Or worse, wilt bid me with some twenty men  
Turn out Colonna from the Milanese,  
Say so; and by this light I'll *do* it too!  
But to submit to *this*,—to bear all this,—  
To let a woman tear my laurels off,—  
And trample them,—Hell! when I think on it!  
Pshaw! never fix those dangerous eyes on me  
And clasp thy hands—I say—

*Mar.* She is my mother!

*Bour.* I'faith I've often doubted of that truth;  
Thou art not like her, for the which thank heaven!

*Mar.* I *can* be like her though, my lord, in this;  
Not to endure the license of your tongue  
If headlong passion urge you, sir, beyond  
The bounds of prudence, look that you control it,  
Nor vent bold thoughts in bolder words to me;  
Else you may chance to find—

*Bour.* She *is* thy mother;

Nay, smooth that brow, thou art too like the  
Queen;

And in those soft blue eyes, whose orbs reflect  
Heaven's light with heaven's own purity, let not  
The stormy gleam of anger e'er flash forth!  
I had thought, Margaret, that love forgot  
All ranks and all distinctions?

*Mar.* Ay, so it doth—

All ties, the world, its wealth, its fame, or fortune,  
Can entwine ; but never those of nature.

So mine can give up all, save the first bond  
My heart e'er knew,—the love of those who gave  
Life, and the power to love ;—those early links  
Lie wreathed like close-knit fibres round my heart,  
Never to sever thence till my heart break.

*Bour.* Lo at thy feet I sue for pardon, sweet!  
By thine own purity, thou virgin lily!  
Thou flower of France! forgive the word that  
broke

Too hastily from my rash lips ; which, thus,  
Having offended, will do penance now  
Upon this marble shrine, my lady love.

[*Kisses her hand.*]

*Mar.* A goodly penitent! Nay, never kneel,  
And look so pitiful,—there, I forgive thee.  
But, Bourbon, by the faith of our sworn love,  
I do implore thee to bear with my mother.

*Bour.* Pshaw!—

*Mar.* Why look now, there's your brow dark  
and contracted ;—

I see the passion flashing in your eyes ;  
You will *not* think of me, and bear with her?

*Bour.* If I could think of thee, and not see her—  
Or think of thee, and not hear her, why, then—  
Well, patience, and kind thoughts of thee befriend  
me!

And I will do my best to second them.

*Mar.* Go you to meet my mother now?

*Bour.* This hour

Love stole from duty to bestow on thee ;  
And now I must attend upon the Queen.

*Mar.* See you observe my lesson.

*Bour.* Fear me not ;  
Oh ! I'll be wonderfully calm and patient.

*Mar.* (*aside.*) Methinks I'll try thee. (*aloud.*)  
—How it she should ask

Some question of your late left government ?

I see you're very calm already ! How

If she should speak of a fit successor ?

Most patient ! Lautrec now, or Bonnivet ?

*Bour.* Confusion light upon thee ! Bonnivet ?  
And Lautrec ? beardless boys ! whose maiden  
swords

Have not yet blush'd with one red drop of blood ;

Whose only march hath been a midnight measure.

Whose only field hath been a midnight masque ;

Is it for these, and their advancement, I

Have watch'd, have toil'd, have fought, have bled,  
have conquer'd ;

Rush'd over fields, strewed with the dead and  
dying ;

Swam streams that ran all curdled with the blood

Of friend and foe ; stood in the bristling breach,

And in the hour of death and desolation

Won never fading victories for France ?

Shall the Queen's minions—by this living light—

*Mar.* Oh, patient gentleman ! how calm he is !

Now in those flaming eyes, and scornful lips,

I read how well my lesson profits thee.

Thou shalt not to the Queen in this hot mood.

*Bour.* I'faith I must ; the storm is over now ;

And having burst, why, I shall be the calmer.

Farewell, sweet monitress ! I'll not forget.

*Mar.* Oh, but I fear—

*Bour.* Fear not—she is thy mother !

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE II.—THE QUEEN MOTHER'S APARTMENT.

*The Queen discovered writing. Enter Gonzales.*

*Gon.* So please your highness, the Duke de Bourbon

Attends your grace.

*Queen.* Give him admittance straight.

[*exit Gonzales.*]

Now then to try the mettle of his soul,  
And tempt him with the glitter of a crown.

*Enter Bourbon.*

*Bour.* Madam, I humbly kiss your highness's hands

*Queen.* I thank you, sir; and though last night's blithe close

Was hardly rest to one o'ermarched before,  
I trust you are recover'd from the weariness  
Of your long journey.

*Bour.* I thank your grace, but owing to the speed

Enjoin'd by those who penn'd my—my recall—  
My journey was a short one.

*Queen.* Did ye not rest at Chantelle?

*Bour.* Ay, good madam.

*Queen.* Short as you hold your march, my lord,  
and lightly

As you think fit to speak of it, I trow  
It was swift riding to reach Paris yesterday.

*Bour.* To me both time and road seem short,  
indeed,

From a proud kingdom back to a poor dukedom—

*Queen.* My lord, there is much bitterness in  
that!

*Bour.* Bitterness! Madam—oh, I do not doubt  
There were high, weighty reasons warranted  
My being thus recalled from Italy;  
And those same weighty reasons will, no doubt,  
Point out a fit successor to me also.

*Queen.* There is much bitterness in *that*, my  
lord.—

Your mind is apt to start at fancied wrongs,  
And makes a shadow where no substance is.

*Bour.* Your grace will pardon me; but hitherto  
We have not seen such payment given to service;  
Can government be wrested from a man  
Unheard,—nay, unaccused, without a cause?

*Queen.* No, sir, they cannot—but might not  
the cause

Have been your future profit and advancement,  
Instead of your disgrace?

*Bour.* Oh! we all know  
The government of our Italian States  
Must henceforth be a post for beardless soldiers.  
Lacking wit wherewith to win their honors,  
Or courtiers lacking valor to deserve them.

*Queen.* I see the bent and mark of this discourse;  
And though, be well assured, no other man  
Who breathes had thus far ventured in his speech,—  
Your daring I have borne with patiently.

*Bour.* Borne with me! Borne with me for-  
sooth!—

*Queen.* Ay, sir,  
Borne with you: further still; for in that sorrow  
Hath fallen on your mind too bitterly,  
And well nigh chang'd its bright and polished  
metal

With its corrosive touch,—I've pitied you.

*Bour.* Wrong'd! borne with! pitied! By our  
Lady, madam—

This is too much.

*Queen.* Oh, sir, the King's advisers—

*Bour.* The King should hearken less to false  
advice,

And more to honest service, madam.

*Queen.* (*aside*) Ha!

Now is the bridle thrown upon the steed.

(*Aloud.*) I pass you that, my lord, you are too  
hot—

And now that I have curb'd all proud respects  
In kind indulgence of your hasty spleen,  
Hear me: what if (I will repeat the question,)  
Your quick preferment, and increase of glory  
Had been alone consulted?

*Bour.* How so, madam?

*Queen.* Ever too rash in your belief, my lord,  
You run before the truth—you've followers,  
Eager and zealous partisans you have;  
Think you it is impossible some friend  
Shall haply have contriv'd this prompt recall,  
To bring you nearer to a court, where you  
May find paths unexplor'd as yet, in which  
Ambition might discover such a prize,  
As were worth winning?

*Bour.* I would have you know  
De Bourbon storms, and does not steal his hon-  
ours.

And though your highness thinks I am ambitious,  
(And rightly thinks) I am not so ambitious  
Ever to beg rewards that I can win,—  
No man shall call me debtor to his tongue.

*Queen.* (*rising.*) 'Tis proudly spoken; nobly  
too—but what,



What if a woman's hand were to bestow  
 Upon the Duke de Bourbon such high honors,  
 To raise him to such state, that grasping man,  
 E'en in his wildest thoughts of mad ambition,  
 Ne'er dreamt of a more glorious pinnacle?

*Bour.* I'd kiss the lady's hand an she were fair,  
 But if this world filled up the universe,—  
 If it could gather all the light that lives  
 In every other star, or sun, or world;  
 If kings could be my subjects, and that I  
 Could call such pow'r and such a world my own,  
 I would not take it from a woman's hand.  
 Fame is my mistress, madam, and my sword  
 The only friend I ever wooed her with.  
 I hate all honors smelling of the distaff,  
 And by this light, would as lief wear a spindle  
 Hung round my neck, as thank a lady's hand  
 For any favor greater than a kiss.—

*Queen.* And how, if such a woman loved you,  
 —how  
 If, while she crown'd your proud ambition, she  
 Could crown her own ungovernable passion,  
 And felt that all this earth possess'd, and she  
 Could give, were all too little for your love?  
 Oh good my lord! there may be such a woman.

*Bour.* (*aside.*) Amazement! can she mean  
 sweet Margaret?  
 (*Aloud.*) Speak, [*he falls at the Queen's feet.*  
 Madam, in pity speak but one word more,—  
 Who is that woman?

*Queen.* (*throwing off her veil.*) I am that wo-  
 man!

*Bour.* (*starting up.*) You? by the holy mass!  
 I scorn your proffers;—  
 Is there no crimson blush to tell of fame

And shrinking womanhood ! Oh shame ! shame !  
shame !

*[The Queen remains clasping her hands to her temples, while De Bourbon walks hastily up and down ; after a long pause, the Queen speaks.]*

Queen. What ho ! Marlon ! St Evreux !

*Enter Two Gentlemen.*

You may retire.

Bour. Confusion !

Queen. Are we obeyed ?

Bour. *(aside.)* Oh Margaret ! for thee ! for thy dear sake !

*[rushes out, followed by the Gentlemen—the Queen sinks into a chair.]*

Queen. Refus'd and scorn'd ! Infamy !—the word chokes me !

Proud noble, I will weave thee such a web,—  
I will so spoil and trample on thy pride !  
Love having fail'd, we'll try the best expedient  
That offers next—revenge !—Oh sweet revenge !  
Thou art my only hope, my only dower,  
And I will make thee worthy of a Queen.  
What, shall we wring this haughty soul a little ?  
Tame this proud spirit, curb this untrained charger ?

We will not weigh too heavily, nor grind  
Too hard, but, having bow'd him to the earth,  
Leave the pursuit to others—carrion birds ;  
Who stoop, but not until the falcon's gorg'd  
Upon the prey he leaves to their base talons.

*[exit.]*

SCENE III.—AN ANTEROOM IN THE PALACE.

*Enter, at opposite sides, the King and Clement.*

*Fran.* The very man I seek,— well met, Clement,  
I have a boon to ask of thee.

*Cle.* My liege,  
Speak but your will, it is my law.

*Fran.* I thank thee.  
But first answer me this—didst thou not mark,  
This morning at the tournament, a lady  
Who sat beside my sister?

*Cle.* That did all  
Who where there—'twas the young Countess de  
Foix,  
Lautrec's fair sister.

*Fran.* Ay, the very same;  
Dost know her, good Clement?

*Cle.* My liege, I do;  
And e'en will say, that her surpassing beauty  
Surpasseth not her wit, which is, indeed,  
So perfect, and withall so gentle, too,  
That her fair form is but a priceless casket,  
Wherein lie precious treasures.

*Fran.* By my fay.  
The lady's praise falls freely from thy tongue,  
Indeed, Clement! Methinks she must be perfect,  
Else art thou very mad!

*Cle.* My gracious liege!

*Fran.* Come, come, *Sieur* Clement, thou dost  
love the lady!

*Cle.* All saints defend me from it! as I see  
Your grace would hold such love insanity.

*Fran.* Hast known her long?

*Cle.* Ay, long enough, my lord,

To have o'ercome that sudden love which springs  
To life from the first glance of beauteous eyes.

*Fran.* Do thou mine errand then, and bear to  
her

This letter and this ring; but see thou name not  
Whence they are sent; be silent, and be swift,  
And to my chamber bring me her reply.—

How, now! I thought thee gone; why dost thou  
stop,

And turn yon letter o'er and o'er, and look  
So sad and doubting?

*Cle.* May it please your grace,  
I had a sister once—my thoughts were of  
This Lady's brother.

*Fran.* Well, sir! what of him?

*Cle.* I pray you, pardon me, my noble lord,  
But if—

*Fran.* I will arrest the treason hanging  
Upon thy lip; for, by my knightly word,  
Yon scroll is such as any gentleman  
Might bear to any lady.

*Cle.* For that word  
I thank your majesty with all my heart,—  
I'll bear your message trustily.

*Fran.* And quick!y;  
And meet me in my chamber with thine answer.  
Good speed—farewell!—be swift. I wait for thee.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE IV.—COUNCIL CHAMBER.

*Under a Canopy is placed the throne; seats are  
placed on both sides of a long table.*

*Enter the Queen-Mother.*

*Queen.* What, dazzled and ensnar'd, ere the  
black eyes

That blinded can have flash'd three glances on him!  
The last that should have won his yielding heart,  
too!

She hath a brother, young and proud,—ambitious,  
Or else he comes not of the haughty stock  
Whose name he bears. Ambitious! ay, and if  
This black-eyed girl have the De Foix' high blood  
Within her veins, she'll forward his ambition.

I fear this government of Italy  
No longer lies at my disposal now.  
I would that blindness had put out the beauty  
That lies in every woman's eyes! I would  
A foul deformity alone had been  
The portion of all women, ere this thing  
Had come to pass?—Beset on ev'ry side,—  
Hemm'd in,—and forced to guard—e'en more  
than life—

My pow'r; and let revenge meantime go sleep:  
No matter! in the storm the pilot's skill  
Shows best.—The king approaches to the council.  
[*Flourish of trumpets.*]

*Enter the King and all the Court, Alençon,  
Bonnivet, Vendôme, Chabannes, Lautrec,  
Laval, &c.*

*Fran.* The Duke de Bourbon's absence we  
might deem

Strange and uncourteous; but we'll rather hope  
That some event of unforeseen importance  
Hath stood between his duty and ourselves:  
Time wears—

[*The King leads his Mother to the throne—the  
Nobles place themselves according to their rank.  
On to the buisness of the day.*]

*Queen.* Sire, will it not seem also strange in us,

And all uncourteous, if we should discuss  
This matter, ere the first prince of the blood  
Be here to give his voice in this decision ?

*Enter Bourbon.*

Said I not so ? We know my lord of Bourbon  
Is ever at the post where duty points.

[*Bourbon seats himself.*]

*Fran.* Cousin of Bourbon, you are welcome  
here,

*Bour.* I thank your majesty who bids me so,  
And crave the assembly's pardon ; on my way  
A man withheld me, unto whom I owed  
Some gratitude.

*Queen.* Shall we not to the point ?

*Fran.* Ay, marry ; thus, then, noble lords, it  
is :—

But now a messenger from Italy  
Hath reach'd our court, with tidings from Milan,—  
Prosper Colonna is in arms again ;  
And Charles of Spain has sent his swarthy bands  
To ravage our fair tributary states :  
We lack some trusty arm to wield our brand  
In the defence of Italy. Already,  
Two have been named to us—De Bonnivet,  
And Lautrec.

*Queen (aside to Bour.)* Bourbon, you look  
wondrous pale ;  
I fear me you are ill.

*Bour. (aside.)* Oh gracious madam !  
Fear's pallid tint must live within your eye,  
And lend whate'er you look on its own hue.

*Fran.* Stand forth, Count Lautrec ; for De Bon-  
nivet,  
Methinks, his youth may follow yet the wars  
Before he lead them on ; how says our mother ?

*Queen.* How should she say when that the  
royal choice

Lights on such valour? how but well? but you,  
My lord of Bourbon, we would have your voice;  
Does silence, disapproving, seal your lips?  
Or takes your wisdom no exception here?

*Bour.* None, Madam; and the only wish I have  
Is, that you ever had been served in Italy,  
As I foresee Count Lautrec's arm will serve you.

*Lau.* My liege! beseech you, hold; and you,  
my lords!—

The honor now conferr'd sits blushing  
On my unworthy brow; oh! not on me  
Bestow a prize, which years of bloody service,  
And hairs bleach'd in your camps, alone should  
wear.

*Fran.* Now, by my fay, Lautrec, thy speech but  
shows

As brave and gallant soldier's speech should show  
Shrinking from praise and guerdon duly won:  
With our own royal hand we'll buckle on  
The sword, that in thy grasp must be the bulwark  
And loadstar of our host. Approach!

*Queen.* Not so:

Your pardon, sir; but it hath ever been  
The pride and privilege of woman's hand  
To arm the valor that she loves so well;  
We would not, for our crown's best jewel, bate  
One jot of our accustom'd state to-day;  
Count Lautrec, we will arm thee; at our feet,  
Take thou the brand which wins thy country's  
wars,—

Thy monarch's trust, and thy fair lady's favor.

Why, how now!—how is this!—my lord of  
Bourbon!

If we mistake not, that's the sword of office  
Which graces still your baldrick; with your leave.  
We'll borrow it of you.

*Bour. (starting up.)* Ay. 'tis the sword  
You buckled on with your own hand, the day  
You sent me forth to conquer in your cause;  
And there it is!—(*breaks the sword*)—take it!  
and with it, all

Th' allegiance that I owe to France; ay! take it;  
And with it, take the hope I breathe o'er it;  
That so, before Colonna's host, your arms  
Lie crush'd and sullied with dishonor's stain;  
So reft asunder by contending factions,  
Be your Italian provinces; so torn  
By di-cord and dissension this vast empire;  
So broken and disjoin'd your subjects' loves;  
So fallen your son's ambition, and your pride!

*Queen. (rising)* What ho! a guard within there!  
Charles of Bourbon,  
I do arrest thee, traitor to the crown!

*Enter Guards.*

Away with yonder wide-mouth'd thunderer!

[*Bourbon is forced out.*]

Dream ye, my lords! that thus with open ears,  
And gaping mouths and eyes, ye sit and drink  
This curbless torrent of rebellious madness!  
And you, sir,—are you slumbering on your throne  
Or has all majesty fled from the earth,  
That women must start up, and in your council  
Speak, think, and act for ye; and, lest your vassals,  
The very dirt beneath your feet, rise up  
And cast ye off, must women, too, defend ye?  
For shame, my lords! all, all of ye, for shame!—  
Off, off with sword and sceptre, for there is



No loyalty in subjects ; and in kings,  
No king-like terror to enforce their rights.

*Fran.* Our mother speaks warmly in the cause ;  
And we must own we hold in somewhat shame,  
That we forestall'd her not in her just wrath.  
Now unto thee once more we turn, Count Lautrec—  
To-morrow's sun must find you on your march ;  
Well speed ye all ! and victory be with you !  
Farewell ; be faithful, and heav'n send ye back  
With no more danger than may serve to be  
The plea for praise and honourable guerdon.  
Mother, thy hand ! we'd speak awhile with thee.

[*Exeunt all but Lautrec and Laval.*

*Lau.* I cry thy mercy, friend ! but I'm so maz'd,  
So thunderstruck, so lost in wonderment !  
Bourbon arrested ! Bourbon prisoner !  
And, by the Queen !

*Lav.* 'Twill be long ere I forget  
That woman's look, and voice.

*Lau.* Come, come, Laval,  
Let us shake off this dream that haunts us thus ;  
The Queen's a woman, who, upon emergency,  
Can don the devil,—which of them cannot ?  
'Tis time we think of our departure ;—hark !  
Footsteps !—

*Lav.* Ay, light, though hurried—'tis thy sister—

*Enter Françoise.*

Lady, you're welcome as the joyous sun,  
And gentle summer airs, which, after storms,  
Come wafting all the sweets of fallen blossoms  
Through the thick foliage ; whose green arms  
shake off,  
In gratitude, their showers of diamond drops,  
And bow to the reviving freshness.

*Fran.* Oh, my dear brother, have I found thee here?

Here will I lock my arms, and rest forever.

*Lau.* My dearest love! what means this passionate grief?

These straining arms and gushing tears? for shame! Look up and smile; for honour crowns our house. Dost know that I am governor of Milan?

*Franc.* They told me so; but oh! they told me, too,

That ere to night thou wilt go hence;—is't so? Dost thou, indeed, forsake me?

*Lau.* Maiden, no;

'Tis true we march for Italy to-night;  
'Tis true that this embrace must be the last  
For many a day. But, for forsaking thee!  
I leave thee with the Princess Margaret;  
I leave thee here at court—nay, silly girl—

*Lav.* Oh, peace!

Canst thou, with sharp reproving words, wound one

Who gems the lustre of thy new made honours  
With such rare drops of love!

*Lau.* My gentle sister?

*Franc.* Oh, Lautrec! blame me not; we twain  
have been

E'en from our birth together and alone;  
Two healthful scions, of a goodly stock,  
Whose other shoots have wither'd all—we've  
grown

Still side by side; I like some fragile aspen;  
And thou a sturdy oak, 'neath whose broad shelter  
I rear'd my head, then frown not, that the wind  
Doth weigh the trembling aspen to the earth,

While the stout oak scarce owns the powerless breeze.

*Lau.* Oh churl! to say one unkind word to thee; Come, dearest, come; unlock thy hands;—Laval, Take her, in pity, from my arms, for sense Is well nigh drown'd in sorrow!

*Franc.* Yet one word; I do beseech thee, leave me not at court; But let me back to our old castle walls— Let me not stay at court.

*Lau.* Even as thou wilt; E'en as it seemeth to thee most fitting. Once more, farewell! Laval, thou'lt follow? [*ex.*

*Lav.* Ay. But ere I go, perchance for ever, lady, Unto the land, whose dismal tales of battles, Where thousands strew'd the earth, have christen'd it

The Frenchman's grave, I'd speak of such a theme As chimes with this sad hour, more fitly than Ist name gives promise— there's a love, which born In early days, lives on through silent years, Nor ever shines, but in the hour of sorrow, When it shows brightest; like the trembling light Of a pale sunbeam, breaking o'er the face Of the wild waters in their hour of warfare. Thus much forgive! and trust, in such an hour, I had not said e'en this, but for the hope That, when the voice of victory is heard From the far Tuscan vallies, in its swell Should mournful dirges mingle for the dead, And I be one of those who are at rest, You may chance recollect this word, and say. That day, upon the bloody field, there fell One who had loved thee long, and lov'd thee well!

*Franc.* Beseech you speak not thus; we soon,  
 I trust,  
 Shall meet again—till then, farewell, and prosper;  
 And if you love me,—which I will not doubt,  
 Sith your sad looks bear witness to your truth,—  
 This do for me—never forsake my brother!  
 And for my brother's sake, since you and he  
 Are but one soul, be mindful of yourself. [*exit Lav.*  
 Defenceless, and alone! ay, go thou forth,  
 For hope sits sunnily upon thy brow,  
 My brother! but, to me, this parting seems  
 Full of ill-omen'd dread, woe's sure forerunner.  
 That letter and that ring—they were the king's!  
 Oh! let me quickly from this fatal court,  
 Beneath whose smiling surface chasms lie yawning,  
 To gulph alike the unwary and the wise.  
 I'll bid farewell to the Princess Margaret,  
 And then take shelter in my ancient home;  
 There brood on my vain love, till grief become  
 Love's substitute—till foolish hope be dead,  
 And heav'n shall grant me patience in its stead.

END OF ACT II.



## ACT III.

SCENE I.—THE ROYAL CHAMBER.

*Francis discover'd,*

*Fran.* By Jupiter! he must have made an errand  
 Unto th' antipodes, or this new world,  
 Which, it should seem, our grandsire Adam's will  
 Did leave to Charles of Spain, else doth he wear  
 Dull lead for Mercury's air-cutting pinions.

*Enter Clement.*

Why, how now, slow foot! art thou lame, I prithee?  
Hath she the ring,—has she perused the letter,—  
What does she,—says she,—answers she? Be  
quick,

Man; thy reply. Come, come, the devil speed thee!

*Cle.* My liege! I found the lady beaming all  
With smiles of hope her brother should be chosen:  
Then to her hand deliver'd I your scroll.

*Fran.* Ha!

*Cle.* The which she, with a doubting look, did  
open;

And, for a moment, her fix'd eye did seem  
To drink the characters, but not the sense  
Of your epistle.

Thus stood the lady, till her eye was fain  
Begin the scroll again; and then, as though  
That moment comprehension woke in her,  
The blood forsook her cheeks; and straight,  
asham'd

Of its unnatural desertion, drew  
A crimson veil over her marble brows.

*Fran.* I would I'd borne the scroll myself, thy  
words

Image her forth so fair!

*Cle.* Do they, indeed!

Then sorrow seize my tongue; for, look you, sir,  
I will not speak of your own fame or honour,  
Nor of your word to me; king's words, I find,  
Are drafts on our credulity, not pledges  
Of their own truth; you have been o'ten pleas'd  
To shower your royal favours on my head;  
But had I known such service was to be  
The nearest way my gratitude might take

To solve the debt, I'd e'en have given back  
 All that I hold of you; and, now, not e'en  
 Your crown and kingdom could requite to me  
 The cutting sense of shame that I endur'd  
 When on me fell the sad reproachful glance  
 Which told me how I stood in the esteem  
 Of yonder lady. I've sorrow at my heart  
 To think your majesty has reckon'd thus  
 Upon my nature. I was poor before,  
 Therefore I can be poor again without  
 Regret, so I lose not mine own esteem.

*Fran.* Skip me thy spleen, and onward with  
 thy tale.

What said the lady then?

*Cle.* With trembling hands  
 She fold'd up your scroll; and more in sorrow,  
 As I believe, than anger, letting fall  
 Unheeded from her hand the sparkling jewel,  
 She left me.

*Fran.* Thou, I warrant, sore abash'd,  
 And durst not urge her further. Excellent!  
 Oh! ye are precious wooers, all of ye!  
 I marvel how ye ever ope your lips  
 Unto, or look upon that fearful thing,  
 A lovely woman!

*Cle.* And I marvel, sir  
 At those who do not feel the majesty,—  
 By heav'n! I'd almost said the holiness,—  
 That circles round a fair and virtuous woman:  
 There is a gentle purity that breathes  
 In such a one, mingled with chaste respect,  
 And modest pride of her own excellence,—  
 A shrinking nature, that is so adverse  
 To aught unseemly, that I could as soon  
 Forget the sacred love I owe to heav'n,

As dare, with impure thoughts, to taint the air  
 Inhal'd by such a being—than whom, my liege,  
 Heaven cannot look on anything more holy,  
 Or earth be proud of anything more fair. [*Exit.*

*Fran.* Good! 'tis his god stirs in him now I  
 trow

The poet is inspir'd, and doubtless, too,  
 With his own muse: whose heavenly perfections  
 He fain would think belong to Eve's frail daugh-  
 ters.

Well: I will find occasions for myself—  
 With my own ardent love I'll take the field,  
 And woo this pretty saint until she yield. [*Exit.*

SCENE II—A SMALL APARTMENT IN 'THE  
 LOUVRE.

*Enter Gonzales with papers in his hand.*

*Gon.* Bourbon arrested! oh sweet mistress  
 Fortune!

Who rails at thee, doth wrong thee, on my soul!  
 I'll strive to win access to Bourbon's prison;  
 It shall fare ill if I cannot outwit—  
 Even this lynx eyed woman.

*Enter the Queen.*

*Queen.* Save you, father!  
 Throw by those papers now, and hearken to me:  
 De Bourbon is arrested; 'tis of that  
 I came to speak—you must straight to his prison.  
 [*Gonzales smiles.*

How now, what council hold you with yourself?

*Gon.* Debate of marvel, only, please your grace;  
 Is then the Duke so near his verge of life,  
 That he hath need of spiritual aid,  
 To improve this brief and wanting tenure?

*Queen.* Most reverend sir and holy confessor,  
Get thee unto the prison of this lord;  
There, see thou do exhort him unto death;—  
And mark me—for all warriors hold acquaintance  
With the grim monarch: when he rides abroad  
The battle skirts, they crown him with proud  
crests;

In human blood dye they his purple robes;  
They place a flashing sword in his right hand,  
And call him Glory!—therefore be thou sure  
To speak of scaffolds robed in black;  
Grim executioners, and the vile mob  
Staring and jeering: 'neath whose clouted shoes,  
Unhonour'd, shall the noble stream of life  
That flows in his proud veins soak in the earth.

*Gon.* Madam, I will.

*Queen.* Then, when thou hast o'ercome  
The haughty spirit, mould it to thy will,  
And tutor him so well, that presently  
Bid them strike off his chains; and to the palace  
Lead him in secret: above all, be sure  
To lard thy speech, but chiefly at the first,  
With sober strains of fitting holiness:—  
Briefly, dissemble well—but haw! I prate!  
I had forgot again—thou art a priest:  
Tarry not, and conduct thy prisoner  
Unto my chamber, where I wait for thee. [*exit.*

*Gon.* Dissemble well! I guess, deep hell, how  
well!

I cannot, for my life, remember me  
That ever I made bargain with the devil;  
Yet, do all things fall out so strangely well  
For me and for my purpose, as though fate  
Served an apprenticeship unto my will  
Now to De Bourbon. [*exit Gonzales.*



## SCENE III—A PRISON.

*Bourbon and Margaret discovered.*

*Bour.* Lady, you speak in vain.

*Mar.* I do beesech thee!

I never bowed my knee to aught of earth,  
Ere this; but I have ever seen around me  
Others who knelt, and worshipp'd princes' fa-  
vours:

Upon my bended knees, I do implore thee,—  
But take the freedom that my gold hath bought  
thee;

Away! nor let these eyes behold thy death!

*Bour.* You are deceiv'd, lady, they will not  
dare

To take my life.

*Mar.* 'Tis thou that art deceived!

What! talk'st thou of not daring!—dost thou  
see

Yon sun that flames above the earth? I tell thee,  
That, if my mother had but bent her will  
To win that sun, she would accomplish it.

*Bour.* My life is little worth to any now,  
Nor have I any, who shall after me  
Inherit my proud name.

*Mar.* Hold, there, my lord!

Posterity, to whom great men, and their  
Fair names belong, is your inheritor.

Your country, from whose kings your house had  
birth,

Claims of you, sir, your high and spotless name!—  
Fame craves it of you; for when there be none  
Bearing the blood of mighty men, to bear  
Their virtues also,—Fame emblazons them  
Upon her flag, which o'er the world she waves,

Persuading others to like glorious deeds.  
 Oh! will you die upon a public scaffold?  
 And in the wide hereafter,—for the which  
 All warriors hope to live,—shall your proud name  
 Be bandied to and fro by foul tradition,  
 Branded and curst, as rebel's name should be?

*Bour.* No! light that curse on those who made  
 me such,—

Light the foul curse of black ingratitude  
 Upon the heartless boy, who knew not how  
 To prize his subject's love! A tenfold curse  
 Light on that royal harlot—

*Mar.* Oh! no more—

*Bour.* Nay, maiden, 'tis in vain! for thou shalt  
 hear me!

Drink to the dregs the knowledge thou hast forced,  
 And dare upbraid me even with a look;  
 Had I but loved thy mother more—thee less,  
 I might this hour, have stood upon a throne!  
 Ay, start! I tell thee, that the Queen thy mother  
 Hath loved—doth love me with the fierce desires  
 Of her unbridled nature; she hath thrown  
 Her crown, the kingdom, and herself before me!  
 Now stare, and shudder,—freeze thyself to mar-  
 ble;—

Now say where best the meed of shame is due,—  
 Now look upou these prison walls,—these chains,  
 And bid me rein my anger!

*Mar.* Oh, be silent!

For you have rent in twain the sacred'st veil  
 That ever hung upou the eyes of innocence.

*Gon. (without)* Heav'n bless the inmates of  
 this prison house!

*Bour.* Who calls without?

*Enter Gonzales.*

*Mar.* The pulse of life stands still  
Within my veins, and horror hath o'ercome  
My strength! Oh! holy father! to thy care  
Do I commend this wayward man. [*Exit Mar.*

*Bour* How, now?

A priest! what means this most unwelcome visit?

*Gon.* Who questions thus a son o' the holy church?  
Look on these walls, whose stern, time stained  
brows

Frown like relentless justice on their inmates!

Listen!—that voice is Echo's dull reply

Unto the rattling of your chains, my lord:—

What *should* a priest do here?

*Bour.* Ay, what, indeed!—

Unless you come to soften down these stones

With your discourse, and teach the tedious echo

A newer lesson; trust me, that is all

Your presence, father, will accomplish here.

*Gon.* Oh! sinful man! and is thy heart so hard,  
That I might easier move thy prison stones?

Know, then, my mission—death is near at hand!

*Bour.* Go to—go to! I have fought battles,  
father,

Where death and I have met in full close contact,

And parted, knowing we should meet again;

Go prate to others about skulls and graves;

Thou never didst in heat of combat stand,

Or know what good acquaintance soldiers have

With the pale scarecrow—Death!

*Gon* (*aside*) Ah, think'st thou so?

Hear me, thou hard of heart!

They who go forth to battle are led on

With sprightly trumpets and shrill clam'rous  
clarions;

The drum doth roll its double notes along,  
Echoing the horses' tramp; and the sweet fife  
Runs through the yielding air in duclet measure,  
That makes the heart leap in its case of steel!  
Thou, shalt be knell'd unto thy death by bells,  
Pond'rous and iron tongued, whose sullen toll  
Shall cleave thine aching brain, and on thy soul  
Fall with a leaden weight; the muffled drum  
Shall mutter round thy path like distant thunder;  
'Stead of the war cry, and wild battle roar,—  
That swells upon the tide of victory,  
And seems unto the conqueror's eager ear  
Triumphant harmony of glorious discords,—  
There shall be voices cry foul shame on thee!  
And the infuriate populace shall clamour  
To heav'n for lightnings on thy rebel head!

*Bour.* Monks love not bells, which call them  
up to pray'rs

I'the dead noon o' night, when they would snore,  
Rather than watch; but, father, I care not,  
E'en if the ugliest sound I e'er did hear—  
Thy raven voice—croak curses o'er my grave.

*Gon.* What! death and shame! alike you heed  
them not!

Then, Mercy! use thy soft, persuasive arts,  
And melt this stubborn spirit! Be it known  
To you, my lord, the Queen hath sent me hither,

*Bour.* Then get thee hence again, foul, pand'  
ring priest!

By heav'n I knew that cowl did cover o'er  
Some filthy secret, that the day dared not  
To pry into.—Out, thou unholy thing!

*Gon.* Hold, madmam!  
 If for thy fame, if for thy warm heart's blood  
 Thou wilt not hear me, listen in the name  
 Of France thy country!—

*Bour.* I have no country,—  
 I am a traitor, cast from out the arms  
 Of my ungrateful country! I disown it!  
 Wither'd be all its glories, and its pride!  
 May it become the slave of foreign power!  
 May foreign princes grind its thankless chil-  
 dren,  
 And make all those, who are such fools, as yet  
 To spill their blood for it, or for its cause,  
 Dig it like dogs! and when they die, like dogs,  
 Rot on its surface, and make fat the soil,  
 Whose produce shall be seiz'd by foreign hands!

*Gon.* You beat the air with idle words: no man  
 Doth know how deep his country's love lies grain'd  
 In his heart's core, until the hour of trial!  
 Fierce though you hurl your curse upon the land,  
 Whose monarchs cast ye from its bosom, yet  
 Let but one blast of war come echoing  
 From where the Ebro and the Douro roll,—  
 Let but the Pyrenees reflect the gleam  
 Of twenty of Spain's lances,—and your sword  
 Shall leap from out its scabbard to your hand!

*Bour.* Ay, priest, it shall! eternal heaven, it  
 shall!

And its far flash shall lighten o'er the land,  
 The leading-star of Spain's victorious host,  
 But flaming, like some dire portentous comet,  
 I' th' eyes of France, and her proud governors!  
 Be merciful, my fate, nor cut me off  
 Ere I have wreak'd my fell desire, and made  
 Infamy glorious, and dishonour fame!

But, if my wayward destiny hath will'd  
 That I should here be butcher'd shamefully,  
 By the immortal soul, that is man's portion,  
 His hope, and his inheritance, I swear,  
 That on the day Spain overflows its bounds,  
 And rolls the tide of war upon these plains,  
 My spirit on the battle's edge shall ride;  
 And louder than death's music, and the roar  
 Of combat, shall my voice be heard to shout,  
 On—on—to victory and carnage!

*Gon.* Now

That day is come, ay, and that very hour;  
 Now shout your war-cry; now unsheath your  
 sword!

I'll join the din, and make these tottering walls  
 Tremble and nod to hear our fierce defiance!  
 Nay, never start, and look upon my cowl—  
 Off! vile denial of my manhood's pride!  
 Nay, stand not gazing thus: it is Garcia,  
 Whom thou hast met in deadly fight full oft  
 When France and Spain join'd in the battle-  
 field!—

Beyond the Pyrenean boundary  
 That guards thy land are forty thousand men—  
 Impatient halt they there; their foaming steeds  
 Pawing the huge and rock-built barrier,  
 That bars their further course: they wait for thee;  
 For thee whom France hath injur'd and cast off;  
 For thee, whose blood it pays with shameful chains,  
 More shameful death; for thee, whom Charles of  
 Spain

Summons to head his host, and lead them on  
 To conquest and to glory!

*Bour.* To revenge!

Why, how we dream! why look, Garcia; canst thou

With mumbled priestcraft file away these chains,  
Or must I bear them into Spain with me,  
That Charles may learn what guerdon valour wins  
This side the Pyrenees?

*Gon.* It shall not need—

What ho! but hold—together with this garb,  
Methinks I have thrown off my prudence!

[*Resumes the Monk's cowl.*]

*Bour.* What!

Wilt thou to Spain with me in frock and cowl,  
That men shall say De Bourbon is turn'd driveller,  
And rides to war in company with monks?

*Gon.* Listen—The Queen for her own purposes  
Confided to my hand her signet-ring,  
Bidding me strike your fetters off, and lead you  
By secret passes to her private chamber;  
But being free, so use thy freedom, that  
Before the morning's dawn all search be fruitless.  
What ho! within.

*Enter Jailer.*

Behold this signet-ring!—

Strike off those chains, and get thee gone.

[*exit Jailer.*]

And now follow.—How's this,——dost doubt  
me, Bourbon?

*Bour.* Ay,

First for thy habit's sake; and next, because  
Thou rather, in a craven priest's disguise,  
Tarriest in danger in a foreign court,  
Than seek'st that danger in thy country's wars.

*Gon.* Thou art unarm'd! there is my dagger;  
'tis

The only weapon that I bear, lest fate  
Should play me false; take it, and use it, too, ]

FRANCIS THE FIRST,

If in the dark and lonely path I lead thee,  
Thou mark'st me halt, or turn, or make a sign  
Of treachery!—but first tell me, dost know  
John Count Laval?

*Bour.* What! Lautrec's loving friend,  
Now bound for Italy, along with him?

*Gon.* Then the foul fiend hath mangled in my  
plot,

And marr'd it too! my life's sole aim and purpose!

Didst thou but know what damned injuries,

What foul, unknighly shame and obloquy,

His sire—whose name is wormwood to my mouth

Did heap upon our house—didst thou but know—

No matter—get thee gone—I tarry here,

And, should we never meet again, when thou

Shalt hear of the most fearful deed of daring,

Of the most horrible and bloody tale,

That ever graced a beldame's midnight legend,

Or froze her gaping list'ners, think of me

And my revenge! Now, Bourbon, heaven speed  
thee!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.—THE ROYAL APARTMENT.

*Francis seated—two Gentlemen attending.*

*Enter the Queen.*

*Queen.* Hear you these tidings, son? Milan is  
lost!

Prosper Colonna hath dissolv'd our host  
Like icicles i' the sun's beams; and Count Lautrec,  
Madden'd with his defeat and shame, fled from it  
The night Colonna entered Milan.

*Fran.* (starting up.) Coward!

But he shall answer dearly for his flight



And for fair Milan's loss. Say they not whither  
He is fled? [*Shouts without.*

What din without?

*Queen.* 'Tis the people,  
Thronging round the palace gates, with gaping  
mouths,  
To hear the confirmation of the tidings,

*Shouts without—Enter a Messenger.*

*Fran.* How now? what more?

*Mess.* So please you, my dread liege,  
News are this hour arriv'd that the Count Lautrec,  
Passing disguis'd from Italy towards Paris,  
Hath been arrested by stout Lord St. Pol;  
Who in his castle holds him a strait prisoner  
Until your royal pleasure be made known,  
Whether he there sojourn in longer durance.  
Or be sent hither to abide his trial.

*Fran.* Confess'd he the betraying of our Milan?

*Mess.* He holds an unmoved silence on the point,  
Still craving of your majesty a hearing,  
And, after that, stern and impartial justice.

*Fran.* And by the soul of Charlemagne, we swear  
He shall have justice, such as he demands.

[*exit Messenger.*

His deeds, upon the swift wings of the wind,  
Have reach'd the high tribunal of our throne,  
And, ere himself arrive, have there condem'd him.  
Mother, how is't with thee? thou art drown'd in  
thought.

*Queen.* Can it be otherwise, when wave o'er  
wave

Of fortune's adverse tide comes whelming us  
With most resistless ruin? Hast thou heard,  
Or did this loss of Milan stop thine ears  
With its ill-fated din,—Bourbon's escap'd!

*Fran.* Bourbon escap'd! then fortune loves  
Colonna!

How fell this evil chance?

*Queen* Another time.

Deeds, and not words, suit best this exigency;  
Our task is vigilant and swift pursuit. *[exit.]*

*Fran.* My task is vigilant thought slow pursuit;  
I have small care for even this event,  
Which seems as though it shook my very throne;  
One thought alone hath room within my breast—  
How I may win this maid: whose fearful charms  
Have deem'd themselves secure in absence only;  
Forgetting how fond mem'ry, young love's shadow,  
Laughs at such hope. I'll win her, though the  
stars

Link hands, and make a fiery rampart round her;  
Though she be ice, steel, rock, or adamant,  
Or anything that is more hard and stubborn:  
Love, lend me aid, this vict'ry must be thine,  
Win thou this peerless vot'ry to thy shrine!

END OF ACT III.



## ACT IV.

SCENE I.—AN APARTMENT IN THE CHATEAU  
DE FOIX.

*Françoise discovered seated—Enter Florise.*

*Flo.* How fare you, madam?

*Franc.* Well, Florise. Why, girl,—  
Why dost thou gaze on me? Do hollow cheeks  
And tear-strain'd eyes belie me?

*Flo.* Lady, no;  
But something in your voice and in your look,—

Something that is all sorrow's, only hers,—  
 Is grafted on the roses of your cheek,  
 And burns in the sad lustre of your eye.  
 Pardon me, sweet, my mistress! but, indeed,  
 Since your return from court,—

[A horn is heard without.

*Franc.* Hasten, prating girl,  
 And fetch me tidings of this sudden summons!  
 [Exit Florise.

I tremble! yet I scarce know wherefore—how  
 If it should be my brother?

*Re-enter Florise.*

*Flo.* Madam, one,  
 A messenger from court, is just arriv'd  
 With this despatch. [Exit Florise.

*Franc.* From court?—oh give it me!  
 Hold! should it be the king! pshaw, trembling fool!  
 [Breaks the seal.

Evil or good come of it, I will read—  
 (*Reads*) ' This, from my most doleful prison-house.  
 ' If half the love thou oft hast sworn to me,  
 ' But half be true, read, and deliver me!  
 ' This I indite in such a darksome cell  
 ' As fancy shrinks from,—where the blessed light  
 ' And genial air do never visit me,—  
 ' Where chains bow down my limbs to the damp  
 earth,  
 ' And darkness compasseth me like a veil;  
 ' I do beseech thee, by the tender love  
 ' That I have borne thee from mine infancy,—  
 ' I do beseech thee, by all strongest ties  
 ' Of kin, and of compassion,—let me not  
 ' Lie like a curs'd and forgotten thing,  
 ' Thrust down beneath the earth;—let not the blood  
 ' That bounds in youth's swift current thro' my veins

‘ Be chill’d by dungeon dew’s before its time ;  
 ‘ Or thicken’d by the weight of galling fetters !  
 Oh misery ! my brother,—my dear brother !  
 (*Reads*)—‘ If this doth move the spirit of thy love,  
 ‘ Hie thee to court, and there, at the King’s feet,  
 ‘ Kneel and implore my pardon ; do not fear  
 ‘ To let thy tears plead for me,—to thy prayers  
 ‘ Do I commit my fate ; and on thy lips,  
 ‘ Whose moving eloquence must touch his soul,  
 ‘ Hang all my hopes !—sweet sister, think upon me !  
 Oh, my unhappy brother !

Why didst thou not at price of my own blood  
 Rate thy deliverance ! but with heart still throbbing

Shall I encounter the King’s eyes, and feel  
 That winning is but loss ; and life, and liberty,  
 Given to thee, the warrants of my ruin ?

(*Reads*)—‘ I do beseech thee, by the tender love  
 ‘ That I have borne thee from thine infancy !  
 I can no more ! thou shalt be rescued ! yet—

*Enter Florise.*

*Flo.* Madam ! the messenger awaits your answer.

*Franc.* Oh, maiden, read ! my brother is in prison ;  
 His fond arms that so oft have clasp’d around me,  
 Strait bound with gyves :—oh heaven ! my dear,  
 dear brother.

*Flo.* Why, madam, how now ? are ye lost in grief ?  
 Are tears his ransom ?—Up ; for shame ! for  
 shame !

You must to court, and straight procure his pardon.

*Franc.* Kind heaven be with me ! I will this  
 hour away ;—

Nay, come not with me ; ere the night be fallen,  
 I shall return, successful and most blest ;

Or thou wilt hear, that at th' obdurate feet  
Of him, whom I am sent to supplicate,  
I pour'd my life in prayers for my dear brother.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II—A ROOM IN THE PALACE.

*Francis and Bonnivet.*

*Fran.* No tidings of De Bourbon; search is vain.  
The storm is gath'ring, and 'tis time we spread  
Due shelter over us.

*Enter a Gentleman.*

In this despatch—How now?

*Gent.* One stands without, and earnestly en-  
treats

To see your Majesty.

*Fran.* Hath he no name?

*Gent.* My liege, it is a woman; but her veil  
So curtains all her form, that even eyes  
Which knew, and oft had gaz'd on her, might guess  
In vain.

*Fran.* A woman, and a suppliant!  
Let her have entrance.

*Bon.* At some other time  
Your Majesty, perhaps, will deign t' inform me  
Further concerning Italy.

*Fran.* Ay, ay,  
At some more fitting time.

*Enter Francoise.*

Close veil'd, indeed: mysterious visitant!  
Whom curious thought doth strive to look upon,  
Despite th' cloud that now enshrines you—pardon  
If failing in its hope, the eager eye

Doth light on ev'ry point, that, unconceal'd,  
 Tells of the secret it so fain would pierce ;  
 That heav'nly gait, whose slow majestic motion  
 Discloses all the bearing of command ;  
 That noiseless foot, which falling on the earth  
 Wakes not an echo ; leaves not e'en a print ;  
 So jealous seeming of its favours ; and  
 This small white hand, I might deem born of  
 marble,

But for the throbbing life that trembles in it :—  
 Why, how is this ? 'tis cold as marble's self ;  
 And by your drooping form !—this is too much—  
 Youth breathes around you ; beauty is youth's kin :  
 I must withdraw this envious veil—

*Franc.* Hold, sir !

Your highness need but speak to be obey'd ;  
 Thus then—(*unveils*)—

*Fran.* Amazement ! oh, thou peerless light !  
 Why thus deny thy radiance, and enfold,  
 Like the coy moon, thy charms in envious clouds ?

*Franc.* Such clouds best suit, whose sun is set  
 for ever ;

And veils should curtain o'er those eyes, whose  
 light

Is all put out with tears ; oh, good, my liege !  
 I come a suitor to your pard'ning mercy.

*Fran.* (*aside.*) Sue on, so thou do after hear my  
 suit.

*Franc.* My brother ! out, alas ! your brow grows  
 dark.

And threat'ningly doth fright my scarce-breathed  
 prayer

Back to its hold of silence.

*Fran.* Lady, ay,

Your brother hath offended 'gainst the state,

And must abide the state's most lawful vengeance;  
Nor canst thou in thy sorrow even say  
Such sentence is unjust.

*Franc.* I do, I do;

Oh, vengeance! what hast thou to do with justice?  
Most merciful, and most vindictive, who  
Hath call'd ye sisters; who hath made ye kin?  
My liege, my liege, if you take such vengeance  
Upon my brother's fault, yourself do sin;  
By calling your's that which is heaven's alone:  
But if 'tis justice that hath sentenc'd him,  
Hear me: for he, unheard, hath been condemn'd  
Against all justice, without any mercy.

*Fran.* Maiden, thou plead'st in vain.

*Franc.* Oh, say not so:

Oh, merciful my lord! you are a soldier;  
You have won war's red favours in the field,  
And victory hath been your handmaiden:  
Oh! think, if you were thrust away for ever  
From fame and glory, warrior's light and air;  
And left to feel time's creeping fingers chill  
Your blood; and from fame's blazonry efface  
Your youthful deeds, which, like a faithless  
promise,  
Bloom'd fair, but bore no after-fruit—

*Fran.* Away!

Thy prayer is cold: hast thou no nearer theme  
Which, having felt thyself, thou may'st address  
More movingly unto my heart?

*Franc.* None, none,

But what that heart itself might whisper you.  
Oh, good my liege! turn not away from me!  
See, on the earth I kneel; by these swift tears  
That witness my affliction; by each throb  
Of my sad heart; by all you love!—

*Fran.* Ah, tempter!

Say rather by these orient pearls, whose price  
Would bribe the very soul of justice; say,  
By these luxuriant tresses, which have thrown  
Eternal chains around my heart: [*Franc. starts up*  
Nay, start not;

If thou, so soon, art weary of beseeching,  
Hearken to me, and I will frame a suit  
Which thou must hear, (*kneels*) by the resistless  
love

Thou hast inspir'd—by thy bright perfections,  
Thy matchless beauty!—nay, it is in vain,  
Thou shalt not free thyself, till thou hast heard;  
Thou shalt not free thy brother, till—

*Franc.* Unhand me!

Sir, as you are a man—

*Enter the Queen.*

*Queen.* Oh, excellent!

*Fran.* (*starts up.*) Confusion seize that woman's  
watchfulness!

*Queen.* I fear me I have marr'd a wise discourse  
Which, if I read aright yon lady's looks,  
Was argued most persuasively; not a word!  
Nay, then, your conference is doubtless ended;  
If so—I have some business with the King—

[*She waives Françoise off.*

*Fran.* Then, madam, you must let that business  
rest;

For, look you I have matters, which, though long;  
I've ponder'd o'er them, I've reserv'd till now,  
Unto your private ear.—How many years  
Longer am I to live in tutelage?  
When will it please your wisdom to resign  
The office, which, self-arrogated, seems



Daily to grow beyond that wisdom's compass,  
 Though strain'd unto its utmost? how long  
 Am I to wear the yoke, which e'vry day  
 Grows heavier, but less firm! if longer yet,  
 Take this good counsel—lighten it, or else  
 'Twill break and crush you, nay, ne'er gaze on me  
 With that fix'd haughty stare; I do not sleep—  
 'Tis you that dream; full time you were awaken'd.

*Queen.* What, thankless boy! whose greatness  
 is the work

Of my own hands;—this, to your mother, sir?

*Fran.* I am your King, madam,——your King,  
 ——your King!——

Ay, start and boil with passion, and turn pale  
 With rage, whose pow'rless effort wakes but scorn:  
 Who made you Queen of France? my father's wife  
 Was Duchess of Savoy and Angoulême.

These are your only titles,—and the rest,  
 A boon, which courtesy hath lent, not given,  
 Unto the mother of the King of France;—  
 'Tis you who shine from a reflected light;  
 'Tis you, who owe me, and my royal state,  
 All that you have of state and of observance.  
 And, as you value the faint shade of power  
 Which clings to you, beware how it is us'd.

Curb your unbounded pride and haughty spirit;  
 Which, brooking no control itself, would make  
 Slaves of all else that breathe; and, mark me well,  
 Slacken your leading strings, or else they break.

[*exit.*

*Queen.* The hour is come at last,—so long fore-  
 seen,—

So long averted by my anxious efforts!  
 My o'ergrown power is toppling from its base,—  
 And like a ruin'd tower, whose huge supporters

At length decay, it nods unto its ruin.  
 I am undone! But, if I needs must fall,  
 No rising foot shall tread upon my neck,  
 And say I pav'd the way for its ascension.  
 Proud spirit! thou, who in the darkest hours  
 Of danger and defeat, hast steaded me,—  
 Thou dauntless uncontroll'd, and daring soul!  
 Who hast but seen in all the world a throne,—  
 In all mankind, thine instruments; rejoice!  
 I'll do a deed, which, prospering, shall place me  
 Beyond all power of future storm or wreck;  
 Or, if I fail, my fall shall be like his,  
 That wond'rous mighty man, who overthrew  
 The whole Philistian host,—when revelry  
 Was turn'd to mourning,—and the pond'rous ruin,  
 Which he drew down on his own head, o'er-  
 whelm'd  
 The power of Gath, when Gaza shook for fear.

*Enter Gonzales.*

Come hither, sirrah, now the day is done,—  
 And night, with swarthy hands, is sowing stars  
 In yonder sky,—De Bourbon is escap'd;  
 Thy days are forfit; but thy life is now  
 More needful to my present purposes.  
 Thou'rt free!—I've need of thee; live and obey.

*Gon.* Madam, obedience ever was my life's  
 Sole study and attainment.

*Queen.* Hark thee, father!

I have a deed for thee, which may, perhaps,  
 For a short moment, freeze thy startled blood;  
 And fright thy firmly-seated heart, to beat  
 Hurried and trembling summons in thy breast;  
 Did'st ever look upon the dead?

*Gon.* Ay, madam;

Full oft; and in each calm or frightful guise  
 Death comes in,—on the bloody battle-field;  
 When with each gush of black and curdling life,  
 A curse was uttered,—when the prayers I've  
     pour'd,  
 Have been all drown'd by din of clashing arms;  
 And shrieks, and shouts, and loud artillery,  
 That shook the slipp'ry earth. all drunk with gore;  
 I've seen it swoll'n with subtle poison, black,  
 And staring with concentrate agony;  
 When every vein hath started from its bed,  
 And wreath'd, like knotted snakes, around the  
     brows,  
 Which frantic, dash'd themselves in tortures down  
 Upon the earth. I've seen life float away  
 On the faint sound of a far tolling bell;  
 Leaving its late warm tenement as fair,  
 As though t'were th' incorruptible that lay  
 Before me; and all earthly taint had vanish'd  
 With the departed spirit.

*Queen.* Father, hold!

Return to th' other—to that second death,  
 Most fearful in its ghastly agony.  
 Come nearer to me; did'st thou ever—nay  
 Put back thy cowl—I fain would see thy face:  
 So; didst thou ever—thou look'st very pale—  
 Art fear'd?

*Gon.* Who I? your highness surely jests!

*Queen.* Did ever thine own hand—thou understand'st me.

*Gon.* I 'gin to understand you, madam; ay,  
 It has been red with blood, with reeking life.

*Queen.* Father! so steep that hand for me once  
     more.

And, by my soul I swear, I will reward thee

With a cardinal's hat when next Rome's princes  
meet.

*Gon.* I pray you, on.  
I know but half my task.

*Queen.* I had forgot; and now methinks I feel  
Lighten'd of a huge burden, now thou know'st  
My settled purpose.—Listen! there is one,  
Whose envious beauty doth pluck down my pow'r  
Day after day, with more audacious hand—  
That woman!

*Gon.* Ha! a woman!

*Queen.* Well, how now!  
Blood is but blood, and life no more than life,  
Be't cradled in however fair a form!  
Dost shrink, thou vaunting caitiff, from the test  
Thine own avowal drew upon thee? Mark me!  
If, ere two suns have risen and have set,  
Françoise de Foix—

*Gon.* How?

*Queen.* The young Lautrec's sister,  
Count Laval's bride.

*Gon.* What! John de Laval's bride!  
Hell! what a flash of light bursts in upon me!

(*aside.*)

*Queen.* Why dost thou start, and look so wide  
and wild,  
And clench thy hands?

*Gon.* So please your grace—O pardon me!—  
'Twas pity—sorrow—l—oh! how has she  
Provoked your dreadful wrath, that such a doom  
Should cut her young days off thus suddenly?

*Queen.* Content thee, that it falls not on thy head.  
And do my bidding, as thou valuest  
That head of thine. I tell thee she must die;  
By subtle poison, or by sudden knife,

I care not ; so those eyes be closed for ever.  
 Look, priest ! thou'rt free ; but if, in two more days,  
 The grave hide not that woman from my hate,  
 She shall not die the less : and, by high heav'n !  
 Be thou i' th' farthest corner of the earth,  
 Thou shalt be dragg'd from hence ; and drop by  
 drop,

Shall thy base blood assuage my fell revenge !  
 Think on it, and resolve—and so farewell ! [*exit.*

*Gon.* Rejoice, my soul ! thy far-off goal is won !  
 His bride,—all that he most doth love and live  
 for,—

His heart's best hope,—she shall be foul corruption  
 When next his eager arms are spread to clasp her !  
 I'll do this deed, ere I go mad for joy ! [*exit.*

SCENE III—A GALLERY IN THE PALACE.

*Enter Triboulet, followed by Françoise de Foix.*

*Franc.* Hold, hold ! I do beseech thee, ere my  
 brain

Whirl with this agony ; show me the letter.

*Tri.* Nay but you did refuse it some time gone ;  
 I'll to

The King and give it back.

*Franc.* O ! if that letter

Tell of my brother's fate, as chance it doth !

Give it me once again—or ere I die !

*Tri.* Listen ; I'll read thee.

*Franc.* Oh ! no, no, no !

(*aside*) For it the King doth plead his love in it—  
 No, tear, but do not open it, good fool !

*Tri.* I cannot read unless I open it. Listen—  
 (*reads*) 'If thou do not follow his footsteps, who

‘ shall bring thee this, not only shall thy brother’s liberty, but e’en his life ’—

*Franc.* Oh gracious heav’n!

His life! Give me that scroll. [*she reads & faints.*]

*Tri.* Let me spell o’er this letter; for the lady, she’ll be the better for a little rest. (*reads.*) ‘ If thou do not follow his footsteps, who shall bring thee this.’ Marry, that means my footsteps; and whither tend my footsteps?—Even to the King’s chamber. What, shall her brother die, unless she meet the King alone at this dead hour of night? I would I had lost the letter! my back and the whip had been acquainted of a surety; but that were better than—poor maiden! By my wisdom, then, I will not lead her to the King! I’ll run away, and then, if I be questioned, I can swear she fell into a swoon by the way, and could not come! [*going—Françoise revives.*]

*Franc.* Oh, no—not death! mercy! oh, mercy! spare him!

Where am I? Have I slept! Good Triboulet, If thou have aught of reason, lend it me.

*Tri.* Alack! poor thing, how wide she talks, she’s come

To borrow wisdom of a fool! Poor lady!

*Franc.* Nay, gaze not on me, for dear charity! But lead, and I will follow to the King,— Fall on my knees, once more implore his mercy!— I do beseech thee—Life is on our haste!

*Tri.* How say you, pretty lady—life and no more?

*Franc.* Oh! I shall go distraught with this delay.

See, to thine eyes I will address my speech,— For what thou look’st on that thou understand’st.

*Tri.* Ay, marry, and more, as I think, than  
either of us  
Look on, do I understand.

*Franc.* These jewels are of a surpassing value,  
Take them, and lead me to the King.

*Tri.* What, at this hour?

*Franc.* If not, my brother dies.

*Tri.* Alone?

*Franc.* The night grows pale, and the stars seem  
To melt away, before the burning breath  
Of fiery morn. If thou art born of woman,—  
Lead to the King, whil'st I have strength to  
follow!

*Tri.* Then heaven be with thee, lady! for I  
can no more.

Follow! and may I in this hour have been a  
greater fool than e'er I was before. [*exeunt.*]

END OF ACT IV.



**ACT V.**

SCENE I.—AN APARTMENT IN THE CHATEAU  
DE-FOIX.

*Françoise is discovered sitting, pale and motionless, by a table—Florise is kneeling by her.*

*Franc.* How heavily the sun hangs in the  
clouds,—  
The day will ne'er be done.

*Flo.* Oh, lady, thou hast sat  
And watched the western clonds, day after day,  
Grow crimson with the sun's farewell, and said,

Each day, the night will never come; yet night  
Hath come at last, and so it will again.

*Franc.* Will it indeed! will the night come at  
last,  
And hide that burning sun, and shade my eyes,  
Which ache with this red light—will darkness  
come  
At last?

*Flo.* Sweet madam, yes; and sleep will come:  
Nay, shake not mournfully your head at me,—  
Your eyes are heavy; sleep is brooding in them.

*Franc.* Hot tears have lain in them, and made  
them heavy;  
But sleep—oh, no! no, no! they will not close;  
I have a gnawing pain, here at my heart:  
Guilt, thou liest heavy, and art hard to bear.

*Flo.* Whhat say you, madam, guilt!

*Franc.* Who dare so?  
(*starting up.*) 'Twas pity,—mercy,—'twas not  
guilt! and though  
The world's fierce scorn shall call it infamy,  
I say 'twas not! Speak,—speak,—dost thou?  
Oh! answer me!

Say was it infamy?

*Flo.* Dear lady, you are ill!  
Some strange distemper fevers thus your brain.  
Let me bind up these golden locks that hang  
Dishevell'd thus upon your neck.

*Franc.* Out viper!  
Nor twine, nor braid, again shall ever bind  
These locks! Oh! rather tear them off, and cast  
them  
Upon the common earth, and trample them,—  
Heap dust and ashes on them.—oh, I am mad!  
Distracted! out alas! alas? poor head!



Thou achest for thy pillow in the grave,—  
Thy darksome couch,—thy dreamless, quiet bed!

*Flo* Let me intreat you send for that same monk  
I told you of this morn: he is a leech,  
Learned in theory, and of wondrous skill  
To heal all maladies of soul or body.

*Franc.* Of soul—of soul!—aye, so they'd have  
us think:

Dost thou believe that the hard coin we pour  
Into their out stretch'd hands, indeed, buys pardon  
For all, or any sin, we may commit?

Dost thou believe forgiveness may be had  
Thus easy cheap?

*Flo.* I do believe, indeed,  
Not all the wealth hid in the womb of ocean,  
Can ransom sin—nothing but deep repentance—  
Austere and lengthened penance—frequent tears.

*Franc.* 'Tis false, I know it—these do nought  
avail:

To move relentless heav'n, it must be brib'd  
And yet—go, call this priest; I'll speak with him.  
I will cast off the burthen of my shame,  
Or ere it press me down into the grave. [*exit.*

*Flo.* Alas, poor flow'r, the canker's in thy core!

*Enter Gonzales.*

Good morrow to my reverend confessor!

*Gon.* Good morrow, maiden;  
Where's thy lady, Florise?

*Flo.* This moment, as I think, gone to her  
chamber.

*Gon.* To sleep, perchance.

*Flo.* Oh, father, would she could!

But there's a sleepless sorrow at her heart,—  
She hath not clos'd her eyes for many a night.

*Gon.* Her brother, Lautrec, for the loss of Milan  
Was lately thrust in prison.

*Flo.* Even so:

She often read a scroll Count Lautrec sent her,  
And wept, and read it o'er and o'er again ;  
And then, as though determin'd by its arguments,  
She sought the king, to move him to forgiveness ;  
Short space elapsed ere home she came again,  
Thus broken-hearted, and, as I do think,  
Bow'd to the grave by some o'ermastering sorrow.  
Out on my prating tongue! I had forgot—  
The lady Françoise straight would speak with  
you,

*Gon.* Tell her I'll wait upon her instantly.

[*exit* Florise.]

Strange ! passing strange! I guess at in vain.  
Lautrec forgiv'n, and herself broken hearted!  
I'll go her straight, and from her wring confession  
By such keen torture, as designless looks  
And careless words inflict on secret guilt. [*exit.*]

SCENE II—AN INNER COURT IN THE CHATEAU  
DE FOIX.

*Enter* Francis wrapped in a cloak, and Florise.

*Flo.* Then be it even as you will, sir stranger,  
Since you bring joyful tidings to my lady,  
At sunset meet me here; when I will bring you  
Where you shall see and speak with her, fair sir.

*Fran.* At sunset I'll not fail: farewell, fair maiden.  
[*Exit* Florise.]

They tell me she is sunk in sorrow,  
Let's a consuming grief destroy her beauty;  
Therefore, in this disguise, leave I the court,  
To follow and to claim her; for though o'erthrown,  
If shame and woe have follow'd her defeat,  
I hold myself no lawful conqueror;  
But one whose love, like the fierce eastern wind,

Hath wither'd that it hung upon.—But, pshaw!  
 'Tis idle all; if that her hand be promis'd,  
 It is not bound; and where it so, king's wills  
 Melt compacts into air. She must be mine—  
 Mine only—mine for ever! and, for Laval,  
 Another and a wealthier bride, I trow,  
 Shall well repay him for the one I've stolen. [*exit.*

*Enter Gonzales.*

*Gon.* 'Tis true, by heav'n! 'tis as my hope  
 presag'd,—  
 Her lips avow'd it. Oh, then there is torture  
 Far worse than death in store for thee, Laval.

*Enter a Page.*

*Page.* Save you—from court a letter, reverend  
 sir.

*Gon.* Give it, and get thee gone,— [*exit Page.*  
 'Tis from the queen!

Further injunctions to be sudden, doubtless—so:  
 [*Opens the letter and reads.*

' That which thou hast in hand, quickly despatch;  
 ' opportunity will play false. Laval is now in France,  
 ' and by to-morrow will have reached Chateau de-  
 ' Foix; therefore, if it is not done, do it so soon as  
 ' thou shalt have received this letter.

LOUISA.'

To morrow! how! why that should be to-day:  
 To-day—to-day—ah! say you so, indeed:  
 He could not come at a more welcome hour.

[*Horns without.*

Hark! even now the horn proclaims my triumph!  
 The gates swing wide, the outer court-yard rings  
 With neighing steeds, and jingling spurs, and steps  
 Whose haste doth tell of hot, impatient love;  
 He stands upon the threshold of his house  
 Reeling with joy. Now, now,——

*Enter Laval and attendants.*

Hail, noble sir!

*Lav.* I joy to see thee, yet I cannot now  
Scarce stay to say as much. Where is my love?

*Gon.* The lady Fraucoise, sir, is in her chamber,  
[*Laval is going.*

I pray you tarry, good my lord, I've much to say  
to you.

*Lav.* Another time, good father.

*Gon.* No time so fitting as the present, sir,

*Lav.* 'Sdeath! wouldst thou have me listen and  
not hear?

Look on thee, and not see thee? Stand aside,  
Till ears and eyes have had their fill of her!  
I'm blind, and deaf, and well nigh mad!

*Gon.* My lord!

What I would say will bear no tarrying.

*Lav.* A plague on thee! come with me, then,  
and thus—

While I do gaze on her, I'll hear thy tale.

*Gon.* What I've to say you'd rather hear alone.

*Lav.* I tell thee, no, thou most vexatious priest!  
That which I hear shall she hear too; my heart,  
And all cares or wishes, is her own;

Knowledge, hopes, fears, deseirs—all, all are hers.

*Gon.* Then be it so—follow unto her chamber!

*Lav.* Follow! I could not follow the swift wind!

*Gon.* E'en as you will, I do; lead on, my lord!

SCENE III.—AN APARTMENT IN THE CHATEAU.  
DE-FOIX.

*Enter Francis and Florise.*

*Fran.* I tell thee, ere she see the Count Laval,  
I must inform her of mine errand.

*Flo.* Well—

I had forgot, in all this sudden joy :  
But see, behind the tapestry, here, you may  
Wait for, and speak with her.

*Fran.* I thank thee, maiden,

*Flo.* Farewell, and good success attend you, sir.  
[*exit.*

[*Francis conceals himself behind the tapestry.*

*Enter Françoise.*

*Fran.* Now, ye paternal halls, that frown on me  
Down, down, and hide me in your ruin—ha !

[*As Laval and Gonzales enter, Françoise shrieks.*

*Lav.* My bride ! my beautiful !

*Gon.* Stand back, young sir !

*Lav.* Who dares extend his arms 'twixt those  
whom love

Hath bound ? whom holy wedlock shall, ere long !

*Gon.* The stern decree of the most holy church :  
Look on that lady, Count Laval, who stands  
Pale as a virgin rose, whose early bloom  
Hath not been gaz'd on yet by the hot sun ;  
And fair—

*Lav.* Oh, how unutterably fair !

*Gon.* Seems not that shrinking flower the soul  
of all

That is most pure, as well as beautiful ?

*Lav.* Peace, thou vain babbler ! Is it unto me  
That thou art prating ?—unto me, who have  
Worshipp'd her, with a wild idolatry,  
Liker to madness than to love ?

*Gon.* Indeed !

Look on her yet ; and say, if ever form  
Show'd half so like a breathing piece of marble.  
Oh well-dissembled sin ! say, was it thus,

Shrinking and pale, thou stoodst, when the king's  
arms

Did clasp thee, and his hot lip, sear'd from thine  
Their oath to wed thy brother's friend?

*Lav.* Damnation

Alight upon thee, thou audacious monk!  
The blight thou breath'st, recoil on thine own head!  
It hath no power to touch the spotless fame  
Of one, from whom thy cursed calumnies  
Fly like rebounding shafts!—Ha! ha! ha! ha!  
The king! a merry tale forsooth!

*Gon.* Then we

Will laugh at it, ha! ha!—why what care I?  
We will be merry: since thou art content  
To laugh, and be a——

*Lav.* Françoise—I—I pray thee  
Speak to me,—smile—speak,—look on me, I say.  
What, tears! what, wring thine hands! what,  
pale as death!—

And not one word—not one!

*Franc.* (*To Gon.*) Oh, deadly fiend!

That hast but hasten'd that which was foredoom'd.  
(*To Laval.*) My lord, ere I make answer to this  
charge,

I have a boon to crave of you—my brother—

*Lav.* How wildly thine eye rolls; thy hand is  
cold

As death, my fairest love.

*Franc.* Beseech you, sir,

Unclasp your arm; where is my brother?

*Lav.* Lautrec,

In Italy, ere now is well and happy.

*Franc.* Thanks, gentle heaven! all is not bitter-  
ness.

In this most bitter hour. My Lord Laval,

To you my faith was plighted, by my brother ;  
That faith I ratified by my own vow.

*Lav.* The oath was register'd in highest heaven.  
Thou'rt mine !

*Fran.* To all eternity, Laval.  
If blood cannot efface that damning bond ;  
[*Snatches his dagger, and stabs herself.*  
'Tis cancelled, I've struck home—my dear, dear  
brother. [ *Dies.*

*Lav.* Oh horrible !—she's dead !

(*Francis rushes from his concealment.*)

*Fran.* Dead !

[*Laval draws his sword, and turns upon the king,  
who draws to defend himself.*

*Lav.* Ha ! what fiend hath sent thee here ?  
Down ! down to hell with thee, thou damn'd se-  
ducer !

*Enter Queen, followed by attendants.*

*Queen.* Secure that madman !

[*Part of the attendants surround and disarm Laval.*

*Queen.* (*aside to Gon.*) Bravely done, indeed !  
I shall remember.—(*aloud*)—How now, wayward  
boy !

How is't I find thee here in private broils,  
Whilst proud rebellion triumphs o'er the land ?  
Bourbon's in France again ! and strong Marseilles  
Beleaguer'd round by Spanish soldiery.

*Fran.* Peace, mother, prithee peace; look there,  
look there !

There is a sight, that hath more sorrow in it  
Than loss of kingdoms, empires, or the world !  
There lies the fairest lily of the land,  
Untimely broken from its stem to wither !

[*Going towards the body.*

*Lav.* (*breaks from the attendants.*) Stand back

King Francis ! lay not e'en a finger  
 On this poor wench, which death hath sanctified !  
 This soulless frame of what was once my love !  
 Oh ! thou pale flower, that in death's icy grasp  
 Dost lie, making the dissolution that we dread.  
 Look fair !—farewell ! forever, and forever !  
 Thou shouldst have been the glad crown of my  
 youth,  
 Maturer life's fruitful and fond companion,—  
 Dreary old age's shelter.

*Gon.* Tears, my lord ?

*Lav.* Ay, tears, thou busy mischief ; get thee  
 hence !

Away ! who sent for thee ? who bade thee pour  
 The venom of thy tongue into my wounds ?  
 What seek'st thou here ?

*Gon.* To see thee weep, Laval !

And I am satisfied ! look on me, boy !  
 Dost know Garcia—first scion of a house  
 Whose kindred shoots, by thee were all cut down ?

*Lav.* For dead I left thee on Marignan plain !  
 Art thou from thence arisen—or from hell—  
 To wreak such ruin on me ?

*Gon.* They die not  
 Who have the work I had on hand unfinish'd ;  
 The spirit would not from its fleshly house,  
 In which thy sword so many outlets made,  
 Ere it had seen its full revenge fulfill'd.

*Lav.* Revenge!—for what?—wherefore dost  
 thou pursue me ?

*Gon.* Look on thy bride ! look on that faded  
 thing !

As fair a flower once grew within my house,  
 As young, as lovely, and as dearly lov'd.—  
 The only daughter of my father's house,



She was the centre of our soul's affections.  
 Thy father, sir—now mark! for 'tis the point  
 And moral of my tale—thy father, then,  
 Was, by my sire, in war ta'en prisoner:—  
 Wounded almost to death, he brought him home,  
 Shelter'd him,—cherish'd him,—and with a care  
 Most like a brother's, watch'd his bed of sickness,  
 Till ruddy health once more through all his veins  
 Sent life's warm stream in strong returning tide.  
 How think ye he repaid my father's love?  
 From her dear house he lur'd my sister forth,  
 And having robb'd her of her treasur'd honour,  
 Cast her away, defil'd!—she died! she died!  
 Upon the threshold of that house, from which  
 My father spurn'd her! and over her pale corpse  
 I swore to haunt, through life, her ravisher;  
 Till due and deep atonement had been made—  
 Honour for honour stolen—blood for blood!

*Lav.* These were my father's injuries,—not mine,  
 Remorseless fiend!

*Gon.* Thy father died in battle;  
 And as his lands, and titles, at his death,  
 Devolv'd on thee, on thee devolv'd the treasure  
 Of my dear hate!—I have had such revenge!  
 Such horrible revenge!—thy life, thy honour,  
 Were all too little!—I have had thy tears!  
 Kings, the earth's mightiest potentates, have been  
 My tools and instruments! yon haughty madam,  
 And your ambition,—yonder headstrong boy,  
 And his mad love,—all, all beneath my feet,  
 And slaves unto my will and deadly purpose.

*Queen.* Such glorious triumphs should be short  
 lived;—ho!

Lead out that man to instant death.

*Gon.* Without confession, madam, shall I go?

Shall not the world know on what services  
Lousia of Savoy hastens such guerdon?

*Queen.* Am I obey'd? away with him!

*Fran.* Your pardon;—

If he has aught to speak before he dies,  
Let him unfold; it is our pleasure so!

*Gon.* You did not deal so hardly with the soul  
Of Bourbon, when you sent me to his cell;  
But let that pass:—King Francis, mark me well  
I was, by yonder lady, made the bearer  
Of am'rous overtures unto De Bourbon,  
Which he with scorn flung back; else trust me, sir,  
You had not stood so safely on your throne  
As now you stand.

So much for De Bourbon. Now,  
Look on the prostrate form of this fair creature!  
Why, how now, madam, do you blanch and start?  
You're somewhat pale! fie, fie! what matters it,  
'*Blood is but blood, and life no more than life,  
Be't cradled in however fair a form.*'

I't not well done! ha! well and suddenly?  
Are you not satisfied?

*Queen.* Thou lying devil!

*Gon.* Dar'st thou deny the part thou hast in this?

*Queen.* Dar'st thou to me? Ay, reptile!

*Gon.* Here! look here!—(*Shows her letter.*)

*Queen.* Ha!

*Gon.* Hast thou found thy master spirit, Queen!  
Our wits have grappled hard for many a day.  
What! mute at last? or hast some quaint device?

*Queen.* No! Hell has conquer'd me!

*Fran.* Give me that scroll—hast thou said all,  
Garcia!

*Gon.* Ay, all! Fair madam, fare ye well awhile:  
And for my death, I thank you from my soul.

For after the rich cup I've drain'd this hour,  
 The rest were tasteless, stale, and wearisome.  
 Life had no aim, or joy, or end, save vengeance;  
 Vengeance is satisfied, so farewell life,

[*exit guarded.*

*Fran.* (*reads the letter.*) Oh! mother! guilt  
 hath taken from thy lips

All proud repelling answer. Give me that ring,—  
 Strip me the diadem from off thy brows,—  
 And bid a long farewell to vanity!

For in a holy nunnery immured,  
 Thou shalt have leisure to make peace with heav'n  
 And mourn i' the shade of solitude thy errors.—  
 (*To the body.*)—For thee, thou lovely dust, all  
 circumstance

That can gild death, shall wait thee to thy grave!  
 Thou shalt lie with the royal and the proud;  
 And marble by the dext'rous chisel taught,  
 Shall learn to mourn thy hapless fortunes.

*Lav.* No!

Ye shall not bear her to your receptacles;  
 Nor raise a monument for busy eyes  
 To stare upon. No hand, in future days,  
 Shall point to her last home; no voice shall cry  
 'There lies King Francis' paramour!' In life,  
 Thou didst despoil me of her; in death, she's  
 mine!

I'll give her that, my love doth tell me best  
 Fits with her fate—an honourable grave;  
 There 'mong our tombs ancestral shall she rest,  
 Without an epitaph, except my tears.

THE END







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