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THE TRAGEDIES
OF
ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE
IN FIVE VOLUMES

VOLUME II

CHASTELARD
AND
BOTHWELL

ACT I.—DAVID RIZZIO

ACT II.—BOTHWELL

LONDON
CHATTO & WINDUS
1905

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CHASTELARD

A TRAGEDY

Au milieu de l'avril, entre les lys naquit
Son corps, qui de blancheur les lys mêmes vainquit ;
Et les roses, qui sont du sang d'Adonis teintes,
Furent par sa couleur de leur vermeil dépeintes.—RONSARD

What need ye hech ' and how ! ladies ?
What need ye how ! for me ?
Ye never saw grace at a graceless face ;
Queen Mary has nane to gie.—*The Queen's Maria*

I DEDICATE THIS PLAY,
AS A PARTIAL EXPRESSION OF REVERENCE
AND GRATITUDE,
TO THE CHIEF OF LIVING POETS;
TO THE FIRST DRAMATIST OF HIS AGE;
TO THE GREATEST EXILE, AND THEREFORE
TO THE GREATEST MAN OF FRANCE;
TO
VICTOR HUGO

PERSONS

MARY STUART.

MARY BEATON.

MARY SEYTON.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

MARY HAMILTON.

PIERRE DE BOSCOSEL DE CHASTELARD.

DARNLEY.

MURRAY.

RANDOLPH.

MORTON.

LINDSAY.

FATHER BLACK.

Guards, Burgesses, a Preacher, Citizens, &c.

Another Yle is there toward the Northc, in the See Ocean, where that ben fulle cruele and ful evele Wommen of Nature: and thei han precious Stones in hire Eyen; and thei ben of that kynde, that zif they beholden ony man, thei slen him anon with the beholdynge, as dothe the Basilisk.

MAUNDEVILE'S *Voiage and Travaile*, Ch. xxviii.

ACT I

MARY BEATON

SCENE I. *The Upper Chamber in Holyrood*

The four MARIES

MARY BEATON (*sings*)

I

*Le navire
Est à l'eau ;
Entends rire
Ce gros flot
Que fait luire
Et bruire
Le vieux sire
Aquila.*

2

*Dans l'espace
Du grand air
Le vent passe
Comme un fer ;*

*Siffle et sonne,
Tombe et tonne,
Prend et donne
A la mer.*

3

*Vois, la brise
Tourne au nord,
Et la bise
Souffle et mord
Sur ta pure
Chevelure
Qui murmure
Et se tord.*

MARY HAMILTON

You never sing now but it makes you sad ;
Why do you sing ?

MARY BEATON

I hardly know well why ;
It makes me sad to sing, and very sad
To hold my peace.

MARY CARMICHAEL

I know what saddens you.

MARY BEATON

Prithee, what ? what ?

MARY CARMICHAEL

Why, since we came from France,
You have no lover to make stuff for songs.

MARY BEATON

You are wise ; for there my pain begins indeed,
Because I have no lovers out of France.

MARY SEYTON

I mind me of one Olivier de Pesme,
(You knew him, sweet) a pale man with short hair,
Wore tied at sleeve the Beaton colour.

MARY CARMICHAEL

Blue—
I know, blue scarfs. I never liked that knight.

MARY HAMILTON

Me? I know him? I hardly knew his name.
Black, was his hair? no, brown.

MARY SEYTON

Light pleases you :
I have seen the time brown served you well enough.

MARY CARMICHAEL

Lord Darnley's is a mere maid's yellow.

MARY HAMILTON

No ;

A man's, good colour.

MARY SEYTON

Ah, does that burn your blood?
Why, what a bitter colour is this red
That fills your face ! if you be not in love,
I am no maiden.

MARY HAMILTON

Nay, God help true hearts !
I must be stabbed with love then, to the bone,
Yea to the spirit, past cure.

MARY SEYTON

What were you saying ?
I see some jest run up and down your lips.

MARY CARMICHAEL

Finish your song ; I know you have more of it ;
Good sweet, I pray you do.

MARY BEATON

I am too sad.

MARY CARMICHAEL

This will not sadden you to sing ; your song
Tastes sharp of sea and the sea's bitterness,
But small pain sticks on it.

MARY BEATON

Nay, it is sad ;
For either sorrow with the beaten lips
Sings not at all, or if it does get breath
Sings quick and sharp like a hard sort of mirth :
And so this song does ; or I would it did,
That it might please me better than it does.

MARY SEYTON

Well, as you choose then. What a sort of men
Crowd all about the squares !

MARY CARMICHAEL

Ay, hateful men ;
For look how many talking mouths be there,
So many angers show their teeth at us.
Which one is that, stooped somewhat in the neck,
That walks so with his chin against the wind,
Lips sideways shut ? a keen-faced man—lo there,
He that walks midmost.

MARY SEYTON

That is Master Knox.
He carries all these folk within his skin,
Bound up as 'twere between the brows of him
Like a bad thought ; their hearts beat inside his ;
They gather at his lips like flies in the sun,
Thrust sides to catch his face.

MARY CARMICHAEL

Look forth ; so—push
The window—further—see you anything ?

MARY HAMILTON

They are well gone ; but pull the lattice in,
The wind is like a blade aslant. Would God
I could get back one day I think upon ;
The day we four and some six after us
Sat in that Louvre garden and plucked fruits
To cast love-lots with in the gathered grapes ;
This way ; you shut your eyes and reach and pluck,
And catch a lover for each grape you get.
I got but one, a green one, and it broke
Between my fingers and it ran down through them.

MARY SEYTON

Ay, and the queen fell in a little wrath
Because she got so many, and tore off
Some of them she had plucked unwittingly—
She said, against her will. What fell to you?

MARY BEATON

Me ? nothing but the stalk of a stripped bunch
With clammy grape-juice leavings at the tip.

MARY CARMICHAEL

Ay, true, the queen came first and she won all ;
It was her bunch we took to cheat you with.

What, will you weep for that now ? for you seem
As one that means to weep. God pardon me !
I think your throat is choking up with tears.
You are not well, sweet, for a lying jest
To shake you thus much.

MARY BEATON

I am well enough :
Give not your pity trouble for my sake.

MARY SEYTON

If you be well sing out your song and laugh,
Though it were but to fret the fellows there.—
Now shall we catch her secret washed and wet
In the middle of her song ; for she must weep
If she sing through.

MARY HAMILTON

I told you it was love ;
I watched her eyes all through the masquing time
Feed on his face by morsels ; she must weep.

MARY BEATON

4

*Le navire
Passe et luit,
Puis chavire
A grand bruit ;*

*Et sur l'onde
La plus blonde
Tête au monde
Flotte et fuit.*

5

*Moi, je rame,
Et l'amour,
C'est ma flamme,
Mon grand jour,
Ma chandelle
Blanche et belle,
Ma chapelle
De séjour.*

6

*Toi, mon âme
Et ma foi,
Sois ma dame
Et ma loi ;
Sois ma mie,
Sois Marie,
Sois ma vie,
Toute à moi !*

MARY SEYTON

I know the song ; a song of Chastelard's
He made in coming over with the queen.
How hard it rained ! he played that over twice
Sitting before her, singing each word soft,
As if he loved the least she listened to.

MARY HAMILTON

No marvel if he loved it for her sake ;
She is the choice of women in the world,
Is she not, sweet ?

MARY BEATON

I have seen no fairer one.

MARY SEYTON

And the most loving : did you note last night
How long she held him with her hands and eyes,
Looking a little sadly, and at last
Kissed him below the chin and parted so
As the dance ended ?

MARY HAMILTON

This was courtesy ;
So might I kiss my singing-bird's red bill
After some song, till he bit short my lip.

MARY SEYTON

But if a lady hold her bird anights
To sing to her between her fingers—ha ?
I have seen such birds.

MARY CARMICHAEL

O, you talk emptily ;
She is full of grace ; and marriage in good time
Will wash the fool called scandal off men's lips.

MARY HAMILTON

I know not that ; I know how folk would gibe
If one of us pushed courtesy so far.
She has always loved love's fashions well ; you wot,
The marshal, head friend of this Chastelard's,
She used to talk with ere he brought her here
And sow their talk with little kisses thick
As roses in rose-harvest. For myself,
I cannot see which side of her that lurks
Which snares in such wise all the sense of men ;
What special beauty, subtle as man's eye
And tender as the inside of the eyelid is,
There grows about her.

MARY CARMICHAEL

I think her cunning speech—
The soft and rapid shudder of her breath
In talking—the rare tender little laugh—
The pitiful sweet sound like a bird's sigh
When her voice breaks ; her talking does it all.

MARY SEYTON

I say, her eyes with those clear perfect brows :
It is the playing of those eyelashes,
The lure of amorous looks as sad as love,
Plucks all souls toward her like a net.

MARY HAMILTON

What, what !

You praise her in too lover-like a wise
For women that praise women ; such report

Is like robes worn the rough side next the skin,
Frets where it warms.

MARY SEYTON

You think too much in French.

Enter DARNLEY

Here comes your thorn ; what glove against it now ?

MARY HAMILTON

O, God's good pity ! this a thorn of mine ?
It has not run deep in yet.

MARY CARMICHAEL

I am not sure :
The red runs over to your face's edge.

DARNLEY

Give me one word ; nay, lady, for love's sake ;
Here, come this way ; I will not keep you ; no.
—O my sweet soul, why do you wrong me thus ?

MARY HAMILTON

Why will you give me for men's eyes to burn ?

DARNLEY

What, sweet, I love you as mine own soul loves me ;
They shall divide when we do.

MARY HAMILTON

I cannot say.

DARNLEY

Why, look you, I am broken with the queen ;
This is the rancour and the bitter heart
That grows in you ; by God it is nought else.
Why, this last night she held me for a fool—
Ay, God wot, for a thing of stripe and bell.
I bade her make me marshal in her masque—
I had the dress here painted, gold and grey
(That is, not grey but a blue-green like this)—
She tells me she had chosen her marshal, she,
The best o' the world for cunning and sweet wit ;
And what sweet fool but her sweet knight, God help !
To serve her with that three-inch wit of his ?
She is all fool and fiddling now ; for me,
I am well pleased ; God knows, if I might choose
I would not be more troubled with her love.
Her love is like a briar that rasps the flesh,
And yours is soft like flowers. Come this way, love ;
So, further in this window ; hark you here.

Enter CHASTELARD

MARY BEATON

Good morrow, sir.

CHASTELARD

Good morrow, noble lady.

MARY CARMICHAEL

You have heard no news ? what news ?

CHASTELARD

Nay, I have none.
That maiden-tongued male-faced Elizabeth
Hath eyes unlike our queen's, hair not so soft,
And hands more sudden save for courtesy ;
And lips no kiss of love's could bring to flower
In such red wise as our queen's ; save this news,
I know none English.

MARY SEYTON

Come, no news of her ;
For God's love talk still rather of our queen.

MARY BEATON

God give us grace then to speak well of her.
You did right joyfully in our masque last night ;
I saw you when the queen lost breath (her head
Bent back, her chin and lips catching the air—
A goodly thing to see her) how you smiled
Across her head, between your lips—no doubt
You had great joy, sir. Did not you take note
Once how one lock fell? that was good to see.

CHASTELARD

Yea, good enough to live for.

MARY BEATON

Nay, but sweet
Enough to die. When she broke off the dance,
Turning round short and soft—I never saw
Such supple ways of walking as she has.

CHASTELARD

Why do you praise her gracious looks to me ?

MARY BEATON

Sir, for mere sport ; but tell me even for love
How much you love her.

CHASTELARD

I know not : it may be
If I had set mine eyes to find that out,
I should not know it. She hath fair eyes : may be
I love her for sweet eyes or brows or hair,
For the smooth temples, where God touching her
Made blue with sweeter veins the flower-sweet white ;
Or for the tender turning of her wrist,
Or marriage of the eyelid with the cheek ;
I cannot tell ; or flush of lifting throat,
I know not if the colour get a name
This side of heaven—no man knows ; or her mouth,
A flower's lip with a snake's lip, stinging sweet,
And sweet to sting with : face that one would see
And then fall blind and die with sight of it
Held fast between the eyelids—oh, all these
And all her body and the soul to that,
The speech and shape and hand and foot and heart
That I would die of—yea, her name that turns
My face to fire being written—I know no whit
How much I love them.

MARY BEATON

Nor how she loves you back ?

CHASTELARD

I know her ways of loving, all of them :
A sweet soft way the first is ; afterward
It burns and bites like fire ; the end of that,
Charred dust, and eyelids bitten through with smoke.

MARY BEATON

What has she done for you to gird at her ?

CHASTELARD

Nothing. You do not greatly love her, you,
Who do not—gird, you call it. I am bound to
France ;
Shall I take word from you to any one ?
So it be harmless, not a gird, I will.

MARY BEATON

I doubt you will not go hence with your life.

CHASTELARD

Why, who should slay me ? no man northwards born,
In my poor mind ; my sword's lip is no maid's
To fear the iron biting of their own,
Though they kiss hard for hate's sake.

MARY BEATON

Lo you, sir,
How sharp he whispers, what close breath and
eyes—
And hers are fast upon him, do you see ?

CHASTELARD

Well, which of these must take my life in hand ?
Pray God it be the better : nay, which hand ?

MARY BEATON

I think, none such. The man is goodly made ;
She is tender-hearted toward his courtesies,
And would not have them fall too low to find.
Look, they slip forth.

[Exeunt DARNLEY and MARY HAMILTON.]

MARY SEYTON

For love's sake, after them,
And soft as love can.

[Exeunt MARY CARMICHAEL and MARY SEYTON.]

CHASTELARD

True, a goodly man.
What shapeliness and state he hath, what eyes,
Brave brow and lordly lip ! were it not fit
Great queens should love him ?

MARY BEATON

See you now, fair lord,
I have but scant breath's time to help myself,
And I must cast my heart out on a chance ;
So bear with me. That we twain have loved well,
I have no heart nor wit to say ; God wot

We had never made good lovers, you and I.
Look you, I would not have you love me, sir,
For all the love's sake in the world. I say,
You love the queen, and loving burns you up,
And mars the grace and joyous wit you had.
Turning your speech to sad, your face to strange,
Your mirth to nothing : and I am piteous, I,
Even as the queen is, and such women are ;
And if I helped you to your love-longing,
Meseems some grain of love might fall my way
And love's god help me when I came to love ;
I have read tales of men that won their loves
On some such wise.

CHASTELARD

If you mean mercifully,
I am bound to you past thought and thank ; if worse,
I will but thank your lips and not your heart.

MARY BEATON

Nay, let love wait and praise me, in God's name,
Some day when he shall find me ; yet, God wot,
My lips are of one colour with my heart.
Withdraw now from me, and about midnight
In some close chamber without light or noise
It may be I shall get you speech of her ;
She loves you well ; it may be she will speak,
I wot not what ; she loves you at her heart.
Let her not see that I have given you word,
Lest she take shame and hate her love. Till night.
Let her not see it.

CHASTELARD

I will not thank you now,
And then I'll die what sort of death you will.
Farewell. [Exit.

MARY BEATON

And by God's mercy and my love's
I will find ways to earn such thank of you. [Exit.

SCENE II. *A Hall in the same*

The QUEEN, DARNLEY, MURRAY, RANDOLPH, *the*
MARIES, CHASTELARD, &c.

QUEEN

Hath no man seen my lord of Chastelard ?
Nay, no great matter. Keep you on that side :
Begin the purpose.

MARY CARMICHAEL

Madam, he is here.

QUEEN

Begin a measure now that other side.
I will not dance ; let them play soft a little.
Fair sir, we had a dance to tread to-night,
To teach our north folk all sweet ways of France ;
But at this time we have no heart to it.
Sit, sir, and talk. Look, this breast-clasp is new,
The French king sent it me.

CHASTELARD

A goodly thing :
But what device ? the word is ill to catch.

QUEEN

A Venus crowned, that eats the hearts of men :
Below her flies a love with a bat's wings,
And strings the hair of paramours to bind
Live birds' feet with. Lo what small subtle work :
The smith's name, Gian Grisostomo da—what ?
Can you read that ? The sea froths underfoot ;
She stands upon the sea and it curls up
In soft loose curls that run to one in the wind.
But her hair is not shaken, there's a fault ;
It lies straight down in close-cut points and tongues,
Not like blown hair. The legend is writ small :
Still one makes out this—*Cave*—if you look.

CHASTELARD

I see the Venus well enough, God wot,
But nothing of the legend.

QUEEN

Come, fair lord,
Shall we dance now ? my heart is good again.
[*They dance a measure.*]

DARNLEY

I do not like this manner of a dance,
This game of two by two ; it were much better
To meet between the changes and to mix
Than still to keep apart and whispering
Each lady out of earshot with her friend.

MARY BEATON

That's as the lady serves her knight, I think :
We are broken up too much.

DARNLEY

Nay, no such thing ;
Be not wroth, lady, I wot it was the queen
Pricked each his friend out. Look you now—your
ear—
If love had gone by choosing—how they laugh,
Lean lips together, and wring hands underhand !
What, you look white too, sick of heart, ashamed,
No marvel—for men call it—hark you though—
[*They pass.*

MURRAY

Was the Queen found no merrier in France ?

MARY HAMILTON

Why, have you seen her sorrowful to-night ?

MURRAY

I say not so much ; blithe she seems at whiles,
Gentle and goodly doubtless in all ways,
But hardly with such lightness and quick heart
As it was said.

MARY HAMILTON

'Tis your great care of her
Makes you misdoubt ; nought else.

MURRAY

Yea, may be so ;
She has no cause I know to sadden her. [*They pass.*]

QUEEN

I am tired too soon ; I could have danced down hours
Two years gone hence and felt no wearier.
One grows much older northwards, my fair lord ;
I wonder men die south ; meseems all France
Smells sweet with living, and bright breath of days
That keep men far from dying. Peace ; pray you now,
No dancing more. Sing, sweet, and make us mirth ;
We have done with dancing measures : sing that song
You call the song of love at ebb.

MARY BEATON (*sings*)

I

*Between the sunset and the sea
My love laid hands and lips on me ;
Of sweet came sour, of day came night,
Of long desire came brief delight :
Ah love, and what thing came of thee
Between the sea-downs and the sea ?*

2

*Between the sea-mark and the sea
Joy grew to grief, grief grew to me ;
Love turned to tears, and tears to fire,
And dead delight to new desire ;
Love's talk, love's touch there seemed to be
Between the sea-sand and the sea.*

3

*Between the sundown and the sea
 Love watched one hour of love with me ;
 Then down the all-golden water-ways
 His feet flew after yesterdays ;
 I saw them come and saw them flee
 Between the sea-foam and the sea.*

4

*Between the sea-strand and the sea
 Love fell on sleep, sleep fell on me ;
 The first star saw twain turn to one
 Between the moonrise and the sun ;
 The next, that saw not love, saw me
 Between the sea-banks and the sea.*

QUEEN

Lo, sirs,

What mirth is here ! Some song of yours, fair lord ;
 You know glad ways of rhyming—no such tunes
 As go to tears.

CHASTELARD

I made this yesterday ;
 For its love's sake I pray you let it live. [He sings.

I

*Après tant de jours, après tant de pleurs,
 Soyez secourable à mon âme en peine.
 Voyez comme Avril fait l'amour aux fleurs ;
 Dame d'amour, dame aux belles couleurs,
 Dieu vous a fait belle, Amour vous fait reine.*

2

*Rions, je t'en prie ; aimons, je le veux.
Le temps fuit et rit et ne revient guère
Pour baiser le bout de tes blonds cheveux,
Pour baiser tes cils, ta bouche et tes yeux ;
L'amour n'a qu'un jour auprès de sa mère.*

QUEEN

'Tis a true song ; love shall not pluck time back
Nor time lie down with love. For me, I am old ;
Have you no hair changed since you changed to Scot ?
I look each day to see my face drawn up
About the eyes, as if they sucked the cheeks.
I think this air and face of things here north
Puts snow at flower-time in the blood, and tears
Between the sad eyes and the merry mouth
In their youth-days.

CHASTELARD

It is a bitter air.

QUEEN

Faith, if I might be gone, sir, would I stay ?
I think, for no man's love's sake.

CHASTELARD

I think not.

QUEEN

Do you not mind at landing how the quay
Looked like a blind wet face in waste of wind
And washing of wan waves ? how the hard mist

Made the hills ache ? your songs lied loud, my knight,
They said my face would burn off cloud and rain
Seen once, and fill the crannied land with fire,
Kindle the capes in their blind black-grey hoods—
I know not what. You praise me past all loves ;
And these men love me little ; 'tis some fault,
I think, to love me : even a fool's sweet fault.
I have your verse still beating in my head
Of how the swallow got a wing broken
In the spring time, and lay upon his side
Watching the rest fly off i' the red leaf-time,
And broke his heart with grieving at himself
Before the snow came. Do you know that lord
With sharp-set eyes ? and him with huge thewed
throat ?

Good friends to me ; I had need love them well.
Why do you look one way ? I will not have you
Keep your eyes here : 'tis no great wit in me
To care much now for old French friends of mine. —
Come, a fresh measure ; come, play well for me,
Fair sirs, your playing puts life in foot and heart.—

DARNLEY

Lo you again, sirs, how she laughs and leans,
Holding him fast—the supple way she hath !
Your queen hath none such ; better as she is
For all her measures, a grave English maid,
Than queen of snakes and Scots.

RANDOLPH

She is over fair

To be so sweet and hurt not. A good knight ;
Goodly to look on.

MURRAY

Yea, a good sword too,
And of good kin ; too light of loving though ;
These jangling song-smiths are keen love-mongers,
They snap at all meats.

DARNLEY

What ! by God I think,
For all his soft French face and bright boy's sword,
There be folks fairer : and for knightliness,
These hot-lipped brawls of Paris breed sweet knights—
Mere stabbers for a laugh across the wine.—

QUEEN

There, I have danced you down for once, fair lord ;
You look pale now. Nay then for courtesy
I must needs help you ; do not bow your head,
I am tall enough to reach close under it.
[*Kisses him.*
Now come, we'll sit and see this passage through.—

DARNLEY

A courtesy, God help us ! courtesy—
Pray God it wound not where it should heal wounds.
Why, there was here last year some lord of France
(Priest on the wrong side as some folk are prince)
Told tales of Paris ladies—nay, by God,
No jest for queen's lips to catch laughter of
That would keep clean ; I wot he made good mirth,
But she laughed over sweetly, and in such wise—
Nay, I laughed too, but lothly.—

QUEEN

How they look !
The least thing courteous galls them to the bone.
What would one say now I were thinking of ?

CHASTELARD

It seems, some sweet thing.

QUEEN

True, a sweet one, sir—
That madrigal you made Alys de Saulx
Of the three ways of love ; the first kiss honour,
The second pity, and the last kiss love.
Which think you now was that I kissed you with ?

CHASTELARD

It should be pity, if you be pitiful ;
For I am past all honouring that keep
Outside the eye of battle, where my kin
Fallen overseas have found this many a day
No helm of mine between them ; and for love,
I think of that as dead men of good days
Ere the wrong side of death was theirs, when God
Was friends with them.

QUEEN

Good ; call it pity then.
You have a subtle riddling skill at love
Which is not like a lover. For my part,
I am resolved to be well done with love,
Though I were fairer-faced than all the world ;

As there be fairer. Think you, fair my knight,
Love shall live after life in any man?
I have given you stuff for riddles.

CHASTELARD

Most sweet queen,
They say men dying remember, with sharp joy
And rapid reluctance of desire,
Some old thing, some swift breath of wind, some word,
Some sword-stroke or dead lute-strain, some lost sight,
Some sea-blossom stripped to the sun and burned
At naked ebb—some river-flower that breathes
Against the stream like a swooned swimmer's mouth—
Some tear or laugh ere lip and eye were man's—
Sweet stings that struck the blood in riding—nay,
Some garment or sky-colour or spice-smell,
And die with heart and face shut fast on it,
And know not why, and weep not; it may be
Men shall hold love fast always in such wise
In new fair lives where all are new things else,
And know not why, and weep not.

QUEEN

A right rhyme,
And right a rhyme's worth: nay, a sweet song, though.
What, shall my cousin hold fast that love of his,
Her face and talk, when life ends? as God grant
His life end late and sweet; I love him well.
She is fair enough, his lover; a fair-faced maid,
With grey sweet eyes and tender touch of talk;
And that, God wot, I wist not. See you, sir,
Men say I needs must get wed hastily;
Do none point lips at him?

CHASTELARD

Yea, guessingly.

QUEEN

God help such lips ! and get me leave to laugh !
What should I do but paint and put him up
Like a gilt god, a saintship in a shrine,
For all fools' feast ? God's mercy on men's wits !
Tall as a housetop and as bare of brain—
I'll have no staffs with fool-faced carven heads
To hang my life on. Nay, for love, no more,
For fear I laugh and set their eyes on edge
To find out why I laugh. Good night, fair lords ;
Bid them cease playing. Give me your hand ; good
night.

SCENE III. MARY BEATON'S *Chamber.* *Night**Enter CHASTELARD*

CHASTELARD

I am not certain yet she will not come ;
For I can feel her hand's heat still in mine,
Past doubting of, and see her brows half drawn,
And half a light in the eyes. If she come not,
I am no worse than he that dies to-night.
This two years' patience gets an end at least,
Whichever way I am well done with it.
How hard the thin sweet moon is, split and laced
And latticed over, just a stray of it
Catching and clinging at a strip of wall,

Hardly a hand's breadth. Did she turn indeed
In going out? not to catch up her gown
The page let slip, but to keep sight of me?
There was a soft small stir beneath her eyes
Hard to put on, a quivering of her blood
That knew of the old nights watched out wakefully.
Those measures of her dancing too were changed—
More swift and with more eager stops at whiles
And rapid pauses where breath failed her lips.

Enter MARY BEATON

O, she is come : if you be she indeed
Let me but hold your hand ; what, no word yet?
You turn and kiss me without word ; O sweet,
If you will slay me be not over quick,
Kill me with some slow heavy kiss that plucks
The heart out at the lips. Alas ! sweet love,
Give me some old sweet word to kiss away.
Is it a jest ? for I can feel your hair
Touch me—I may embrace your body too?
I know you well enough without sweet words.
How should one make you speak ? This is not she.
Come in the light ; nay, let me see your eyes.
Ah, you it is ? what have I done to you?
And do you look now to be slain for this
That you twist back and shudder like one stabbed ?

MARY BEATON

Yea, kill me now and do not look at me :
God knows I meant to die. Sir, for God's love
Kill me now quick ere I go mad with shame.

CHASTELARD

Cling not upon my wrists : let go the hilt :
Nay, you will bruise your hand with it : stand up :
You shall not have my sword forth.

MARY BEATON

Kill me now,

I will not rise : there, I am patient, sec,
I will not strive, but kill me for God's sake.

CHASTELARD

Pray you rise up and be not shaken so :
Forgive me my rash words, my heart was gone
After the thing you were : be not ashamed ;
Give me the shame, you have no part in it ;
Can I not say a word shall do you good ?
Forgive that too.

MARY BEATON

I shall run crazed with shame ;

But when I felt your lips catch hold on mine
It stopped my breath : I would have told you all ;
Let me go out ; you see I lied to you,
And I am shamed ; I pray you loose me, sir,
Let me go out.

CHASTELARD

Think no base things of me :

I were most base to let you go ashamed.
Think my heart's love and honour go with you :
Yea, while I live, for your love's noble sake,

I am your servant in what wise may be,
To love and serve you with right thankful heart.

MARY BEATON

I have given men leave to mock me, and must bear
What shame they please : you have good cause to
mock.

Let me pass now.

CHASTELARD

You know I mock you not.
If ever I leave off to honour you,
God give me shame ! I were the worst churl born.

MARY BEATON

No marvel though the queen should love you too,
Being such a knight. I pray you for her love,
Lord Chastelard, of your great courtesy,
Think now no scorn to give me my last kiss
That I shall have of man before I die.
Even the same lips you kissed and knew not of
Will you kiss now, knowing the shame of them,
And say no one word to me afterwards,
That I may see I have loved the best lover
And man most courteous of all men alive ?

MARY SEYTON (*within*)

Here, fetch the light : nay, this way ; enter all.

MARY BEATON

I am twice undone. Fly, get some hiding, sir ;
They have spied upon me somehow.

CHASTELARD

Nay, fear not ;

Stand by my side.

Enter MARY SEYTON and MARY HAMILTON

MARY HAMILTON

Give me that light : this way.

CHASTELARD

What jest is here, fair ladies ? it walks late,
Something too late for laughing.

MARY SEYTON

Nay, fair sir,

What jest is this of yours ? Look to your lady :
She is nigh swooned. The queen shall know all this.

MARY HAMILTON

A grievous shame it is we are fallen upon ;
Hold forth the light. Is this your care of us ?
Nay, come, look up : this is no game, God wot.

CHASTELARD

Shame shall befall them that speak shamefully :
I swear this lady is as pure and good
As any maiden, and who believes me not
Shall keep the shame for his part and the lie.
To them that come in honour and not in hate
I will make answer. Lady, have good heart.
Give me the light there : I will see you forth.

ACT II

*DARNLEY*SCENE I. *The great Chamber in Holyrood**The QUEEN and MARY SEYTON*

QUEEN

BUT will you swear it?

MARY SEYTON

Swear it, madam?

QUEEN

Ay—

Swear it.

MARY SEYTON

Madam, I am not friends with them.

QUEEN

Swear then against them if you are not friends.

MARY SEYTON

Indeed I saw them kiss.

QUEEN

So lovers use—

What, their mouths close? a goodly way of love!
Or but the hands? or on her throat? Prithee—
You have sworn that.

MARY SEYTON

I say what I saw done.

QUEEN

Ay, you did see her cheeks (God smite them red!)
Kissed either side? what, they must eat strange food,
Those singing lips of his?

MARY SEYTON

Sweet meat enough—

They started at my coming five yards off,
But there they were.

QUEEN

A maid may have kissed cheeks
And no shame in them—yet one would not swear.
You have sworn that. Pray God he be not mad:
A sickness in his eyes. The left side love
(I was told that) and the right courtesy.
'Tis good fools' fashion. What, no more but this?
For me, God knows I am no whit wroth; not I;
But, for your fame's sake that her shame will sting,
I cannot see a way to pardon her—
For your fame's sake, less that be prated of.

MARY SEYTON

Nay, if she were not chaste—I have not said
She was not chaste.

QUEEN

I know you are tender of her ;
And your sweet word will hardly turn her sweet.

MARY SEYTON

Indeed I would fain do her any good.
Shall I not take some gracious word to her ?

QUEEN

Bid her not come or wait on me to-day.

MARY SEYTON

Will you see him ?

QUEEN

See—O, this Chastelard ?
He doth not well to sing maids into shame ;
And folk are sharp here ; yet for sweet friends' sake
Assuredly I'll see him. I am not wroth.
A goodly man, and a good sword thereto—
It may be he shall wed her. I am not wroth.

MARY SEYTON

Nay, though she bore with him, she hath no great love,
I doubt me, that way.

QUEEN

God mend all, I pray—
And keep us from all wrongdoing and wild words.
I think there is no fault men fall upon
But I could pardon. Look you, I would swear
She were no paramour for any man,
So well I love her.

MARY SEYTON

Am I to bid him in?

QUEEN

As you will, sweet. But if you held me hard
You did me grievous wrong. Doth he wait there?
Men call me over tender; I had rather so,
Than too ungracious. Father, what with you?

Enter FATHER BLACK

FATHER BLACK

God's peace and health of soul be with the queen
And pardon be with me though I speak truth.
As I was going on peaceable men's wise
Through your good town, desiring no man harm,
A kind of shameful woman with thief's lips
Spake somewhat to me over a thrust-out chin,
Soliciting as I deemed an alms; which alms
(Remembering what was writ of Magdalen)
I gave not grudging but with pure good heart,
When lo some scurril children that lurked near
Set there by Satan for my stumbling-stone,

Fell hooting with necks thwart and eyes asquint,
Screeched and made horns and shot out tongues
at me,

As at my Lord the Jews shot out their tongues
And made their heads wag ; I considering this
Took up my cross in patience and passed forth :
Nevertheless one ran between my feet
And made me totter, using speech and signs
I smart with shame to think of : then my blood
Kindled, and I was moved to smite the knave,
And the knave howled ; whereat the lewd whole herd
Brake forth upon me and cast mire and stones
So that I ran sore risk of bruise or gash
If they had touched ; likewise I heard men say,
(Their foul speech missed not of mine ear) they cried,
“ This devil’s mass-priest hankers for new flesh
Like a dry hound ; let him seek such at home,
Snuff and smoke out the queen’s French—”

QUEEN

They said that ?

FATHER BLACK

“—French paramours that breed more shames than
sons
All her court through ;” forgive me.

QUEEN

With my heart.

Father, you see the hatefulness of these—
They loathe us for our love. I am not moved :
What should I do being angry ? By this hand
(Which is not big enough to bruise their lips),

I marvel what thing should be done with me
To make me wroth. We must have patience with us
When we seek thank of men.

FATHER BLACK

Madam, farewell ;
I pray God keep you in such patient heart. [Exit.

QUEEN

Let him come now.

MARY SEYTON

Madam, he is at hand. [Exit.

Enter CHASTELARD

QUEEN

Give me that broidery frame ; how, gone so soon ?
No maid about ? Reach me some skein of silk.
What, are you come, fair lord ? Now by my life
That lives here idle, I am right glad of you ;
I have slept so well and sweet since yesternight
It seems our dancing put me in glad heart.
Did you sleep well ?

CHASTELARD

Yea, as a man may sleep.

QUEEN

You smile as if I jested ; do not men
Sleep as we do ? Had you fair dreams in the night ?

For me—but I should fret you with my dreams—
I dreamed sweet things. You are good at sooth-
saying :

Make me a sonnet of my dream.

CHASTELARD

I will,

When I shall know it.

QUEEN

I thought I was asleep
In Paris, lying by my lord, and knew
In somewise he was well awake, and yet
I could not wake too ; and I seemed to know
He hated me, and the least breath I made
Would turn somehow to slay or stifle me.
Then in brief time he rose and went away,
Saying, *Let her dream, but when her dream is out
I will come back and kill her as she wakes.*
And I lay sick and trembling with sore fear,
And still I knew that I was deep asleep ;
And thinking *I must dream now, or I die,
God send me some good dream lest I be slain,*
Fell fancying one had bound my feet with cords
And bade me dance, and the first measure made
I fell upon my face and wept for pain :
And my cords broke, and I began the dance
To a bitter tune ; and he that danced with me
Was clothed in black with long red lines and bars
And masked down to the lips, but by the chin
I knew you though your lips were sewn up close
With scarlet thread all dabbled wet in blood.
And then I knew the dream was not for good.

And striving with sore travail to reach up
And kiss you (you were taller in my dream)
I missed your lips and woke.

CHASTELARD

Sweet dreams, you said?
An evil dream I hold it for, sweet love.

QUEEN

You call love sweet ; yea, what is bitter, then ?
There's nothing broken sleep could hit upon
So bitter as the breaking down of love.
You call me sweet ; I am not sweet to you,
Nor you—O, I would say not sweet to me,
And if I said so I should hardly lie.
But there have been those things between us, sir,
That men call sweet.

CHASTELARD

I know not how *There is*
Turns to *There hath been* ; 'tis a heavier change
Than change of flesh to dust. Yet though years change
And good things end and evil things grow great,
The old love that was, or that was dreamed about,
That sang and kissed and wept upon itself,
Laughed and ran mad with love of its own face,
That was a sweet thing.

QUEEN

Nay, I know not well.
'Tis when the man is held fast underground
They say for sooth what manner of heart he had.

We are alive, and cannot be well sure
If we loved much or little : think you not
It were convenient one of us should die ?

CHASTELARD

Madam, your speech is hard to understand.

QUEEN

Why, there could come no change then ; one of us
Would never need to fear our love might turn
To the sad thing that it may grow to be.
I would sometimes all things were dead asleep
That I have loved, all buried in soft beds
And sealed with dreams and visions, and each dawn
Sung to by sorrows, and all night assuaged
By short sweet kisses and by sweet long loves
For old life's sake, lest weeping overmuch
Should wake them in a strange new time, and arm
Memory's blind hand to kill forgetfulness.

CHASTELARD

Look, you dream still, and sadly.

QUEEN

Sooth, a dream ;
For such things died or lied in sweet love's face,
And I forget them not, God help my wit !
I would the whole world were made up of sleep
And life not fashioned out of lies and loves.
We foolish women have such times, you know,
When we are weary or afraid or sick
For perfect nothing.

CHASTELARD (*aside*)

Now would one be fain
To know what bitter or what dangerous thing
She thinks of, softly chafing her soft lip.
She must mean evil.

QUEEN

Are you sad too, sir,
That you say nothing?

CHASTELARD

I? not sad a jot—
Though this your talk might make a blithe man sad.

QUEEN

O me! I must not let stray sorrows out;
They are ill to fledge, and if they feel blithe air
They wail and chirp untunefully. Would God
I had been a man! when I was born, men say,
My father turned his face and wept to think
I was no man.

CHASTELARD

Will you weep too?

QUEEN

In sooth,
If I were man I should be no base man;
I could have fought; yea, I could fight now too
If men would show me; I would I were the king!
I should be all ways better than I am.

CHASTELARD

Nay, would you have more honour, having this—
Men's hearts and loves and the sweet spoil of souls
Given you like simple gold to bind your hair?
Say you were king of thews, not queen of souls,
An iron headpiece hammered to a head,
You might fail too.

QUEEN

No, then I would not fail,
Or God should make me woman back again.
To be King James—you hear men say *King James*,
The word sounds like a piece of gold thrown down,
Rings with a round and royal note in it—
A name to write good record of; this king
Fought here and there, was beaten such a day,
And came at last to a good end, his life
Being all lived out, and for the main part well
And like a king's life; then to have men say
(As now they say of Flodden, here they broke
And there they held up to the end) years back
They saw you—*yea, I saw the king's face helmed
Red in the hot lit foreground of some fight
Hold the whole war as it were by the bit, a horse
Fit for his knees' grip—the great rearing war
That frothed with lips flung up, and shook men's lives
Off either flank of it like snow; I saw
(You could not hear as his sword rang), saw him
Shout, laugh, smite straight, and flaw the riven ranks,
Move as the wind moves, and his horse's feet
Stripe their long flags with dust.* Why, if one died,
To die so in the heart and heat of war

Were a much goodlier thing than living soft
And speaking sweet for fear of men. Woe's me,
Is there no way to pluck this body off?
Then I should never fear a man again,
Even in my dreams I should not ; no, by heaven.

CHASTELARD

I never thought you did fear anything.

QUEEN

God knows I do ; I could be sick with wrath
To think what grievous fear I have 'twixt whiles
Of mine own self and of base men : last night
If certain lords were glancing where I was
Under the eyelid, with sharp lip and brow,
I tell you, for pure shame and fear of them,
I could have gone and slain them.

CHASTELARD

Verily,
You are changed since those good days that fell in
France ;
But yet I think you are not so changed at heart
As to fear man.

QUEEN

I would I had no need.
Lend me your sword a little ; a fair sword ;
I see the fingers that I hold it with
Clear in the blade, bright pink, the shell-colour,
Brighter than flesh is really, curved all round.
Now men would mock if I should wear it here,

Bound under bosom with a girdle, here,
And yet I have heart enough to wear it well.
Speak to me like a woman, let me see
If I can play at man.

CHASTELARD

God save King James !

QUEEN

Would you could change now ! Fie, this will not do ;
Unclasp your sword ; nay, the hilt hurts my side ;
It sticks fast here. Unbind this knot for me :
Stoop, and you'll see it closer ; thank you : there.
Now I can breathe, sir. Ah ! it hurts me, though :
This was fool's play.

CHASTELARD

Yea, you are better so,
Without the sword ; your eyes are stronger things,
Whether to save or slay.

QUEEN

Alas, my side !
It hurts right sorely. Is it not pitiful
Our souls should be so bound about with flesh
Even when they leap and smite with wings and feet,
The least pain plucks them back, puts out their eyes,
Turns them to tears and words ? Ah my sweet
knight,
You have the better of us that weave and weep
While the blithe battle blows upon your eyes
Like rain and wind ; yet I remember too

When this last year the fight at Corrichie
Reddened the rushes with stained fen-water,
I rode with my good men and took delight,
Feeling the sweet clear wind upon my eyes
And rainy soft smells blown upon my face
In riding : then the great fight jarred and joined,
And the sound stung me right through heart and all ;
For I was here, see, gazing off the hills,
In the wet air ; our housings were all wet,
And not a plume stood stiffly past the ear
But flapped between the bridle and the neck ;
And under us we saw the battle go
Like running water ; I could see by fits
Some helm the rain fell shining off, some flag
Snap from the staff, shorn through or broken short
In the man's falling : yea, one seemed to catch
The very grasp of tumbled men at men,
Teeth clenched in throats, hands riveted in hair,
Tearing the life out with no help of swords.
And all the clamour seemed to shine, the light
Seemed to shout as a man doth ; twice I laughed—
I tell you, twice my heart swelled out with thirst
To be into the battle ; see, fair lord,
I swear it seemed I might have made a knight,
And yet the simple bracing of a belt
Makes me cry out ; this is too pitiful,
This dusty half of us made up with fears.—
Have you been ever quite so glad to fight
As I have thought men must ? pray you, speak truth.

CHASTELARD

Yea, when the time came, there caught hold of me
Such pleasure in the head and hands and blood

As may be kindled under loving lips :
Crossing the ferry once to the Clerks' Field,
I mind me how the plashing noise of Seine
Put fire into my face for joy, and how
My blood kept measure with the swinging boat
Till we touched land, all for the sake of that
Which should be soon.

QUEEN

Her name, for God's love, sir ;
You slew your friend for love's sake? nay, the name.

CHASTELARD

Faith, I forget.

QUEEN

Now by the faith I have
You have no faith to swear by.

CHASTELARD

A good sword :
We left him quiet after a thrust or twain.

QUEEN

I would I had been at hand and marked them off
As the maids did when we played singing games :
You outwent me at rhyming ; but for faith,
We fight best there. I would I had seen you fight.

CHASTELARD

I would you had ; his play was worth an eye ;
He made some gallant way before that pass
Which made me way through him.

QUEEN

Would I saw that—

How did you slay him?

CHASTELARD

A clean pass—this way ;
Right in the side here, where the blood has root.
His wrist went round in pushing, see you, thus,
Or he had pierced me.

QUEEN

Yea, I see, sweet knight.
I have a mind to love you for his sake ;
Would I had seen.

CHASTELARD

Hugues de Marsillac—
I have the name now ; 'twas a goodly one
Before he changed it for a dusty name.

QUEEN

Talk not of death ; I would hear living talk
Of good live swords and good strokes struck withal,
Brave battles and the mirth of mingling men,
Not of cold names you greet a dead man with.
You are yet young for fighting ; but in fight
Have you never caught a wound?

CHASTELARD

Yea, twice or so :
The first time in a little outlying field
(My first field) at the sleepy grey of dawn,

They found us drowsy, fumbling at our girths,
And rode us down by heaps ; I took a hurt
Here in the shoulder.

QUEEN

Ah, I mind well now ;
Did you not ride a day's space afterward,
Having two wounds ? yea, Dandelot it was,
That Dandelot took word of it. I know,
Sitting at meat when the news came to us
I had nigh swooned but for those Florence eyes
Slanting my way with sleek lids drawn up close—
Yea, and she said, the Italian brokeress,
She said such men were good for great queens' love.
I would you might die, when you come to die,
Like a knight slain. Pray God we make good ends.
For love too, love dies hard or easily,
But some way dies on some day, ere we die.

CHASTELARD

You made a song once of old flowers and loves,
Will you not sing that rather ? 'tis long gone
Since you sang last.

QUEEN

I had rather sigh than sing
And sleep than sigh ; 'tis long since verily,
But I will once more sing ; ay, thus it was. [*Sings.*

I

*J'ai vu faner bien des choses,
Mainte feuille aller au vent.
En songeant aux vieilles roses,
J'ai pleuré souvent.*

2

*Vois-tu dans les roses mortes
Amour qui sourit caché ?
O mon amant, à nos portes
L'as-tu vu couché ?*

3

*As-tu vu jamais au monde
Vénus chasser et courir ?
Fille de l'onde, avec l'onde
Doit-elle mourir ?*

4

*Aux jours de neige et de givre
L'amour s'effeuille et s'endort ;
Avec mai doit-il revivre,
Ou bien est-il mort ?*

5

*Qui sait où s'en vont les roses ?
Qui sait où s'en va le vent ?
En songeant à telles choses,
J'ai pleuré souvent.*

I never heard yet but love made good knights,
But for pure faith, by Mary's holiness,
I think she lies about men's lips asleep,
And if one kiss or pluck her by the hand
To wake her, why God help your woman's wit,
Faith is but dead ; dig her grave deep at heart,
And hide her face with cerecloths ; farewell faith.
Would I could tell why I talk idly. Look,
Here come my riddle-readers. Welcome all ;

Enter MURRAY, DARNLEY, RANDOLPH, LINDSAY,
MORTON, *and other Lords*

Sirs, be right welcome. Stand you by my side,
Fair cousin, I must lean on love or fall ;
You are a goodly staff, sir ; tall enough,
And fair enough to serve. My gentle lords,
I am full glad of God that in great grace
He hath given me such a lordly stay as this ;
There is no better friended queen alive.
For the repealing of those banished men
That stand in peril yet of last year's fault,
It is our will ; you have our seal to that.
Brother, we hear harsh bruits of bad report
Blown up and down about our almoner ;
See you to this : let him be sought into :
They say lewd folk make ballads of their spleen,
Strew miry ways of words with talk of him ;
If they have cause let him be spoken with.

LINDSAY

Madam, they charge him with so rank a life
Were it not well this fellow were plucked out—
Seeing this is not an eye that doth offend,
But a blurred glass it were no harm to break ;
Yea rather it were gracious to be done ?

QUEEN

Let him be weighed, and use him as he is ;
I am of my nature pitiful, ye know,
And cannot turn my love unto a thorn
In so brief space. Ye are all most virtuous ;

Yea, there is goodness grafted on this land ;
But yet compassion is some part of God.
There is much heavier business held on hand
Than one man's goodness : yea, as things fare here,
A matter worth more weighing. All you wot
I am to choose a help to my weak feet,
A lamp before my face, a lord and friend
To walk with me in weary ways, high up
Between the wind and rain and the hot sun.
Now I have chosen a helper to myself,
I wot the best a woman ever won ;
A man that loves me, and a royal man,
A goodly love and lord for any queen.
But for the peril and despite of men
I have sometime tarried and withheld myself,
Not fearful of his worthiness nor you,
But with some lady's loathing to let out
My whole heart's love ; for truly this is hard,
Not like a woman's fashion, shamefacedness
And noble grave reluctance of herself
To be the tongue and cry of her own heart.
Nathless plain speech is better than much wit,
So ye shall bear with me ; albeit I think
Ye have caught the mark whereat my heart is bent.
I have kept close counsel and shut up men's lips,
But lightly shall a woman's will slip out,
The foolish little wingèd will of her,
Through cheek or eye when tongue is charmed asleep.
For that good lord I have good will to wed,
I wot he knew long since which way it flew,
Even till it lit on his right wrist and sang.
Lo, here I take him by the hand : fair lords,
This is my kinsman, made of mine own blood,
I take to halve the state and services

That bow down to me, and to be my head,
My chief, my master, my sweet lord and king.
Now shall I never say "sweet cousin" more
To my dear head and husband; here, fair sir,
I give you all the heart of love in me
To gather off my lips. Did it like you,
The taste of it? sir, it was whole and true.
God save our king!

DARNLEY

Nay, nay, sweet love, no lord;
No king of yours though I were lord of these.

QUEEN

Let word be sent to all good friends of ours
To help us to be glad; England and France
Shall bear great part of our rejoicings up.
Give me your hand, dear lord; for from this time
I must not walk alone. Lords, have good cheer:
For you shall have a better face than mine
To set upon your kingly gold and show
For Scotland's forehead in the van of things.
Go with us now, and see this news set out.
[*Exeunt* QUEEN, DARNLEY, and Lords.]

As CHASTELARD *is going out, enter* MARY BEATON

MARY BEATON

Have you yet heard? You knew of this?

CHASTELARD

I know.

I was just thinking how such things were made

And were so fair as this is. Do you know
She held me here and talked—the most sweet talk
Men ever heard of?

MARY BEATON

You hate me to the heart.
What will you do?

CHASTELARD

I know not : die some day,
But live as long and lightly as I can.
Will you now love me? faith, but if you do,
It were much better you were dead and hearsed.
Will you do one thing for me?

MARY BEATON

Yea, all things.

CHASTELARD

Speak truth a little, for God's sake : indeed
It were no harm to do. Come, will you, sweet?
Though it be but to please God.

MARY BEATON

What will you do?

CHASTELARD

Ay, true, I must do somewhat. Let me see :
To get between and tread upon his face—
Catch both her hands and bid men look at them,
How pure they were—I would do none of these,
Though they got wedded all the days in the year.

We may do well yet when all's come and gone.
I pray you on this wedding night of theirs
Do but one thing that I shall ask you,
And Darnley will not hunger as I shall
For that good time. Sweet, will you swear me this?

MARY BEATON

Yea ; though to do it were mortal to my soul
As the chief sin.

CHASTELARD

I thank you : let us go.

ACT III

THE QUEEN

SCENE I. *The Queen's Chamber. Night.
Lights burning in front of the bed*

Enter CHASTELARD and MARY BEATON

MARY BEATON

Be tender of your feet.

CHASTELARD

I shall not fail :

These ways have light enough to help a man
That walks with such stirred blood in him as mine.

MARY BEATON

I would yet plead with you to save your head :
Nay, let this be then : sir, I chide you not.
Nay, let all come. Do not abide her yet.

CHASTELARD

Have you read never in French books the song
Called the Duke's Song, some boy made ages back,

A song of drag-nets hauled across thwart seas
And plucked up with rent sides, and caught therein
A strange-haired woman with sad singing lips,
Cold in the cheek like any stray of sea,
And sweet to touch ? so that men seeing her face,
And how she sighed out little Ahs of pain
And soft cries sobbing sideways from her mouth,
Fell in hot love, and having lain with her
Died soon ? one time I could have told it through :
Now I have kissed the sea-witch on her eyes
And my lips ache with it : but I shall sleep
Full soon, and a good space of sleep.

MARY BEATON

Alas !

CHASTELARD

What makes you sigh though I be found a fool ?
You have no blame : and for my death, sweet friend,
I never could have lived long either way.
Why, as I live, the joy I have of this
Would make men mad that were not mad with love ;
I hear my blood sing, and my lifted heart
Is like a springing water blown of wind
For pleasure of this deed. Now, in God's name,
I swear if there be danger in delight
I must die now : if joys have deadly teeth,
I'll have them bite my soul to death, and end
In the old asp's way, Egyptian-wise ; be killed
In a royal purple fashion. Look, my love
Would kill me if my body were past hurt
Of any man's hand ; and to die thereof,
I say, is sweeter than all sorts of life.
I would not have her love me now, for then

I should die meanlier some time. I am safe,
Sure of her face, my life's end in her sight,
My blood shed out about her feet—by God,
My heart feels drunken when I think of it.
See you, she will not rid herself of me,
Not though she slay me : her sweet lips and life
Will smell of my spilt blood.

MARY BEATON

Give me good night.

CHASTELARD

Yea, and good thanks. [*Exit* MARY BEATON.]

Here is the very place :

Here has her body bowed the pillows in
And here her head thrust under made the sheet
Smell soft of her mixed hair and spice : even here
Her arms pushed back the coverlet, pulled here
The golden silken curtain halfway in
It may be, and made room to lean out loose,
Fair tender fallen arms. Now, if God would,
Doubtless he might take pity on my soul
To give me three clear hours, and then red hell
Snare me for ever : this were merciful :
If I were God now I should do thus much.
I must die next, and this were not so hard
For him to let me eat sweet fruit and die
With my lips sweet from it. For one shall have
This fare for common days'-bread, which to me
Should be a touch kept always on my sense
To make hell soft, yea, the keen pain of hell
Soft as the loosening of wound arms in sleep.
Ah, love is good, and the worst part of it

More than all things but death. She will be here
In some small while, and see me face to face
That am to give up life for her and go
Where a man lies with all his loves put out
And his lips full of earth. I think on her,
And the old pleasure stings and makes half-tears
Under mine eyelids. Prithee, love, come fast,
That I may die soon ; yea, some kisses through,
I shall die joyfully enough, so God
Keep me alive till then. I feel her feet
Coming far off ; now must I hold my heart,
Steadying my blood to see her patiently.

[Hides himself by the bed.]

Enter the QUEEN and DARNLEY

QUEEN

Nay, now go back : I have sent off my folk,
Maries and all. Pray you, let be my hair ;
I cannot twist the gold thread out of it
That you wound in so close. Look, here it clings :
Ah ! now you mar my hair unwinding it.
Do me no hurt, sir.

DARNLEY

I would do you ease ;
Let me stay here.

QUEEN

Nay, will you go, my lord ?

DARNLEY

Eh ? would you use me as a girl does fruit,
Touched with her mouth and pulled away for game

To look thereon ere her lips feed ? but see,
By God, I fare the worse for you.

QUEEN

Fair sir,
Give me this hour to watch with and say prayers :
You have no faith—it needs me to say prayers,
That with commending of this deed to God
I may get grace for it.

DARNLEY

Why, lacks it grace ?
Is not all wedlock gracious of itself ?

QUEEN

Nay, that I know not of. Come, sweet, be hence.

DARNLEY

You have a sort of jewel in your neck
That's like mine here.

QUEEN

Keep off your hands and go :
You have no courtesy to be a king.

DARNLEY

Well, I will go : nay, but I thwart you not.
Do as you will, and get you grace ; farewell,
And for my part, grace keep this watch with me !
For I need grace to bear with you so much. [*Exit.*

QUEEN

So, he is forth. Let me behold myself ;
I am too pale to be so hot ; I marvel
So little colour should be bold in the face
When the blood is not quieted. I have
But a brief space to cool my thoughts upon.
If one should wear the hair thus heaped and curled
Would it look best ? or this way in the neck ?
Could one ungirdle in such wise one's heart
[*Taking off her girdle.*

And ease it inwards as the waist is eased
By slackening of the slid clasp on it !
How soft the silk is—gracious colour too ;
Violet shadows like new veins thrown up
Each arm, and gold to fleck the faint sweet green
Where the wrist lies thus eased. I am right glad
I have no maids about to hasten me—
So I will rest and see my hair shed down
On either silk side of my woven sleeves,
Get some new way to bind it back with—yea,
Fair mirror-glass, I am well ware of you,
Yea, I know that, I am quite beautiful.
How my hair shines !—Fair face, be friends with me
And I will sing to you ; look in my face
Now, and your mouth must help the song in mine.

*Alys la châtelaine
Voit venir de par Seine
Thiébault le capitaine
Qui parle ainsi :*

Was that the wind in the casement ? nay, no more
But the comb drawn through half my hissing hair
Laid on my arms—yet my flesh moved at it.

*Dans ma camaille
Plus de clou qui vaille,
Dans ma cotte-maille
Plus de fer aussi.*

Ah, but I wrong the ballad-verse : what's good
In such frayed fringes of old rhymes, to make
Their broken burden lag with us ? meseems
I could be sad now if I fell to think
The least sad thing ; aye, that sweet lady's fool,
Fool sorrow, would make merry with mine eyes
For a small thing. Nay, but I will keep glad,
Nor shall old sorrow be false friends with me.
But my first wedding was not like to this—
Fair faces then and laughter and sweet game,
And a pale little mouth that clung on mine
When I had kissed him by the faded eyes
And either thin cheek beating with faint blood.
Well, he was sure to die soon ; I do think
He would have given his body to be slain,
Having embraced my body. Now, God knows,
I have no man to do as much for me
As give me but a little of his blood
To fill my beauty from, though I go down
Pale to my grave for want—I think not. Pale—
I am too pale surely—Ah !

[Sees him in the glass, coming forward.]

CHASTELARD

Be not afraid.

QUEEN

Saint Mary ! what a shaken wit have I !
Nay, is it you ? who let you through the doors ?

Where be my maidens ? which way got you in ?
Nay, but stand up, kiss not my hands so hard ;
By God's fair body, if you but breathe on them
You are just dead and slain at once. What adder
Has bit you mirthful mad ? for by this light
A man to have his head laughed off for mirth
Is no great jest. Lay not your eyes on me ;
What, would you not be slain ?

CHASTELARD

I pray you, madam,
Bear with me a brief space and let me speak.
I will not touch your garments even, nor speak
But in soft wise, and look some other way,
If that it like you ; for I came not here
For pleasure of the eyes ; yet, if you will,
Let me look on you.

QUEEN

As you will, fair sir.
Give me that coif to gather in my hair—
I thank you—and my girdle—nay, that side.
Speak, if you will : yet if you will be gone,
Why, you shall go, because I hate you not.
You know that I might slay you with my lips,
With calling out ? but I will hold my peace.

CHASTELARD

Yea, do some while. I had a thing to say ;
I know not wholly what thing. O my sweet,
I am come here to take farewell of love
That I have served, and life that I have lived

Made up of love, here in the sight of you
That all my life's time I loved more than God,
Who quits me thus with bitter death for it.
For you well know that I must shortly die,
My life being wound about you as it is,
Who love me not ; yet do not hate me, sweet,
But tell me wherein I came short of love ;
For doubtless I came short of a just love,
And fell in some fool's fault that angered you.
Now that I talk men dig my grave for me
Out in the rain, and in a little while
I shall be thrust in some sad space of earth
Out of your eyes ; and you, O you my love,
A newly-wedded lady full of mirth
And a queen girt with all good people's love,
You shall be fair and merry in all your days.
Is this so much for me to have of you ?
Do but speak, sweet : I know these are no words
A man should say though he were now to die,
But I am as a child for love, and have
No strength at heart ; yea, I am afraid to die,
For the harsh dust will lie upon my face
Too thick to see you pass. Look how I love you ;
I did so love you always, that your face
Seen through my sleep has wrung mine eyes to tears
For pure delight in you. Why do you thus ?
You answer not, but your lips curl in twain
And your face moves ; there, I shall make you weep
And be a coward too ; it were much best
I should be slain.

QUEEN

Yea, best such folk were slain ;
Why should they live to cozen fools with lies ?

You would swear now you have used me faithfully ;
Shall I not make you swear ? I am ware of you :
You will not do it ; nay, for the fear of God
You will not swear. Come, I am merciful ;
God made a foolish woman, making me,
And I have loved your mistress with whole heart ;
Say you do love her, you shall marry her
And she give thanks : yet I could wish your love
Had not so lightly chosen forth a face ;
For your fair sake, because I hate you not.

CHASTELARD

What is to say ? why, you do surely know
That since my days were counted for a man's
I have loved you ; yea, how past help and sense,
Whatever thing was bitter to my love,
I have loved you ; how when I rode in war
Your face went floated in among men's helms,
Your voice went through the shriek of slipping
swords ;
Yea, and I never have loved women well,
Seeing always in my sight I had your lips
Curled over, red and sweet ; and the soft space
Of carven brows, and splendour of great throat
Swayed lily-wise : what pleasure should one have
To wind his arms about a lesser love ?
I have seen you ; why, this were joy enough
For God's eyes up in heaven, only to see
And to come never nearer than I am.
Why, it was in my flesh, my bone and blood,
Bound in my brain, to love you ; yea, and writ
All my heart over : if I would lie to you
I doubt I could not lie. Ah, you see now,

You know now well enough ; yea, there, sweet love,
Let me kiss there.

QUEEN

I love you best of them.

Clasp me quite round till ~~y~~our lips cleave on mine,
False mine, that did you wrong. Forgive them
dearly,

As you are sweet to them ; for by love's love
I am not that evil woman in my heart
That laughs at a rent faith. O Chastelard,
Since this was broken to me of your new love
I have not seen the face of a sweet hour.
Nay, if there be no pardon in a man,
What shall a woman have for loving him ?
Pardon me, sweet.

CHASTELARD

Yea, so I pardon you,
And this side now ; the first way. Would God please
To slay me so ! who knows how he might please ?
Now I am thinking, if you know it not,
How I might kill you, kiss your breath clean out,
And take your soul to bring mine through to God
That our two souls might close and be one twain
Or a twain one, and God himself want skill
To set us either severally apart.
O, you must overlive me many years,
And many years my soul be in waste hell ;
But when some time God can no more refrain
To lay death like a kiss across your lips,
And great lords bear you clothed with funeral things,
And your crown girded over deadly brows,

Then after all your happy reach of life
For pity you shall touch me with your eyes,
Remembering love was fellow with my flesh
Here in sweet earth, and make me well of love
And heal my many years with piteousness.

QUEEN

You talk too sadly and too feignedly.

CHASTELARD

Too sad, but not too feigned ; I am sad
That I shall die here without feigning thus ;
And without feigning I were fain to live.

QUEEN

Alas, you will be taken presently
And then you are but dead. Pray you get hence.

CHASTELARD

I will not.

QUEEN

Nay, for God's love be away ;
You will be slain and I get shame. God's mercy !
You were stark mad to come here ; kiss me, sweet.
Oh, I do love you more than all men ! yea,
Take my lips to you, close mine eyes up fast,
So you leave hold a little : there, for pity,
Abide now, and to-morrow come to me.
Nay, lest one see red kisses in my throat—
Dear God ! what shall I give you to be gone ?

CHASTELARD

I will not go. Look, here's full night grown up ;
Why should I seek to sleep away from here ?
The place is soft and the lights burn for sleep ;
Be not you moved ; I shall lie well enough.

QUEEN

You are utterly undone. Sweet, by my life,
You shall be saved with taking ship at once.
For if you stay this foolish love's hour out
There is not ten days' likely life in you.
This is no choice.

CHASTELARD

Nay, for I will not go.

QUEEN

Oh me ! this is that Bayard's blood of yours
That makes you mad ; yea, and you shall not stay.
I do not understand. Mind, you must die.
Alas, poor lord, you have no sense of me ;
I shall be deadly to you.

CHASTELARD

Yea, I saw that ;
But I saw not that when my death's day came
You could be quite so sweet to me.

QUEEN

My love !

If I could kiss my heart's root out on you
You would taste love hid at the core of me.

CHASTELARD

Kiss me twice more. This beautiful bowed head
That has such hair with kissing ripples in
And shivering soft eyelashes and brows
With fluttered blood ; but laugh a little, sweetly,
That I may see your sad mouth's laughing look
I have used sweet hours in seeing. O, will you weep?
I pray you do not weep.

QUEEN

Nay, dear, I have
No tears in me ; I never shall weep much,
I think, in all my life : I have wept for wrath
Sometimes and for mere pain, but for love's pity
I cannot weep at all. I would to God
You loved me less ; I give you all I can
For all this love of yours, and yet I am sure
I shall live out the sorrow of your death
And be glad afterwards. You know I am sorry.
I should weep now ; forgive me for your part,
God made me hard, I think. Alas, you see
I had fain been other than I am.

CHASTELARD

Yea, love.
Comfort your heart. What way am I to die?

QUEEN

Ah, will you go yet, sweet?

CHASTELARD

No, by God's body.
You will not see ? how shall I make you see ?
Look, it may be love was a sort of curse
Made for my plague and mixed up with my days
Somewise in their beginning ; or indeed
A bitter birth begotten of sad stars
At mine own body's birth, that heaven might make
My life taste sharp where other men drank sweet ;
But whether in heavy body or broken soul,
I know it must go on to be my death.
There was the matter of my fate in me
When I was fashioned first, and given such life
As goes with a sad end ; no fault but God's.
Yea, and for all this I am not penitent :
You see I am perfect in these sins of mine,
I have my sins writ in a book to read ;
Now I shall die and be well done with this.
But I am sure you cannot see such things,
God knows I blame you not.

QUEEN

What shall be said ?
You know most well that I am sorrowful.
But you should chide me. Sweet, you have seen fair
wars,
Have seen men slain and ridden red in them ;
Why will you die a chamberer's death like this ?
What, shall no praise be written of my knight,
For my fame's sake ?

CHASTELARD

Nay, no great praise, I think ;
I will no more ; what should I do with death,
Though I died goodly out of sight of you ?
I have gone once : here am I set now, sweet,
Till the end come. That is your husband, hark,
He knocks at the outer door. Kiss me just once.
You know now all you have to say. Nay, love,
Let him come quickly.

Enter DARNLEY, and afterwards the MARIES

DARNLEY

Yea, what thing is here ?
Ay, this was what the doors shut fast upon—
Ay, trust you to be fast at prayer, my sweet ?
By God I have a mind—

CHASTELARD

What mind then, sir ?
A liar's lewd mind, to coin sins for jest,
Because you take me in such wise as this ?
Look you, I have to die soon, and I swear,
That am no liar but a free knight and lord,
I shall die clear of any sin to you,
Save that I came for no good will of mine ;
I am no carle, I play fair games with faith,
And by mine honour for my sake I swear
I say but truth ; for no man's sake save mine,
Lest I die shamed. Madam, I pray you say
I am no liar ; you know me what I am,

A sinful man and shortly to be slain,
That in a simple insolence of love
Have stained with a fool's eyes your holy hours
And with a fool's words put your pity out ;
Nathless you know if I be liar or no,
Wherefore for God's sake give me grace to swear
(Yea, for mine too) how past all praise you are
And stainless of all shame ; and how all men
Lie, saying you are not most good and innocent,
Yea, the one thing good as God.

DARNLEY

O sir, we know
You can swear well, being taken ; you fair French
Dare swallow God's name for a lewd love-sake
As it were water. Nay, we know, we know ;
Save your sweet breath now lest you lack it soon ;
We are simple, we ; we have not heard of you.
Madam, by God you are well shamed in him :
Ay, trust you to be fingering in one's face,
Play with one's neck-chain ? ah, your maiden's man,
A relic of your people's !

CHASTELARD

Hold your peace,
Or I will set an edge on your own lie
Shall scar yourself. Madam, have out your guard ;
'Tis time I were got hence.

QUEEN

Sweet Hamilton,
Hold you my hand and help me to sit down.

O Henry, I am beaten from my wits—
Let me have time and live ; call out my people—
Bring forth some armed guard to lay hold on him ;
But see no man be slain. Sirs, hide your swords ;
I will not have men slain.

DARNLEY

What, is this true ?
Call the queen's people—help the queen there, you—
Ho, sirs, come in.

Enter some with the Guard

QUEEN

Lay hold upon that man ;
Bear him away, but see he have no hurt.

CHASTELARD

Into your hands I render up myself
With a free heart ; deal with me how you list,
But courteously, I pray you. Take my sword.
Farewell, great queen ; the sweetness in your look
Makes life look bitter on me. Farewell, sirs.
[*He is taken out.*]

DARNLEY

Yea, pluck him forth, and have him hanged by dawn ;
He shall find bed enow to sleep. God's love !
That such a knave should be a knight like this !

QUEEN

Sir, peace awhile ; this shall be as I please ;
Take patience to you. Lords, I pray you see
All be done goodly ; look they wrong him not.
Carmichael, you shall sleep with me to-night ;
I am sorely shaken, even to the heart. Fair lords,
I thank you for your care. Sweet, stay by me.

ACT IV

MURRAY

SCENE I. *The Queen's Lodging at St. Andrew's**The QUEEN and the four MARIES*

QUEEN

WHY will you break my heart with praying to me?
 You Seyton, you Carmichael, you have wits,
 You are not all run to tears; you do not think
 It is my wrath or will that whets this axe
 Against his neck?

MARY SEYTON

Nay, these three weeks ago
 I said the queen's wrath was not sharp enough
 To shear a neck.

QUEEN

Sweet, and you did me right,
 And look you, what my mercy bears to fruit,
 Danger and deadly speech and a fresh fault
 Before the first was cool in people's lips;
 A goodly mercy: and I wash hands of it.—

Speak you, there ; have you ever found me sharp ?
You weep and whisper with sloped necks and heads
Like two sick birds ; do you think shame of me ?
Nay, I thank God none can think shame of me ;
But am I bitter, think you, to men's faults ?
I think I am too merciful, too meek :
Why if I could I would yet save this man ;
'Tis just boy's madness ; a soft stripe or two
Would do to scourge the fault in his French blood.
I would fain let him go. You, Hamilton,
You have a heart thewed harder than my heart ;
When mine would threat it sighs, and wrath in it
Has a bird's flight and station, starves before
It can well feed or fly : my pulse of wrath
Sounds tender as the running down of tears.
You are the hardest woman I have known,
Your blood has frost and cruel gall in it,
You hold men off with bitter lips and eyes—
Such maidens should serve England ; now, perfoy,
I doubt you would have got him slain at once.
Come, would you not ? come, would you let him live ?

MARY HAMILTON

Yes—I think yes ; I cannot tell ; maybe
I would have seen him punished.

QUEEN

Look you now,
There's maiden mercy ; I would have him live—
For all my wifhood maybe I weep too :
Here's a mere maiden falls to slaying at once,
Small shrift for her ; God keep us from such hearts !
I am a queen too that would have him live,

But one that has no wrong and is no queen,
She would—What are you saying there, you twain?

MARY CARMICHAEL

I said a queen's face and so fair an one's
Would lose no grace for giving grace away ;
That gift comes back upon the mouth it left
And makes it sweeter, and sets fresh red on it.

QUEEN

This comes of sonnets when the dance draws breath ;
These talking times will make a dearth of grace.
But you—what ails you that your lips are shut ?
Weep, if you will ; here are four friends of yours
To weep as fast for pity of your tears.
Do you desire him dead ? nay, but men say
He was your friend, he fought them on your side,
He made you songs—God knows what songs he made !
Speak you for him a little : will you not ?

MARY BEATON

Madam, I have no words.

QUEEN

No words ? no pity—
Have you no mercies for such men ? God help !
It seems I am the meekest heart on earth—
Yea, the one tender woman left alive,
And knew it not. I will not let him live,
For all my pity of him.

MARY BEATON

Nay, but, madam,
For God's love look a little to this thing.
If you do slay him you are but shamed to death ;
All men will cry upon you, women weep,
Turning your sweet name bitter with their tears ;
Red shame grow up out of your memory
And burn his face that would speak well of you :
You shall have no good word nor pity, none,
Till some such end be fallen upon you : nay,
I am but cold, I knew I had no words,
I will keep silence.

QUEEN

Yea now, as I live,
I wist not of it : troth, he shall not die.
See you, I am pitiful, compassionate,
I would not have men slain for my love's sake,
But if he live to do me three times wrong,
Why then my shame would grow up green and red
Like any flower. I am not whole at heart ;
In faith, I wot not what such things should be ;
I doubt it is but dangerous ; he must die.

MARY BEATON

Yea, but you will not slay him.

QUEEN

Swear me that,
I'll say he shall not die for your oath's sake.
What will you do for grief when he is dead?

MARY BEATON

Nothing for grief, but hold my peace and die.

QUEEN

Why, for your sweet sake one might let him live ;
But the first fault was a green seed of shame,
And now the flower, and deadly fruit will come
With apple-time in autumn. By my life,
I would they had slain him there in Edinburgh ;
But I reprove him ; lo the thank I get,
To set the base folk muttering like smoked bees
Of shame and love, and how love comes of shame,
And how the queen loves shame that comes of love ;
Yet I say nought and go about my ways,
And this mad fellow that I respited
Being forth and free, lo now the second time
Ye take him by my bed in wait. Now see
If I can get goodwill to pardon him ;
With what a face may I crave leave of men
To respite him, being young and a good knight
And mad for perfect love ? shall I go say,
Dear lords, because ye took him shamefully,
Let him not die ; because his fault is foul,
Let him not die ; because if he do live
I shall be held a harlot of all men,
I pray you, sweet sirs, that he may not die ?

MARY BEATON

Madam, for me I would not have him live ;
Mine own heart's life was ended with my fame,
And my life's breath will shortly follow them ;
So that I care not much ; for you wot well
I have lost love and shame and fame and all
To no good end ; nor while he had his life
Have I got good of him that was my love,

Save that for courtesy (which may God quit)
He kissed me once as one might kiss for love
Out of great pity for me ; saving this,
He never did me grace in all his life.
And when you have slain him, madam, it may be
I shall get grace of him in some new way
In a new place, if God have care of us.

QUEEN

Bid you my brother to me presently. [*Exeunt* MARIES.
And yet the thing is pitiful ; I would
There were some way. To send him overseas,
Out past the long firths to the cold keen sea
Where the sharp sound is that one hears up here—
Or hold him in strong prison till he died—
He would die shortly—or to set him free
And use him softly till his brains were healed—
There is no way. Now never while I live
Shall we twain love together any more
Nor sit at rhyme as we were used to do,
Nor each kiss other only with the eyes
A great way off ere hand or lip could reach ;
There is no way.

Enter MURRAY

O, you are welcome, sir ;
You know what need I have ; but I praise heaven,
Having such need, I have such help of you.
I do believe no queen God ever made
Was better holpen than I look to be.
What, if two brethren love not heartily,
Who shall be good to either one of them ?

MURRAY

Madam, I have great joy of your good will.

QUEEN

I pray you, brother, use no courtesies :
I have some fear you will not suffer me
When I shall speak. Fear is a fool, I think,
Yet hath he wit enow to fool my wits,
Being but a woman's. Do not answer me
Till you shall know ; yet if you have a word
I shall be fain to hear it ; but I think
There is no word to help me ; no man's word :
There be two things yet that should do me good,
A speeding arm and a great heart. My lord,
I am soft-spirited as women are,
And ye wot well I have no harder heart :
Yea, with my will I would not slay a thing,
But all should live right sweetly if I might ;
So that man's blood-spilling lies hard on me.
I have a work yet for mine honour's sake,
A thing to do, God wot I know not how,
Nor how to crave it of you : nay, by heaven,
I will not shame myself to show it you :
I have not heart.

MURRAY

Why, if it may be done
With any honour, or with good men's excuse,
I shall well do it.

QUEEN

I would I wist that well.
Sir, do you love me ?

MURRAY

Yea, you know I do.

QUEEN

In faith, you should well love me, for I love
The least man in your following for your sake
With a whole sister's heart.

MURRAY

Speak simply, madam ;
I must obey you, being your bounden man.

QUEEN

Sir, so it is you know what things have been,
Even to the endangering of mine innocent name,
And by no fault, but by men's evil will ;
If Chastelard have trial openly,
I am but shamed.

MURRAY

This were a wound indeed,
If your good name should lie upon his lip.

QUEEN

I will the judges put him not to plead,
For my fame's sake ; he shall not answer them.

MURRAY

What, think you he will speak against your fame ?

QUEEN

I know not ; men might feign belief of him
For hate of me ; it may be he will speak ;
In brief, I will not have him held to proof.

MURRAY

Well, if this be, what good is to be done ?

QUEEN

Is there no way but he must speak to them,
Being had to trial plainly ?

MURRAY

I think, none.

QUEEN

Now mark, my lord ; I swear he will not speak.

MURRAY

It were the best if you could make that sure.

QUEEN

There is one way. Look, sir, he shall not do it :
Shall not, or will not, either is one way ;
I speak as I would have you understand.

MURRAY

Let me not guess at you ; speak certainly.

QUEEN

You will not mind me : let him be removed ;
Take means to get me surety : there be means.

MURRAY

So, in your mind, I have to slay the man ?

QUEEN

Is there a mean for me to save the man ?

MURRAY

Truly I see no mean except your love.

QUEEN

What love is that, my lord ? what think you of,
Talking of love and of love's mean in me
And of your guesses and of slaying him ?
Why, I say nought, have nought to say : God help me !
I bid you but take surety of the man,
Get him removed.

MURRAY

Come, come, be clear with me ;
You bid me to despatch him privily.

QUEEN

God send me sufferance ! I bid you, sir ?
Nay, do not go : what matter if I did ?
Nathless I never bade you ; no, by God.

Be not so wroth ; you are my brother born ;
Why do you dwell upon me with such eyes ?
For love of God you should not bear me hard.

MURRAY

What, are you made of flesh ?

QUEEN

O, now I see
You had rather lose your wits to do me harm
Than keep sound wits to help me.

MURRAY

It is right strange ;
The worst man living hath some fear, some love,
Holds somewhat dear a little for life's sake,
Keeps fast to some compassion ; you have none ;
You know of nothing that remembrance knows
To make you tender. I must slay the man ?
Nay, I will do it.

QUEEN

Do, if you be not mad.
I am sorry for him ; and he must needs die.
I would I were assured you hate me not :
I have no heart to slay him by my will.
I pray you think not bitterly of me.

MURRAY

Is it your pleasure such a thing were done ?

QUEEN

Yea, by God's body is it, certainly.

MURRAY

Nay, for your love then, and for honour's sake,
This thing must be.

QUEEN

Yea, should I set you on ?
Even for my love then, I beseech you, sir,
To seek him out, and lest he prate of me
To put your knife into him ere he come forth :
Meseems this were not such wild work to do.

MURRAY

I'll have him in the prison taken off.

QUEEN

I am bounden to you, even for my name's sake,
When that is done.

MURRAY

I pray you fear me not.
Farewell. I would such things were not to do,
Or not for me ; yea, not for any man. [Exit.

QUEEN

Alas, what honour have I to give thanks ?
I would he had denied me : I had held my peace

Thenceforth for ever ; but he wrung out the word,
Caught it before my lip, was fain of it—
It was his fault to put it in my mind,
Yea, and to feign a loathing of his fault.
Now is he about devising my love's death,
And nothing loth. Nay, since he must needs die,
Would he were dead and come alive again
And I might keep him safe. He doth live now
And I may do what love I will to him ;
But by to-morrow he will be stark dead,
Stark slain and dead ; and for no sort of love
Will he so much as kiss me half a kiss.
Were this to do I would not do it again.

Re-enter MURRAY

What, have you taken order ? is it done ?
It were impossible to do so soon.
Nay, answer me.

MURRAY

Madam, I will not do it.

QUEEN

How did you say ? I pray, sir, speak again :
I know not what you said.

MURRAY

I say I will not ;
I have thought thereof, and have made up my heart
To have no part in this : look you to it.

QUEEN

O, for God's sake ! you will not have me shamed ?

MURRAY

I will not dip my hand into your sin.

QUEEN

It were a good deed to deliver me ;
I am but woman, of one blood with you,
A feeble woman ; put me not to shame ;
I pray you of your pity do me right.
Yea, and no fleck of blood shall cleave to you
For a just deed.

MURRAY

I know not : I will none.

QUEEN

O, you will never let him speak to them
To put me in such shame ? why, I should die
Out of pure shame and mine own burning blood ;
Yea, my face feels the shame lay hold on it,
I am half burnt already in my thought ;
Take pity of me. Think how shame slays a man ;
How shall I live then ? would you have me déad ?
I pray you for our dead dear father's sake,
Let not men mock at me. Nay, if he speak,
I shall be sung in mine own towns. Have pity.
What, will you let men stone me in the ways ?

MURRAY

Madam, I shall take pains the best I may
To save your honour, and what thing lieth in me
That will I do, but no close manslayings.
I will not have God's judgment gripe my throat
When I am dead, to hale me into hell
For a man's sake slain on this wise. Take heed.
See you to that. [*Exit.*

QUEEN

One of you maidens there
Bid my lord hither. Now by Mary's soul,
He shall not die and bring me into shame.
There's treason in you like a fever, hot,
My holy-natured brother, cheek and eye :
You look red through with it : sick, honour-sick,
Specked with the blain of treason, leper-like—
A scrupulous fair traitor with clean lips—
If one should sue to hell to do him good
He were as brotherly holpen as I am.
This man must live and say no harm of me ;
I may reprieve and cast him forth ; yea, so—
This were the best ; or if he die midway—
Yea, anything, so that he die not here.
[*To the MARIES within.*

Fetch hither Darnley. Nay, ye gape on me—
What, doth he sleep, or feeds, or plays at games ?
Why, I would see him ; I am weary for his sake ;
Bid my lord in.—Nathless he will but chide ;
Nay, flee and laugh : what should one say to him ?
There were some word if one could hit on it ;
Some way to close with him : I wot not.—Sir,

Enter DARNLEY

Please it your love I have a suit to you.

DARNLEY

What sort of suit ?

QUEEN

Nay, if you be not friends—
I have no suit towards mine enemies.

DARNLEY

•Eh, do I look now like your enemy ?

QUEEN

You have a way of peering under brow
I do not like. If you see anything
In me that irks you I will painfully
Labour to lose it : do but show me favour,
And as I am your faithful humble wife
This foolishness shall be removed in me.

DARNLEY

Why do you laugh and mock me with stretched
hands ?

Faith, I see no such thing.

QUEEN

That is well seen.
Come, I will take my heart between my lips,
Use it not hardly. Sir, my suit begins ;

That you would please to make me that I am,
(In sooth I think I am) mistress and queen
Of mine own people.

DARNLEY

Why, this is no suit ;
This is a simple matter, and your own.

QUEEN

It was, before God made you king of me.

DARNLEY

No king, by God's grace ; were I such a king
I'd sell my kingdom for six roods of rye.

QUEEN

You are too sharp upon my words ; I would
Have leave of you to free a man condemned.

DARNLEY

What man is that, sweet ?

QUEEN

Such a mad poor man
As God desires us use not cruelly.

DARNLEY

Is there no name a man may call him by ?

QUEEN

Nay, my fair master, what fair game is this ?
Why, you do know him, it is Chastelard.

DARNLEY

Ay, is it soothly ?

QUEEN

By my life, it is ;
Sweet, as you tender me, so pardon him.

DARNLEY

As he doth tender you, so pardon me ;
For if it were the mean to save my life
He should not live a day.

QUEEN

Nay, shall not he ?

DARNLEY

Look what an evil wit old Fortune hath :
Why, I came here to get his time cut off.
This second fault is meat for lewd men's mouths ;
You were best have him slain at once : 'tis hot.

QUEEN

Give me the warrant, and sit down, my lord.
Why, I will sign it ; what, I understand
How this must be. Should not my name stand here ?

DARNLEY

Yea, there, and here the seal.

QUEEN

Ay, so you say.
Shall I say too what I am thinking of?

DARNLEY

Do, if you will.

QUEEN

I do not like your suit.

DARNLEY

'Tis of no Frenchman fashion.

QUEEN

No, God wot ;
'Tis nowise great men's fashion in French land
To clap a headsman's taberd on their backs.

DARNLEY

No, madam ?

QUEEN

No ; I never wist of that.
Is it a month gone I did call you lord ?
I chose you by no straying stroke of sight,
But with my heart to love you heartily.
Did I wrong then ? did mine eye draw my heart ?
I know not ; sir, it may be I did wrong :

And yet to see you I should call it right
Even yet to love you ; and would choose again,
Again to choose you.

DARNLEY

There, I love you too ;
Take that for sooth, and let me take this hence.

QUEEN

O, do you think I hold you off with words ?
Why, take it then ; there is my handwriting,
And here the hand that you shall slay him with.
'Tis a fair hand, a maiden-coloured one :
I doubt yet it has never slain a man.
You never fought yet save for game, I wis.
Nay, thank me not, but have it from my sight ;
Go and make haste for fear he be got forth :
It may be such a man is dangerous ;
Who knows what friends he hath ? and by my faith
I doubt he hath seen some fighting, I do fear
He hath fought and shed men's blood ; ye are wise
men
That will not leave such dangerous things alive ;
'Twere well he died the sooner for your sakes.
Pray you make haste ; it is not fit he live.

DARNLEY

What, will you let him die so easily ?

QUEEN

Why, God have mercy ! what way should one take
To please such people ? there's some cunning way,

Something I miss, out of my simple soul.
What, must one say "Beseech you do no harm,"
Or "for my love, sweet cousins, be not hard,"
Or "let him live but till the vane come round"—
Will such things please you? well then, have your
way ;

Sir, I desire you, kneeling down with tears,
With sighs and tears, fair sir, require of you,
Considering of my love I bear this man,
Just for my love's sake let him not be hanged
Before the sundown ; do thus much for me,
To have a queen's prayers follow after you.

DARNLEY

I know no need for you to gibe at me.

QUEEN

Alack, what heart then shall I have to jest?
There is no woman jests in such a wise—
For the shame's sake I pray you hang him not,
Seeing how I love him, save indeed in silk,
Sweet twisted silk of my sad handiwork.
Nay, and you will not do so much for me ;
You vex your lip, biting the blood and all :
Were this so hard, and you compassionate?
I am in sore case then, and will weep indeed.

DARNLEY

What do you mean to cast such gibes at me?

QUEEN

Woe's me, and will you turn my tears to thorns?
Nay, set your eyes a little in my face :
See, do I weep ? what will you make of me ?
Will you not swear I love this prisoner ?
Ye are wise, and ye will have it ; yet for me
I wist not of it. We are but feeble fools,
And love may catch us when we lie asleep
And yet God knows we know not this a whit.
Come, look on me, swear you believe it not :
It may be I will take your word for that.

DARNLEY

Do you not love him ? nay, but verily ?

QUEEN

Now then, make answer to me verily,
Which of us twain is wiser ? for my part
I will not swear I love not, if you will ;
Ye be wise men and many men, my lords,
And ye will have me love him, ye will swear
That I do love him ; who shall say ye lie ?
Look on your paper ; maybe I have wept :
Doubtless I love your hanged man in my heart.
What, is the writing smutched or gone awry ?
Or blurred—ay, surely so much—with one tear,
One little sharp tear strayed on it by chance ?
Come, come, the man is deadly dangerous ;
Let him die presently.

DARNLEY

You do not love him ;
Well, yet he need not die ; it were right hard
To hang the fool because you love him not.

QUEEN

You have keen wits and thereto courtesy
To catch me with. No, let this man not die ;
It were no such perpetual praise to you
To be his doomsman and in doglike wise
Bite his brief life in twain.

DARNLEY

Truly it were not.

QUEEN

Then for your honour and my love of you
(Oh, I do love you ! but you know not, sweet,
You shall see how much), think you for their sake
He may go free ?

DARNLEY

How, freely forth of us ?
But yet he loves you, and being mad with love
Makes matter for base mouths to chew upon :
'Twere best he live not yet.

QUEEN

Will you say that ?

DARNLEY

**Why should he live to breed you bad reports?
Let him die first.**

QUEEN

Sweet, for your sake, not so.

DARNLEY

Fret not yourself to pity ; let him die.

QUEEN

Come, let him live a little ; it shall be
A grace to us.

DARNLEY

By God he dies at once.

QUEEN

Now, by God's mother, if I respite him,
Though you were all the race of you in one
And had more tongues than hairs to cry on me
He should not lose a hair.

DARNLEY

This is mere mercy—

But you thank God you love him not a whit?

QUEEN

It shall be what it please ; and if I please
It shall be anything. Give me the warrant.

DARNLEY

Nay, for your sake and love of you, not I,
To make it dangerous.

QUEEN

O, God's pity, sir !
You are tender of me ; will you serve me so,
Against mine own will, show me so much love,
Do me good service that I loath being done,
Out of pure pity ?

DARNLEY

Nay, your word shall stand.

QUEEN

What makes you gape so beastlike after blood ?
Were you not bred up on some hangman's hire
And dieted with fleshmeats at his hand
And fed into a fool ? Give me that paper.

DARNLEY

Now for that word I will not.

QUEEN

Nay, sweet love,
For your own sake be just a little wise ;
Come, I beseech you.

DARNLEY

Pluck not at my hands.

QUEEN

No, that I will not : I am brain-broken, mad ;
Pity my madness for sweet marriage-sake
And my great love's ; I love you to say this ;
I would not have you cross me, out of love.
But for true love should I not chafe indeed ?
And now I do not.

DARNLEY

Yea, and late you chid,
You chafed and jested and blew soft and hard—
No, for that “fool” you shall not fool me so.

QUEEN

You are no churl, sweet, will you see me weep ?
Look, I weep now ; be friends with my poor tears.
Think each of them beseeches you of love
And hath some tongue to cry on you for love
And speak soft things ; for that which loves not you
Is none of mine, not though they grow of grief
And grief of you ; be not too hard with them.
You would not of your own heart slay a man ;
Nay, if you will, in God's name make me weep,
I will not hate you ; but at heart, sweet lord,
Be not at heart my sweet heart's enemy.
If I had many mighty men to friend
I would not plead too lovingly with you
To have your love.

DARNLEY

Why, yet you have my love.

QUEEN

Alas, what shall mine enemies do to me
If I be used so hardly of my friends?
Come, sir, you hate me ; yet for all your hate
You cannot have such heart.

DARNLEY

What sort of heart ?

I have no heart to be used shamefully
If you mean that.

QUEEN

Would God I loved you not ;
You are too hard to be used lovingly.

DARNLEY

You are moved too much for such a little love
As you bear me.

QUEEN

God knows you do me wrong ;
God knows the heart, sweet, that I love you with.
Hark you, fair sir, I'd have all well with you ;
Do you not fear at sick men's time of night
What end may come ? are you so sure of heart ?
Is not your spirit surprisable in sleep ?
Have you no evil dreams ? Nay, look you, love,
I will not be flung off you heart and hand,
I am no snake : but tell me for your love
Have you no fancies how these things will end
In the pit's mouth ? how all life-deeds will look
At the grave's edge that lets men into hell ?

For my part, who am weak and woman-eyed,
It turns my soul to tears : I doubt this blood
Fallen on our faces when we twain are dead
Will scar and burn them : yea, for heaven is sweet,
And loves sweet deeds that smell not of spilt blood.
Let us not kill : God that made mercy first
Pities the pitiful for their deed's sake.

DARNLEY

Get you some painting ; with a cheek like this
You'll find no faith in listeners.

QUEEN

How, fair lord ?

DARNLEY

I say that looking with this face of yours
None shall believe you holy ; what, you talk,
Take mercy in your mouth, eat holiness,
Put God under your tongue and feed on heaven,
With fear and faith and—faith, I know not what—
And look as though you stood and saw men slain
To make you game and laughter : nay, your eyes
Threaten as unto blood. What will you do
To make men take your sweet word ? pitiful—
You are pitiful as he that's hired for death
And loves the slaying yet better than the hire.

QUEEN

You are wise that live to threat and tell me so ;
Do you love life too much ?

DARNLEY

O, now you are sweet
Right tender now : you love not blood nor death,
You are too tender.

QUEEN

Yea, too weak, too soft :
Sweet, do not mock me, for my love's sake ; see
How soft a thing I am. Will you be hard ?
The heart you have, has it no sort of fear ?

DARNLEY

Take off your hand and let me go my way
And do my deed, and when the doing is past
I will come home and teach you tender things
Out of my love till you forget my wrath.
I will be angry when I see good need,
And will grow gentle after, fear not that ;
You shall get no wrong of my wrongdoing.
So I take leave.

QUEEN

Take what you will ; take all ;
You have taken half my heart away with words :
Take all I have, and take no leave ; I have
No leave to give : yea, shortly shall lack leave,
I think, to live ; but I crave none of you ;
I would have none : yet for the love I have,
If I get ever a mean to show it you,
I pray God put you some day in my hand
That you may take that too.

DARNLEY

Well, as he please ;
God keep you in such love ; and so farewell. [*Exit.*

QUEEN

So fare I as your lover, but not well.—
Ah sweet, if God be ever good to me
To put you in my hand ! I am come to shame ;
Let me think now, and let my wits not go ;
God, for dear mercy, let me not forget
Why I should be so angry ; the dull blood
Beats at my face and blinds me—I am chafed to death,
And I am shamed ; I shall go mad and die.
Truly I think I did kneel down, did pray,
Yea, weep (who knows ?) it may be—all for that.
Yea, if I wept not, this was blood brake forth
And burnt mine eyelids ; I will have blood back,
And wash them cool in the hottest of his heart,
Or I will slay myself : I cannot tell :
I have given gold for brass, and lo the pay
Cleaves to my fingers : there's no way to mend—
Not while life stays : would God that it were gone !
The fool will feed upon my fame and laugh ;
Till one seal up his tongue and lips with blood,
He carries half my honour and good name
Between his teeth. Lord God, mine head will fail !
When have I done thus since I was alive ?
And these ill times will deal but ill with me—
My old love slain, and never a new to help,
And my wits gone, and my blithe use of life,
And all the grace was with me. Love—perchance
If I save love I shall well save myself.

I could find heart to bid him take such fellows
And kill them to my hand. I was the fool
To sue to these and shame myself : God knows
I was a queen born, I will hold their heads
Here in my hands for this. Which of you waits ?

Enter MARY BEATON and MARY CARMICHAEL

No maiden of them ?—what, no more than this ?

MARY CARMICHAEL

Madam, the lady Seyton is gone forth ;
She is ill at heart with watching.

QUEEN

Ay, at heart—
All girls must have such tender sides to the heart
They break for one night's watching, ache to death
For an hour's pity, for a half-hour's love—
Wear out before the watches, die by dawn,
And ride at noon to burial. God's my pity !
Where's Hamilton ? doth she ail too ? at heart,
I warrant her at heart.

MARY BEATON

I know not, madam.

QUEEN

What, sick or dead ? I am well holpen of you :
Come hither to me. What pale blood you have—
Is it for fear you turn such cheeks to me ?

Why, if I were so loving, by my hand,
I would have set my head upon the chance,
And loosed him though I died. What will you do?
Have you no way?

MARY BEATON

None but your mercy.

QUEEN

Ay?

Why then the thing is piteous. Think, for God's sake—
Is there no loving way to fetch him forth?
Nay, what a white thin-blooded thing is love,
To help no more than this doth! Were I in love,
I would unbar the ways to-night and then
Laugh death to death to-morrow, mock him dead;
I think you love well with one half your heart,
And let fear keep the other. Hark you now,
You said there was some friend durst break my bars—
Some Scotch name—faith, as if I wist of it!
Ye have such heavy wits to help one with—
Some man that had some mean to save him by—
Tush, I must be at pains for you!

MARY BEATON

Nay, madam,

It were no boot; he will not be let forth.

QUEEN

I say, the name. O, Robert Erskine—yea,
A fellow of some heart: what saith he?

MARY BEATON

Madam,
The thing was sound all through, yea, all went well,
But for all prayers that we could make to him
He would not fly : we cannot get him forth.

QUEEN

Great God ! that men should have such wits as this !
I have a mind to let him die for that ;
And yet I wot not. Said he, he loathed his life ?

MARY BEATON

He says your grace given would scathe yourself,
And little grace for such a grace as that
Be with the little of his life he kept
To cast off some time more unworthily.

QUEEN

God help me ! what should wise folk do with him ?
These men be weaker-witted than mere fools
When they fall mad once ; yet by Mary's soul
I am sorrier for him than for men right wise.
God wot a fool that were more wise than he
Would love me something worse than Chastelard,
Ay, and his own soul better. Do you think
(There's no such other sort of fool alive)
That he may live ?

MARY BEATON

Yea, by God's mercy, madam,
To your great praise and honour from all men
If you should keep him living.

QUEEN

By God's light,
I have good will to do it. Are you sure,
If I would pack him with a pardon hence,
He would speak well of me—not hint and halt,
Smile and look back, sigh and say love runs out,
But times have been—with some loose laugh cut
short,
Bit off at lip—eh?

MARY BEATON

No, by heaven he would not.

QUEEN

You know how quickly one may be belied—
Faith, you should know it—I never thought the worst,
One may touch love and come with clean hands off—
But you should know it. What, he will not fly—
Not though I wink myself asleep, turn blind—
Which that I will I say not?

MARY BEATON

Nay, not he;
We had good hope to bring him well aboard,
Let him slip safe down by the firths to sea,
Out under Leith by night-setting, and thence
Take ship for France and serve there out of sight
In the new wars.

QUEEN

Ay, in the new French wars—
You wist thereof too, madam, with good leave—

A goodly bait to catch mine honour with
And let me wake up with my name bit through.
I had been much bounden to you twain, methinks,
But for my knight's sake and his loves ; by God,
He shall not die in God's despite nor mine.
Call in our chief lords ; bid one see to it :
Ay, and make haste.

[*Exeunt MARY BEATON and MARY CARMICHAEL.*

Now shall I try their teeth :

I have done with fear ; now nothing but pure love
And power and pity shall have part in me ;
I will not throw them such a spirit in flesh
To make their prey on. Though he be mad indeed,
It is the goodliest madness ever smote
Upon man's heart. A kingly knight—in faith,
Meseems my face can yet make faith in men
And break their brains with beauty : for a word,
An eyelid's twitch, an eye's turn, tie them fast
And make their souls cleave to me. God be thanked,
This air has not yet curdled all the blood
That went to make me fair. An hour ago,
I thought I had been forgotten of men's love
More than dead women's faces are forgot
Of after lovers. All men are not of earth :
For all the frost of fools and this cold land
There be some yet catch fever of my face
And burning for mine eyes' sake. I did think
My time was gone when men would dance to death
As to a music, and lie laughing down
In the grave and take their funerals for their feasts,
To get one kiss of me. I have some strength yet,
Though I lack power on men that lack men's blood.
Yea, and God wot I will be merciful ;
For all the foolish hardness round my heart

That tender women miss of to their praise,
They shall not say but I had grace to give
Even for love's sake. Why, let them take their way :
What ails it them though I be soft or hard ?
Soft hearts would weep and weep and let men die
For very mercy and sweet-heartedness ;
I that weep little for my pity's sake,
I have the grace to save men. Let fame go—
I care not much what shall become of fame,
So I save love and do mine own soul right ;
I'll have my mercy help me to revenge
On all the crew of them. How will he look,
Having my pardon ! I shall have sweet thanks
And love of good men for my mercy's love—
Yea, and be quit of these I hate to death,
With one good deed.

Enter the MARIES

MARY BEATON

Madam, the lords are here.

QUEEN

Stand you about me, I will speak to them.
I would the whole world stood up in my face
And heard what I shall say. Bid them come in.

*Enter MURRAY, RANDOLPH, MORTON, LINDSAY, and
other Lords*

Hear you, fair lords, I have a word to you ;
There is one thing I would fain understand—
If I be queen or no ; for by my life

Methinks I am growing unqueenly. No man speak?
Pray you take note, sweet lord ambassador,
I am no queen : I never was born queen ;
Alack, that one should fool us in this wise !
Take up my crown, sir, I will none of it
Till it hath bells on as a fool's cap hath.
Nay, who will have it ? no man take it up ?
Was there none worthy to be shamed but I ?
Here are enow good faces, good to crown ;
Will you be king, fair brother ? or you, my lord ?
Give me a spinner's curch, a wisp of reed,
Any mean thing ; but, God's love, no more gold,
And no more shame : let boys throw dice for it,
Or cast it to the grooms for tennis-play,
For I will none.

MURRAY

What would your highness have ?

QUEEN

Yea, yea, I said I was no majesty ;
I shall be shortly fallen out of grace.
What would I have ? I would have leave to live ;
Perchance I shall not shortly : nay, for me
That have no leave to respite other lives
To keep mine own life were small praise enow.

MURRAY

Your majesty hath power to respite men,
As we well wot ; no man saith otherwise.

QUEEN

What, is this true? 'tis a thing wonderful—
So great I cannot be well sure of it.
Strange that a queen should find such grace as this
At such lords' hands as ye be, such great lords :
I pray you let me get assured again,
Lest I take jest for truth and shame myself
And make you mirth : to make your mirth of me,
God wot it were small pains to you, my lords,
But much less honour. I may send reprieve—
With your sweet leaves I may ?

MURRAY

Assuredly.

QUEEN

Lo, now, what grace is this I have of you !
I had a will to respite Chastelard,
And would not do it for very fear of you :
Look you, I wist not ye were merciful.

MORTON

Madam—

QUEEN

My lord, you have a word to me ?
Doth it displease you such a man should live ?

MORTON

'Twere a mad mercy in your majesty
To lay no hand upon his second fault
And let him thrice offend you.

QUEEN

Ay, my lord?

MORTON

It were well done to muffle lewd men's mouths
By casting of his head into their laps :
It were much best.

QUEEN

Yea, truly were it so?

But if I will not, yet I will not, sir,
For all the mouths in Scotland. Now, by heaven,
As I am pleased he shall not die, but live,
So shall ye be. There is no man shall die,
Except it please me ; and no man shall say,
Except it please me, if I do ill or well.
Which of you now will set his will to mine ?
Not you, nor you I think, nor none of you,
Nor no man living that loves living well.
Let one stand forth and smite me with his hand,
Wring my crown off and cast it underfoot,
And he shall get my respite back of me,
And no man else : he shall bid live or die,
And no man else ; and he shall be my lord,
And no man else. What, will not one be king ?
Will not one here lay hold upon my state ?
I am queen of you for all things come and gone.
Nay, my chief lady, and no meaner one,
The chiefest of my maidens, shall bear this
And give it to my prisoner for a grace ;
Who shall deny me ? who shall do me wrong ?
Bear greeting to the lord of Chastelard,

And this withal for respite of his life,
For by my head he shall die no such way :
Nay, sweet, no words, but hence and back again.

[*Exit* MARY BEATON.]

Farewell, dear lords ; ye have shown grace to me,
And some time I will thank you as I may ;
Till when think well of me and what is done.

ACT V

CHASTELARD

SCENE I. *Before Holyrood. A crowd of people ; among them Soldiers, Burgesses, a Preacher, &c.*

FIRST CITIZEN

THEY are not out yet. Have you seen the man ?
What manner of man ?

SECOND CITIZEN

Shall he be hanged or no ?
There was a fellow hanged some three days gone
Wept the whole way : think you this man shall die
In better sort, now ?

FIRST CITIZEN

Eh, these shawm-players
That walk before strange women and make songs !
How should they die well ?

THIRD CITIZEN

Is it sooth men say
Our dame was wont to kiss him on the face
In lewd folk's sight ?

FIRST CITIZEN

Yea, saith one, all day long
He used to sit and jangle words in rhyme
To suit with shakes of faint adulterous sound
Some French lust in men's ears ; she made songs
too,
Soft things to feed sin's amorous mouth upon—
Delicate sounds for dancing at in hell.

FOURTH CITIZEN

Is it priest Black that he shall have by him
When they do come ?

THIRD CITIZEN

Ah ! by God's leave, not so ;
If the knave show us his peeled onion's head
And that damned flagging jowl of his—

SECOND CITIZEN

Nay, sirs,
Take heed of words ; moreover, please it you,
This man hath no pope's part in him.

THIRD CITIZEN

I say
That if priest whore's-friend with the lewd thief's
cheek
Show his foul blinking face to shame all ours,
It goes back fouler ; well, one day hell's fire
Will burn him black indeed.

A WOMAN

What kind of man?

'Tis yet great pity of him if he be
Goodly enow for this queen's paramour.
A French lord overseas? what doth he here,
With Scotch folk here?

FIRST CITIZEN

Fair mistress, I think well
He doth so at some times that I were fain
To do as well.

THE WOMAN

Nay, then he will not die.

FIRST CITIZEN

Why, see you, if one eat a piece of bread
Baked as it were a certain prophet's way,
Not upon coals, now—you shall apprehend—
If defiled bread be given a man to eat,
Being thrust into his mouth, why he shall eat,
And with good hap shall eat; but if now, say,
One steal this, bread and beastliness and all,
When scarcely for pure hunger flesh and bone
Cleave one to other—why, if he steal to eat,
Be it even the filthiest feeding—though the man
Be famine-flayed of flesh and skin, I say
He shall be hanged.

THIRD CITIZEN

Nay, stolen said you, sir?
See, God bade eat abominable bread,

And freely was it eaten—for a sign
This, for a sign—and doubtless as did God,
So may the devil ; bid one eat freely and live,
Not for a sign.

SECOND CITIZEN

Will you think thus of her?
But wherefore should they get this fellow slain
If he be clear toward her?

THIRD CITIZEN

Sir, one must see
The day comes when a woman sheds her sin
As a bird moults ; and she being shifted so,
The old mate of her old feather pecks at her
To get the right bird back ; then she being stronger
Picks out his eyes—eh?

SECOND CITIZEN

Like enough to be ;
But if it be—Is not one preaching there
With certain folk about him?

FIRST CITIZEN

Yea, the same
Who preached a month since from Ezekiel
Concerning these twain—this our queen that is
And her that was, and is not now so much
As queen over hell's worm.

THIRD CITIZEN

Ay, said he not,
This was Aholah, the first one of these,
Called sisters only for a type—being twain,
Twain Maries, no whit Nazarene? the first
Bred out of Egypt like the water-worm
With sides in wet green places baked with slime
And festered flesh that steams against the sun;
A plague among all people, and a type
Set as a flake upon a leper's fell.

FIRST CITIZEN

Yea, said he, and unto her the men went in,
The men of Pharaoh's, beautiful with red
And with red gold, fair foreign-footed men,
The bountiful fair men, the courteous men,
The delicate men with delicate feet, that went
Curling their small beards Agag-fashion, yea
Pruning their mouths to nibble words behind
With pecking at God's skirts—small broken oaths
Fretted to shreds between most dainty lips,
And underbreath some praise of Ashtaroth
Sighed laughingly.

SECOND CITIZEN

Was he not under guard
For the good word?

FIRST CITIZEN

Yea, but now forth again—
And of the latter said he—there being two,
The first Aholah, which interpreted—

THIRD CITIZEN

But, of this latter ?

FIRST CITIZEN

Well, of her he said
How she made letters for Chaldean folk
And men that came forth of the wilderness
And all her sister's chosen men ; yea, she
Kept not her lip from any sin of hers
But multiplied in whoredoms toward all these
That hate God mightily ; for these, he saith,
These are the fair French people, and these her kin
Sought out of England with her love-letters
To bring them to her kiss of love ; and thus
With a prayer made that God would break such love
Ended some while ; then crying out for strong wrath
Spake with a great voice after : This is she,
Yea the lewd woman, yea the same woman
That gat bruised breasts in Egypt, when strange men
Swart from great suns, foot-burnt with angry soils
And strewn with sand of gaunt Chaldean miles,
Poured all their love upon her : she shall drink
The Lord's cup of derision that is filled
With drunkenness and sorrow, great of sides
And deep to drink in till the dreg drips out :
Yea, and herself with the twain shards thereof
Pluck off her breasts ; so said he.

FOURTH CITIZEN

See that stir—

Are not they come ?

THIRD CITIZEN

There wants an hour of them.
Draw near and let us hearken ; he will speak
Surely some word of this.

SECOND CITIZEN

What saith he now ?

THE PREACHER

The mercy of a harlot is a sword
And her mouth sharper than a flame of fire.

SCENE II. *In Prison*

CHASTELARD

So here my time shuts up ; and the last light
Has made the last shade in the world for me.
The sunbeam that was narrow like a leaf
Has turned a hand, and the hand stretched to an arm,
And the arm has reached the dust on the floor, and
made
A maze of motes with paddling fingers. Well,
I knew not that a man so sure to die
Could care so little ; a bride-night's lustiness
Leaps in my veins as light fire under a wind :
As if I felt a kindling beyond death
Of some new joys far outside of me yet ;
Sweet sound, sweet smell and touch of things far out
Sure to come soon. I wonder will death be
Even all it seems now ? or the talk of hell
And wretched changes of the worn-out soul

Nailed to decaying flesh, shall that be true?
Or is this like the forethought of deep sleep
Felt by a tired man? Sleep were good enough—
Shall sleep be all? But I shall not forget
For any sleep this love bound upon me—
For any sleep or quiet ways of death.
Ah, in my weary dusty space of sight
Her face will float with heavy scents of hair
And fire of subtle amorous eyes, and lips
More hot than wine, full of sweet wicked words
Babbled against mine own lips, and long hands
Spread out, and pale bright throat and pale bright
 breasts,
Fit to make all men mad. I do believe
This fire shall never quite burn out to the ash
And leave no heat and flame upon my dust
For witness where a man's heart was burnt up.
For all Christ's work this Venus is not quelled,
But reddens at the mouth with blood of men,
Sucking between small teeth the sap o' the veins,
Dabbling with death her little tender lips—
A bitter beauty, poisonous-pearlèd mouth.
I am not fit to live but for love's sake,
So I were best die shortly. Ah, fair love,
Fair fearful Venus made of deadly foam,
I shall escape you somehow with my death—
Your splendid supple body and mouth on fire
And Paphian breath that bites the lips with heat.
I had best die.

Enter MARY BEATON

What, is my death's time come,
And you the friend to make death kind to me?
'Tis sweetly done; for I was sick for this.

MARY BEATON

Nay, but see here ; nay, for you shall not die :
She has reprieved you ; look, her name to that,
A present respite ; I was sure of her :
You are quite safe : here, take it in your hands :
I am faint with the end of pain. Read there.

CHASTELARD

Reprieve ?

Wherefore reprieve ? Who has done this to me ?

MARY BEATON

I never feared but God would have you live,
Or I knew well God must have punished me ;
But I feared nothing, had no sort of fear.
What makes you stare upon the seal so hard ?
Will you not read now ?

CHASTELARD

A reprieve of life—

Reprieving me from living. Nay, by God,
I count one death a bitter thing enough.

MARY BEATON

See what she writes ; your love ; for love of you ;
Out of her love ; a word to save your life :
But I knew this too though you love me not :
She is your love ; I knew that : yea, by heaven.

CHASTELARD

You knew I had to live and be reprieved :
Say I were bent to die now ?

MARY BEATON

Do not die,
For her sweet love's sake ; not for pity of me,
You would not bear with life for me one hour ;
But for hers only.

CHASTELARD

Nay, I love you well,
I would not hurt you for more lives than one.
But for this fair-faced paper of reprieve,
We'll have no riddling to make death shift sides :
Look, here ends one of us. *[Tearing it.]*

For her I love,
She will not anger heaven with slaying me ;
For me, I am well quit of loving her ;
For you, I pray you be well comforted,
Seeing in my life no man gat good by me
And by my death no hurt is any man's.

MARY BEATON

And I that loved you ? nay, I loved you ; nay,
Why should your like be pitied when they love ?
Her hard heart is not yet so hard as yours,
Nor God's hard heart. I care not if you die.
These bitter madmen are not fit to live.
I will not have you touch me, speak to me,
Nor take farewell of you. See you die well,

Or death will play with shame for you, and win,
And laugh you out of life. I am right glad
I never am to see you any more,
For I should come to hate you easily ;
I would not have you live. [Exit.

CHASTELARD

She has cause enow.

I would this wretched waiting had an end,
For I wax feebler than I was : God knows
I had a mind once to have saved this flesh
And made life one with shame. It marvels me
This girl that loves me should desire so much
To have me sleep with shame for bedfellow
A whole life's space ; she would be glad to die
To escape such life. It may be too her love
Is but an amorous quarrel with herself,
Not love of me but her own wilful soul ;
Then she will live and be more glad of this
Than girls of their own will and their heart's love
Before love mars them : so God go with her !
For mine own love—I wonder will she come
Sad at her mouth a little, with drawn cheeks
And eyelids wrinkled up ? or hot and quick
To lean her head on mine and leave her lips
Deep in my neck ? For surely she must come ;
And I should fare the better to be sure
What she will do. But as it please my sweet ;
For some sweet thing she must do if she come,
Seeing how I have to die. Now three years since
This had not seemed so good an end for me ;
But in some wise all things wear round betimes
And wind up well. Yet doubtless she might take

A will to come my way and hold my hands
And kiss me some three kisses, throat, mouth, eyes,
And say some soft three words to soften death :
I do not see how this should break her ease.
Nay, she will come to get her warrant back :
By this no doubt she is sorely penitent,
Her fit of angry mercy well blown out
And her wits cool again. She must have chafed
A great while through for anger to become
So like pure pity ; they must have fretted her
Nigh mad for anger : or it may be mistrust,
She is so false ; yea, to my death I think
She will not trust me ; alas the hard sweet heart !
As if my lips could hurt her any way
But by too keenly kissing of her own.
Ah false poor sweet fair lips that keep no faith,
They shall not catch mine false or dangerous ;
They must needs kiss me one good time, albeit
They love me not at all. Lo, here she comes,
For the blood leaps and catches at my face ;
There go her feet and tread upon my heart ;
Now shall I see what way I am to die.

Enter the QUEEN

QUEEN

What, is one here ? Speak to me for God's sake :
Where are you lain ?

CHASTELARD

Here, madam, at your hand.

QUEEN

Sweet lord, what sore pain have I had for you
And been most patient !—Nay, you are not bound.
If you be gentle to me, take my hand.
Do you not hold me the worst heart in the world?
Nay, you must needs ; but say not yet you do.
I am worn so weak I know not how I live :
Reach me your hand.

CHASTELARD

Take comfort and good heart ;
All will find end ; this is some grief to you,
But you shall overlive it. Come, fair love ;
Be of fair cheer ; I say you have done no wrong.

QUEEN

I will not be of cheer : I have done a thing
That will turn fire and burn me. Tell me not ;
If you will do me comfort, whet your sword.
But if you hate me, tell me of soft things,
For I hate these, and bitterly. Look up ;
Am I not mortal to be gazed upon ?

CHASTELARD

Yes, mortal, and not hateful.

QUEEN

O lost heart !
Give me some mean to die by.

CHASTELARD

Sweet, enough.

You have made no fault ; life is not worth a world
That you should weep to take it : would mine were,
And I might give you a world-worthier gift
Than one poor head that love has made a spoil ;
Take it for jest, and weep not : let me go.
And think I died of chance or malady.
Nay, I die well ; one dies not best abed.

QUEEN

My warrant to reprieve you—that you saw ?
That came between your hands ?

CHASTELARD

Yea, not long since.

It seems you have no will to let me die.

QUEEN

Alas, you know I wrote it with my heart,
Out of pure love ; and since you were in bonds
I have had such grief for love's sake and my heart's—
Yea, by my life I have—I could not choose
But give love way a little. Take my hand ;
You know it would have pricked my heart's blood out
To write reprieve with.

CHASTELARD

Sweet, your hands are kind ;

Lay them about my neck, upon my face,
And tell me not of writing.

QUEEN

Nay, by heaven,
I would have given you mine own blood to drink
If that could heal you of your soul-sickness.
Yea, they know that, they curse me for your sake,
Rail at my love—would God their heads were lopped
And we twain left together this side death!
But look you, sweet, if this my warrant hold
You are but dead and shamed; for you must die,
And they will slay you shamefully by force
Even in my sight.

CHASTELARD

Faith, I think so they will.

QUEEN

Nay, they would slay me too, cast stones at me,
Drag me alive—they have eaten poisonous words,
They are mad and have no shame.

CHASTELARD

Ay, like enough.

QUEEN

Would God my heart were greater; but God wot
I have no heart to bear with fear and die.
Yea, and I cannot help you: or I know
I should be nobler, bear a better heart:
But as this stands—I pray you for good love,
As you hold honour a costlier thing than life--

CHASTELARD

Well?

QUEEN

Nay, I would not be denied for shame ;
In brief, I pray you give me that again.

CHASTELARD

What, my reprieve ?

QUEEN

Even so ; deny me not,
For your sake mainly : yea, by God you know
How fain I were to die in your death's stead,
For your name's sake. This were no need to swear,
Lest we be mocked to death with a reprieve,
And so both die, being shamed. What, shall I swear ?
What, if I kiss you ? must I pluck it out ?
You do not love me : no, nor honour. Come,
I know you have it about you : give it me.

CHASTELARD

I cannot yield you such a thing again ;
Not as I had it.

QUEEN

A coward ? what shift now ?
Do such men make such cravens ?

CHASTELARD

Chide me not :
Pity me that I cannot help my heart.

QUEEN

Heaven mend mine eyes that took you for a man !
What, is it sewn into your flesh ? take heed—
Nay, but for shame—what have you done with it ?

CHASTELARD

Why, there it lies, torn up.

QUEEN

God help me, sir !

Have you done this ?

CHASTELARD

Yea, sweet ; what should I do ?
Did I not know you to the bone, my sweet ?
God speed you well ! you have a goodly lord.

QUEEN

My love, sweet love, you are more fair than he,
Yea, fairer many times : I love you much,
Sir, know you that ?

CHASTELARD

I think I know that well.
Sit here a little till I feel you through
In all my breath and blood for some sweet while.
O gracious body that mine arms have had,
And hair my face has felt on it ! grave eyes
And low thick lids that keep since years ago
In the blue sweet of each particular vein
Some special print of me ! I am right glad

That I must never feel a bitterer thing
Than your soft curled-up shoulder and amorous arms
From this time forth ; nothing can hap to me
Less good than this for all my whole life through.
I would not have some new pain after this
Come spoil the savour. O, your round bird's throat,
More soft than sleep or singing ; your calm cheeks,
Turned bright, turned wan with kisses hard and hot ;
The beautiful colour of your deep curved hands,
Made of a red rose that had changed to white ;
That mouth mine own holds half the sweetness of,
Yea, my heart holds the sweetness of it, whence
My life began in me ; mine that ends here
Because you have no mercy, nay you know
You never could have mercy. My fair love,
Kiss me again, God loves you not the less ;
Why should one woman have all goodly things ?
You have all beauty ; let mean women's lips
Be pitiful, and speak truth : they will not be
Such perfect things as yours. Be not ashamed
That hands not made like these that snare men's souls
Should do men good, give alms, relieve men's pain ;
You have the better, being more fair than they,
They are half foul, being rather good than fair ;
You are quite fair : to be quite fair is best.
Why, two nights hence I dreamed that I could see
In through your bosom under the left flower,
And there was a round hollow, and at heart
A little red snake sitting, without spot,
That bit—like this, and sucked up sweet—like this,
And curled its lithe light body right and left,
And quivered like a woman in act to love.
Then there was some low fluttered talk i' the lips,
Faint sound of soft fierce words caressing them—

Like a fair woman's when her love gets way.
Ah, your old kiss—I know the ways of it :
Let the lips cling a little. Take them off,
And speak some word or I go mad with love.

QUEEN

Will you not have my chaplain come to you ?

CHASTELARD

Some better thing of yours—some handkerchief,
Some fringe of scarf to make confession to—
You had some book about you that fell out—

QUEEN

A little written book of Ronsard's rhymes,
His gift, I wear in there for love of him—
See, here between our feet.

CHASTELARD

Ay, my old lord's—
The sweet chief poet, my dear friend long since ?
Give me the book. Lo you, this verse of his :
With coming lilies in late April came
Her body, fashioned whiter for their shame ;
And roses, touched with blood since Adon bled,
From her fair colour filled their lips with red :
A goodly praise : I could not praise you so.
I read that while your marriage-feast went on.
Leave me this book, I pray you : I would read
The hymn of death here over ere I die ;
I shall know soon how much he knew of death

When that was written. One thing I know now,
I shall not die with half a heart at least,
Nor shift my face, nor weep my fault alive,
Nor swear if I might live and do new deeds
I would do better. Let me keep the book.

QUEEN

Yea, keep it : as would God you had kept your life
Out of mine eyes and hands. I am wrung to the
heart :

This hour feels dry and bitter in my mouth,
As if its sorrow were my body's food
More than my soul's. There are bad thoughts in
me—

Most bitter fancies biting me like birds
That tear each other. Suppose you need not die ?

CHASTELARD

You know I cannot live for two hours more.
Our fate was made thus ere our days were made :
Will you fight fortune for so small a grief ?
But for one thing I were full fain of death.

QUEEN

What thing is that ?

CHASTELARD

None need to name the thing.
Why, what can death do with me fit to fear ?
For if I sleep I shall not weep awake ;
Or if their saying be true of things to come,

Though hell be sharp, in the worst ache of it
I shall be eased so God will give me back
Sometimes one golden gracious sight of you—
The aureole woven flower-like through your hair,
And in your lips the little laugh as red
As when it came upon a kiss and ceased,
Touching my mouth.

QUEEN

As I do now, this way,
With my heart after : would I could shed tears,
Tears should not fail when the heart shudders so.
But your bad thought ?

CHASTELARD

Well, such a thought as this :
It may be, long time after I am dead,
For all you are, you may see bitter days ;
God may forget you or be wroth with you :
Then shall you lack a little help of me,
And I shall feel your sorrow touching you,
A happy sorrow, though I may not touch :
I that would fain be turned to flesh again,
Fain get back life to give up life for you,
To shed my blood for help, that long ago
You shed and were not holpen : and your heart
Will ache for help and comfort, yea for love,
And find less love than mine—for I do think
You never will be loved thus in your life.

QUEEN

It may be man will never love me more ;
For I am sure I shall not love man twice.

CHASTELARD

I know not : men must love you in life's spite ;
For you will always kill them ; man by man
Your lips will bite them dead ; yea, though you would,
You shall not spare one ; all will die of you ;
I cannot tell what love shall do with these,
But I for all my love shall have no might
To help you more, mine arms and hands no power
To fasten on you more. This cleaves my heart,
That they shall never touch your body more.
But for your grief—you will not have to grieve ;
For being in such poor eyes so beautiful
It must needs be as God is more than I
So much more love he hath of you than mine ;
Yea, God shall not be bitter with my love,
Seeing she is so sweet.

QUEEN

Ah my sweet fool,
Think you when God will ruin me for sin
My face of colour shall prevail so much
With him, so often the toothed iron's edge
To save my throat a scar ? nay, I am sure
I shall die somehow sadly.

CHASTELARD

This is pure grief ;
The shadow of your pity for my death,
Mere foolishness of pity : all sweet moods
Throw out such little shadows of themselves,
Leave such light fears behind. You, die like me ?
Stretch your throat out that I may kiss all round

Where mine shall be cut through : suppose my
mouth

The axe-edge to bite so sweet a throat in twain
With bitter iron, should not it turn soft
As lip is soft to lip?

QUEEN

I am quite sure
I shall die sadly some day, Chastelard ;
I am quite certain.

CHASTELARD

Do not think such things ;
Lest all my next world's memories of you be
As heavy as this thought.

QUEEN

I will not grieve you ;
Forgive me that my thoughts were sick with grief.
What can I do to give you ease at heart ?
Shall I kiss now ? I pray you have no fear
But that I love you.

CHASTELARD

Turn your face to me ;
I do not grudge your face this death of mine ;
It is too fair—by God, you are too fair.
What noise is that ?

QUEEN

Can the hour be through so soon ?
I bade them give me but a little hour.
Ah ! I do love you ! such brief space for love !

I am yours all through, do all your will with me ;
What if we lay and let them take us fast,
Lips grasping lips ? I dare do anything.

CHASTELARD

Show better cheer : let no man see you mazed ;
Make haste and kiss me ; cover up your throat
Lest one see tumbled lace and prate of it.

Enter the Guard : MURRAY, DARNLEY, MARY
HAMILTON, MARY BEATON, *and others with them*

DARNLEY

Sirs, do your charge ; let him not have much time.

MARY HAMILTON

Peace, lest you chafe the queen : look, her brows bend.

CHASTELARD

Lords, and all you come hither for my sake,
If while my life was with me like a friend
That I must now forget the friendship of,
I have done a wrong to any man of you,
As it may be by fault of mine I have ;
Of such an one I crave for courtesy
He will now cast it from his mind and heed
Like a dead thing ; considering my dead fault
Worth no remembrance further than my death.
This for his gentle honour and goodwill
I do beseech him, doubting not to find

Such kindness if he be nobly made
And of his birth a courteous race of man.
You, my lord James, if you have aught toward me—
Or you, Lord Darnley—I dare fear no jot,
Whate'er this be wherein you were aggrieved,
But you will pardon all for gentleness.

DARNLEY

For my part—yea, well, if the thing stand thus,
As you must die—one would not bear folk hard—
And if the rest shall hold it honourable,
Why, I do pardon you.

MURRAY

Sir, in all things
We find no cause to speak of you but well;
For all I see, save this your deadly fault,
I hold you for a noble perfect man.

CHASTELARD

I thank you, fair lord, for your nobleness.
You likewise, for the courtesy you have
I give you thanks, sir ; and to all these lords
That have not heart to load me at my death.
Last, I beseech of the best queen of men
And royallest fair lady in the world
To pardon me my grievous mortal sin
Done in such great offence of her : for, sirs,
If ever since I came between her eyes
She hath beheld me other than I am
Or shown her honour other than it is,
Or, save in royal faultless courtesies,

Used me with favour ; if by speech or face,
By salutation or by tender eyes,
She hath made a way for my desire to live,
Given ear to me or boldness to my breath ;
I pray God cast me forth before day cease
Even to the heaviest place there is in hell.
Yea, if she be not stainless toward all men,
I pray this axe that I shall die upon
May cut me off body and soul from heaven.
Now for my soul's sake I dare pray to you ;
Forgive me, madam.

QUEEN

Yea, I do, fair sir :
With all my heart in all I pardon you.

CHASTELARD

God thank you for great mercies. Lords, set hence ;
I am right loth to hold your patience here ;
I must not hold much longer any man's.
Bring me my way and bid me fare well forth.

[As they pass out the QUEEN stays MARY BEATON.]

QUEEN

Hark hither, sweet. Get back to Holyrood
And take Carmichael with you : go both up
In some chief window whence the squares lie clear—
Seem not to know what I shall do—mark that—
And watch how things fare under. Have good
cheer ;
You do not think now I can let him die ?
Nay, this were shameful madness if you did,
And I should hate you.

MARY BEATON

Pray you love me, madam,
And swear you love me and will let me live,
That I may die the quicker.

QUEEN

Nay, sweet, see,
Nay, you shall see, this must not seem devised ;
I will take any man with me, and go ;
Yea, for pure hate of them that hate him : yea,
Lay hold upon the headsman and bid strike
Here on my neck ; if they will have him die,
Why, I will die too : queens have died this way
For less things than his love is. Nay, I know
They want no blood ; I will bring swords to boot
For dear love's rescue though half earth were slain ;
What should men do with blood ? Stand fast at
watch ;
For I will be his ransom if I die. [Exeunt.

SCENE III. *The Upper Chamber in Holyrood*

MARY BEATON *seated* : MARY CARMICHAEL
at a window

MARY BEATON

Do you see nothing ?

MARY CARMICHAEL

Nay, but swarms of men
And talking women gathered in small space,

Flapping their gowns and gaping with fools' eyes :
And a thin ring round one that seems to speak,
Holding his hands out eagerly ; no more.

MARY BEATON

Why, I hear more, I hear men shout *The Queen.*¹

MARY CARMICHAEL

Nay, no cries yet.

MARY BEATON

Ah, they will cry out soon
When she comes forth ; they should cry out on her ;
I hear their crying in my heart. Nay, sweet,
Do not you hate her ? all men, if God please,
Shall hate her one day ; yea, one day no doubt
I shall worse hate her.

MARY CARMICHAEL

Pray you, be at peace ;
You hurt yourself : she will be merciful ;
What, could you see a true man slain for you ?
I think I could not ; it is not like our hearts
To have such hard sides to them.

MARY BEATON

O, not you,
And I could nowise ; there's some blood in her
That does not run to mercy as ours doth :
That fair face and the cursed heart in her
Made keener than a knife for manslaying
Can bear strange things.

MARY CARMICHAEL

Peace, for the people come.

Ah—Murray, hooded over half his face
With plucked-down hat, few folk about him, eyes
Like a man angered ; Darnley after him,
Holding our Hamilton above her wrist,
His mouth put near her hair to whisper with—
And she laughs softly, looking at his feet—

MARY BEATON

She will not live long ; God hath given her
Few days and evil, full of hate and love,
I see well now.

MARY CARMICHAEL

Hark, there's their cry—*The queen !
Fair life and long, and good days to the queen.*

MARY BEATON

Yea, but God knows. I feel such patience here
As I were sure in a brief while to die.

MARY CARMICHAEL

She bends and laughs a little, graciously,
And turns half, talking to I know not whom—
A big man with great shoulders ; ah, the face,
You get his face now—wide and duskish, yea
The youth burnt out of it. A goodly man,
Thewed mightily and sunburnt to the bone ;
Doubtless he was away in banishment,
Or kept some march far off.

MARY BEATON

Still you see nothing ?

MARY CARMICHAEL

Yea, now they bring him forth with a great noise,
The folk all shouting and men thrust about
Each way from him.

MARY BEATON

Ah, Lord God, bear with me,
Help me to bear a little with my love
For thine own love, or give me some quick death.
Do not come down ; I shall get strength again,
Only my breath fails. Looks he sad or blithe ?
Not sad I doubt yet.

MARY CARMICHAEL

Nay, not sad a whit,
But like a man who losing gold or lands
Should lose a heavy sorrow ; his face set,
The eyes not curious to the right or left,
And reading in a book, his hands unbound,
With short fleet smiles. The whole place catches
breath,
Looking at him ; she seems at point to speak :
Now she lies back, and laughs, with her brows drawn
And her lips drawn too. Now they read his crime—
I see the laughter tightening her chin :
Why do you bend your body and draw breath ?
They will not slay him in her sight ; I am sure
She will not have him slain.

MARY BEATON

Forth, and fear not :
I was just praying to myself—one word,
A prayer I have to say for her to God
If he will mind it.

MARY CARMICHAEL

Now he looks her side ;
Something he says, if one could hear thus far :
She leans out, lengthening her throat to hear
And her eyes shining.

MARY BEATON

Ah, I had no hope :
Yea thou God knowest that I had no hope.
Let it end quickly.

MARY CARMICHAEL

Now his eyes are wide
And his smile great ; and like another smile
The blood fills all his face. Her cheek and neck
Work fast and hard ; she must have pardoned him,
He looks so merrily. Now he comes forth
Out of that ring of people and kneels down ;
Ah, how the helve and edge of the great axe
Turn in the sunlight as the man shifts hands—
It must be for a show : because she sits
And hardly moves her head this way—I see
Her chin and lifted lips. Now she stands up,
Puts out her hand, and they fall muttering ;
Ah !

MARY BEATON

It is done now ?

MARY CARMICHAEL

For God's love, stay there ;
Do not look out. Nay, he is dead by this ;
But gather up yourself from off the floor ;
Will she die too ? I shut mine eyes and heard—
Sweet, do not beat your face upon the ground.
Nay, he is dead and slain.

MARY BEATON

What, slain indeed ?
I knew he would be slain. Ay, through the neck :
I knew one must be smitten through the neck
To die so quick : if one were stabbed to the heart,
He would die slower.

MARY CARMICHAEL

Will you behold him dead ?

MARY BEATON

Yea : must a dead man not be looked upon
That living one was fain of ? give me way.
Lo you, what sort of hair this fellow had ;
The doomsman gathers it into his hand
To grasp the head by for all men to see ;
I never did that.

MARY CARMICHAEL

For God's love, let me go.

MARY BEATON

I think sometimes she must have held it so,
Holding his head back, see you, by the hair
To kiss his face, still lying in his arms.
Ay, go and weep : it must be pitiful
If one could see it. What is this they say ?
So perish the queen's traitors ! Yea, but so
Perish the queen ! God, do thus much to her
For his sake only : yea, for pity's sake
Do thus much with her.

MARY CARMICHAEL

Prithee come in with me :

Nay, come at once.

MARY BEATON

If I should meet with her
And spit upon her at her coming in——
But if I live then shall I see one day
When God will smite her lying harlot's mouth—
Surely I shall. Come, I will go with you ;
We will sit down together face to face
Now, and keep silence ; for this life is hard,
And the end of it is quietness at last.
Come, let us go : here is no word to say.

AN USHER

Make way there for the lord of Bothwell ; room—
Place for my lord of Bothwell next the queen.

BOTHWELL

A TRAGEDY

πολλὰ μὲν γὰρ τρέφει
δεινὰ δειμάτων ἄχνη,
πόντιαί τ' ἀγκάλαι κνωδάλων
ἀνταίων βροτοῖσι
πλάθουσι, βλαστοῦσι καὶ πεδαίχμιοι
λαμπάδες πεδάοροι,
πτανὰ τε καὶ πεδοβάμοινα, κἀνεμοέντων
αἰγίδων φράσαι κότον.
ἀλλ' ὑπέρτολμον ἀν-
δρὸς φρόνημα τίς λέγοι,
καὶ γυναικῶν φρεσὶν τλημόνων ;
καὶ παντόλμους
ἔρωτας ἄταισι συννόμους βροτῶν,
ξυζύγους θ' ὀμαυλίας ;
θηλυκρατῆς ἀπέρωτος ἔρως παρανικᾷ
κνωδάλων τε καὶ βροτῶν.

ÆSCH. *Cho.* 585-601.

À VICTOR HUGO

*Comme un fleuve qui donne à l'océan son âme,
J'apporte au lieu sacré d'où le vers tonne et luit
Mon drame épique et plein de tumulte et de flamme
Où vibre un siècle éteint, où flotte un jour qui fui.*

*Un peuple qui rugit sous les pieds d'une femme
Passe, et son souffle emplit d'aube et d'ombre et de
Un ciel âpre et guerrier qui luit comme une lame
Sur l'avenir debout, sur le passé détruit.*

*Au fond des cieux hagards, par l'orage battue,
Une figure d'ombre et d'étoiles vêtue
Pleure et menace et brille en s'évanouissant ;*

*Éclair d'amour qui blesse et de haine qui tue,
Fleur éclos au sommet du siècle éblouissant,
Rose à tige épineuse et que rougit le sang.*

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MARY STUART.

MARY BEATON.

MARY SEYTON.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

JANE GORDON, *Countess of Bothwell.*

JANET STUART, *Countess of Argyle.*

MARGARET LADY DOUGLAS *of Lochleven.*

LADY RERES.

HENRY LORD DARNLEY, *King Consort.*

JAMES HEPBURN, *Earl of Bothwell.*

JAMES STUART, *Earl of Murray.*

JAMES DOUGLAS, *Earl of Morton.*

WILLIAM MAITLAND *of Lethington, Secretary of State.*

JOHN KNOX.

DAVID RIZZIO.

*The Earls of HUNTLEY, ARGYLE, CAITHNESS, ROTHES, CASSILIS,
ATHOL, and MAR.*

*Lords HERRIES, LINDSAY, RUTHVEN, FLEMING, SEYTON, BOYD,
OCHILTREE, HUME, ARBROATH, and MAXWELL.*

The younger RUTHVEN.

THE MASTER OF OCHILTREE, *son to Lord Ochiltree.*

THE MASTER OF MAXWELL, *son to Lord Herries.*

SIR JAMES MELVILLE.

SIR ROBERT MELVILLE.

SIR GEORGE DOUGLAS, *uncle to Darnley.*

SIR WILLIAM DOUGLAS *of Lochleven.*

GEORGE DOUGLAS, *his brother.*

SIR WILLIAM KIRKALDY *of Grange.*

LORD ROBERT STUART, *Abbot of St. Cross.*

DU CROC, *Ambassador from France.*

SIR NICHOLAS THROGMORTON, *Ambassador from England.*

JOHN HAMILTON, *Archbishop of St. Andrew's.*

JOHN LESLIE, *Bishop of Ross.*

ARTHUR ERSKINE, *Captain of the Guard.*

ANTHONY STANDEN and STUART OF TRAQUAIR, *Equerries.*

JOHN ERSKINE *of Dun.*

ANDREW KER *of Fauldonside.*

HENRY DRUMMOND *of Ricarton.*

ARCHIBALD BEATON.

JOHN HEPBURN *of Bolton*, ORMISTON, HAY *of Talla*, *Conspirators with Bothwell.*

CRAWFORD, NELSON, TAYLOR, *servants to Darnley.*

NICHOLAS HUBERT, *surnamed PARIS, servant to Bothwell.*

THE PROVOST OF EDINBURGH.

ROBERT CUNNINGHAM, *steward to the Earl of Lennox.*

Page and Girl attending on Lady Lochleven.

Burgesses, Citizens, Soldiers, Attendants, &c.

TIME — MARCH 9, 1566, TO MAY 16, 1568

B O T H W E L L

Act I.—DAVID RIZZIO

Act II.—BOTHWELL

ACT I

DAVID RIZZIO

TIME, MARCH 9, 1566

SCENE I. *Holyrood*

Enter DARNLEY and MARY CARMICHAEL

DARNLEY

BUT you will not believe me though you hear ;
You have no faith ; you steer by sight, and see
This fellow gilt and garnished with her grace
Sit covered by the queen where lords stand bare
And jet before them lordlier ; and the sight
Makes firm your faith that in his hand and eye
This land is but a harp to play upon,
Whose strings may turn to serpents or to swords
To maim his hand or charm his eye to death.
You have no faith to see this, or to read
The sentence that ensuing shall write me king,
And worth men's fears or faiths : lo, now you laugh,
As though my hope were braggart, and myself
A fool and mouthpiece of its foolish vaunt :
You have no faith.

MARY CARMICHAEL

I have no wit nor will
To choose between St. David for my lord
And sweet St. Henry.

DARNLEY

Nay, King David now,
King David psalmist ; but for all his song
I doubt he hath lost the old trick of touch he had
Once in the sword-play.

MARY CARMICHAEL

See you play not Saul,
Who are something of his stature in our eyes,
Much of his mighty presence ; be it not said
He hath snipt your skir's already.

DARNLEY

Who said that ?
Who speaks of me so, lies to the blood and bone,
To the heart and soul lies. I am no king mayhap—
I do not say yet I shall die no king—
God knows that, and is wise—but man I am,
Look else, who love you——

MARY CARMICHAEL

Sir, be king for me,
It shall content my will to youward, seeing
I take you to be royal, and myself
Honest.

DARNLEY

Why honest ? what a gibe is this !
What make you of me ?

MARY CARMICHAEL

Yea, what should I make?
'Tis time I were on service.

DARNLEY

O, the queen's?
She gets good service, excellent service done,
And worthy servants hath she—a liberal queen.
Well, if you will. [*Exit MARY CARMICHAEL.*]

I would the month were out.
If earth were easier by just one less knave,
I might sleep well and laugh and walk at ease,
With none to mate me.

Enter MORTON

Ah, my good lord and friend,
I had somewhat I would say—but let words be.
The man you know of—I would you had made him
safe;
I would have told you this much.

MORTON

Sir, the earl
Murray being with us in the main thing here,
Though he keep hand from the red handiwork,
Shall enough help us.

DARNLEY

Let him know it not then :
Let him stand by : he must not know it. Why, well,
It is the more our honour : yet would God

He, being not with us, were not anywhere,
But dead, sir, dead. I say, who hath eyes to see
May see him dangerous to us, and manifest.
Ye have no eyes who see not : for my part,
I noted him at once. Sir, by this light,
When I first saw him—and I have eyes to see—
I knew what manner of meaning in his face
Lay privy and folded up and sealed and signed.
I would you lords had sight and heart like mine,
He should not long live dangerous ; yet, God wot,
For my poor personal peril I would match
This body against his better.

MORTON

There's no need
Of iron words and matches here of men,
Save this we meet upon ; which being played out
Leaves our hands full and henceforth peaceable.
For the earl, he makes no part of men's designs,
Nor would I have you keen to strive with him
Who lies yet still and is well liked of men
That are well-willers to this common state
And the open peace of the people. Let him be ;
Keep your heart here.

DARNLEY

Here is it fixed and set
With roots of iron. 'Tis more honour to us,
Being so more perilous, to have no help
Of popular hands and common friendliness,
But our hearts helpful only. I am sure of her,
That she suspects not—I do surely think :
But yet she is subtle and secret-souled and wise,

Wise woman-fashion ; look you be not caught
Through too much trust in what of her is weak,
In her light mind and mutability,
For subtlety lies close in her light wit,
And wisdom wantons in her wantonness :
I know her, I know her ; I have seen ere now, and am
Not all to learn in women.

MORTON

I believe

Your grace hath grace with women as with men,
And skill of sense alike in those and these,
I doubt not ; which is well and profitable.
For this, how shall she know it, except you slip
And let her wring the truth out from your hand,
Or kiss the truth out, hanging mouth on mouth ?
But if no pressure press from hand or lip
The unripe truth, the fruit so soon so red,
What can she to us, though doubting, help or harm ?
How if she know not surely ?

DARNLEY

So I say.

And we that do it, we do it for all men's good,
For the main people's love, thankworthily—
And this is matter of law we take in hand,
Is it not, lawful ? for the man is judged,
Doomed dead and damned by sentence, in good deed,
Though not by scruple and show of trial and test,
By clearer cause and purer policy—
We cannot stand toward any accountable
As for a slaughter, a treasonable shame,
To mark us red in the world's eyes ? no man

Can say our fame is blotted with his blood,
No man, albeit he hate us, bring in doubt—
Woman^{or} man—our right, our absolute law,
Giving us leave—nay, bidding us do so?
So that we stand after the deed as now,
In no more danger or fear?

MORTON

In less fear, you,
And much more honour; now it might please you fear,
Being overborne of woman and fast bound
With feminine shame and weakness; the man's
strength,
The sinew and nerve and spirit of royalty,
Hers, and all power to use her power on you
Hers, and all honour and pleasure of high place
That should make sweet your lips and bright your
brows
Hers, and the mockery of mismarried men
Yours.

DARNLEY

Nay, by God I said so; why, I knew it;
I told you thus aforetime, did I not?

MORTON

Truly and wisely; if this content you thus,
He is even our king.

DARNLEY

Methinks he should be king,
And I, God wot, content. Here came a man

Some few days back, a goodly, a gentleman,
An honourable, that for king knave's behoof
Was stript out of the better of all his lands
As I of what was best part of my wife,
My place, and honour that grows up with hers—
For of her love small fruit was left to strip,
Few leaves for winter weather—but of these,
These good things, am I stript as bare as shame,
Even beggared as was this man. By God's light,
It seems this is but justice, doth it not,
And I so gentle and temperate—as, by God,
I was not nor I will not.

MORTON

There's more need
That you seem resolutely temperate then
And temperately be resolute, I say,
Till the hour to cast off temperance and put on
Plain passion for the habit of your heart
Which now it wears in darkness, and by day
The cloak and hood of temperance. But these fits
And gusts and starts of will and will not, these
Blow you this side and that side till men see
Too much, and trust too little.

DARNLEY

O sir, you are wise,
You are honourable, and a counselor, and my friend,
And I too light, too light—yet by this light
I think I am worth more than your counsel is
If I be worth this work here to be done—
I think I am so much.

MORTON

It may well be, sir,
And you much wiser ; yet forbear your wrath
If you would have it ready to your hand.

DARNLEY

I will forbear nothing—nor nothing bear—
Nor live by no man's bidding. This year through
I have even been surfeited with wise men's breath
And winds of wordy weather round mine ears—
Do this, spare that, walk thus, look otherwise,
Hold your head kingly, or wisely bow your neck—
A man might come to doubt himself no man,
Being so long childlike handled. Now, look you,
Look she, look God to it if I be not man !
Now is my way swept, and my foot shod now,
My wallet full now for the travelling day
That I fare forth and forward, arrow straight,
Girt for the goal, red battle-ripe at need—
As need there is—you are sure—and utter need ?

MORTON

Is my lord not sure ?

DARNLEY

Ay, as sure as you—
Surer maybe—the need is more of mine—
This grazes your bare hand that grates my heart :
Your queen it is wrongs you, and me my wife.

MORTON

You see that sure, too ? sharp sight, have you not ?

DARNLEY

I saw it, I first—I knew her—who knew her but I,
That swore—at least I swore to mine own soul,
Would not for shame's sake swear out wide to the
world,

But in myself swore with my heart to hear—
There was more in it, in all their commerce, more
Than the mere music—he is warped, worn through,
Bow-bent, uncomely in wholesome eyes that see
Straight, seeing him crooked—but she seeing awry
Sees the man straight enough for paramour.

This I saw, this I swore to—silently,
Not loud but sure, till time should be to speak
Sword's language, no fool's jargon like his tongue,
But plain broad steel speech and intelligible,
Though not to the ear, Italian's be it or Scot's,
But to the very life intelligible,
To the loosed soul, to the shed blood—for blood
There must be—one must slay him—you are sure—
as I am?

For I was sure of it always—while you said,
All you, 'twas council-stuff, state-handicraft,
Cunning of card-play between here and there,
I knew 'twas this and more, sir, I kept sight,
Kept heed of her, what thing she was, what wife,
What manner of stateswoman and governess—
More than all you saw—did you see it or I?

MORTON

You saw first surely, and some one spoke first out—
You had eyes, he tongue—and both bear witness now
If this must be or not be.

DARNLEY

Death, is that?
I must kill—bid you kill him?

MORTON

Nowise, sir;
As little need of one as the other is here;
As little of either as no need at all.

DARNLEY

You doubt or hand or tongue then, sir, of mine?
I would not strike, if need were, or bid strike?

MORTON

Neither we doubt, nor neither do we need—
Having you with us.

DARNLEY

'Twas but so you meant?
I had else been angry—nay, half wroth I was—
Not as I took it—I had else been wroth indeed.

MORTON

That had been grievous to me and perilous,
This time of all times.

DARNLEY

Ay, you need me, ay,
I am somewhat now then, somewhat more than wont,
Who thus long have been nothing—but will be?
Well, so, I am with you. Shall he die—how soon?

To-day I had said, but haply not to-day—
There might fall somewhat, something slip awry,
In such swift work, ha? Then, what day? Perchance
'Twere better he died abed—or were there charms,
Spells—if himself though be not witch, drug-proof
'Tis like, and devil-witted, being a knave
Born poisonous and bred sorcerous like his kind—
We have heard what manner of plague his south land
 spawns,
What sort of kith and kin to hell and him,
How subtle in starry riddles and earth's roots
The dog-leeches that kill your soul in you,
Or only body, or both, as Catherine please,
Mother that was to our Mary—have we not?
We must look to it, and closely look.

MORTON

My lord,

Of so much being so sure, of this be too;
That surely and soon in some wise very sure
We are quit of him with God's help or without.

DARNLEY

Why, that were well. I hold you resolute;
I pray you stay so, and all is well enough.
We have talked our time out—you had all to say—
All the thing's carriage—and my mind to take,
Which with plain heart I have made you understand.
My mind is, he must die then: keep you there. [*Exit.*]

MORTON

Had God but plagued Egypt with fools for flies,
His Jews had sped the quicker.

Enter MARY BEATON .

Is the queen risen,
Lady?

MARY BEATON

Not yet. Was not the king with you?
I heard him high and shrill.

MORTON

Ay, he was here,
If anywhere the king be. You are sad.

MARY BEATON

I am not blithe of bearing, I wot well,
But the word sad is sadder than I am.
Is he not vexed?

MORTON

I have never seen him else,
Save when light-heartedness and loose-hung brain
Have made him proud and drunken : as of late
He has been but seldom. There's one sad at least ;
If it be sad to hang the head apart,
Walk with brows drawn and eyes disquieted,
Speak sullen under breath, and shrug and swear,
If any move him, and then again fall dumb ;
He has changed his fresher manner, and put off
What little grace made his ungracious youth
Fair in men's eyes a little ; if this last,
He will not long last in men's lordship here,
Except by love and favour shown of the queen.

MARY BEATON

There he sits strong in surety ; yet men say
He is discontent, disheartened, for distaste
Of the like love and favour shown of her
(Or not the like, yet too much near the like)
Toward Rizzio ; but such men, seeing visionary,
Run wide in talk, and sleep with speech awake
And sight shut fast : 'are you not of my mind ?

MORTON

I am most of theirs whose mind is most toward hers,
As whose should be most noble ; but in truth
Mine own is moved to hear her gracious heart
Mismade of, her clear courtesies misread,
Misliked her liking, her goodwill maligned,
Even of his mouth who owes life, breath, and place,
Honour and title, even to that clear goodwill,
To that her grace, liking, and courtesy.

MARY BEATON

You mean our lord and hers and king of Scots ?

MORTON

As kingly a king as masterful a lord,
And no less hers than ours ; as strong each way.

MARY BEATON

And he misreads so much the queen's pure heart
As to mistake aloud her manner of life,
And teach the world's broad open popular ear
His graceless commentary on her mere grace

And simple favour shown a simple knave,
Her chamber-child, her varlet ? a poor man,
Stranger, skilled little in great men's policies
—Which is strange too, seeing he hath had some
 chance

To learn some tricks of courts and embassies,
Being therein bred, and not so very a fool
But one might teach him—yet no doubt a man,
Save for such teaching, simple and innocent ;
Only what heart, what spirit and wit he has,
Being hot and close as fire on the old faith's side
And the French party's—if his wit were great,
It might do more than simple service soon,
Having her heart as 'twere by the ear which leans
Still toward his saying or singing ; but ye know
There is no peril in him, and the king
More fool than he a knave.

MORTON

Well, I know not ;
My skill is small in tunes, yet I can tell
Discord between king's ear and people's tongue,
Which hearing as in spirit I forehear
Harsh future music in a state mistuned,
If such men lay but hand upon the keys,
Touch ne'er so slight a string of policy
With ne'er so light a finger : I would the queen,
For the dear faith I bear her, saw but this,
Or that the lords were heavier-eyed to see.

MARY BEATON

Are they so keen of soul as of their sight,
To slay wrong as to see wrong ?

MORTON

'Faith, with us
The hand is matched against the eye for speed ;
And these no slower in stroke of sight and sword
Than their sharp-sighted swift-souled forefathers.
I say not this that you should gather fear
Out of my saying to sow in the ear of the queen ;
But for truth's sake ; and truly I do not fear
That I have put fear in you, for you seem
Not lightly fearful to me.

MARY BEATON

I would not be,
Where I might keep good heart and open eye
Nor blind nor fevered with foolhardiness,
As here meseems I may keep ; for I see
No hurt yet nor hurt's danger steer in sight,
Save the mere daily danger of high-raised heads
To be misspoken and misseen of men,
Which is not for high-seated hearts to fear.

MORTON

Her heart is high enough, and yours as hers ;
You shall do well to hold your courage fast,
Keeping your wits awake ; whereof myself
I make no doubt, howbeit men fear the queen,
Having our bitter folk and faith to fight,
Out of sharp spirit and high-heartedness
May do such things for love's sake or for wrath's
As fools for fear's sake ; which were no less harm
(Turning her wit and heart against herself)
Than to be coward or witless. Fare you well ;
I will not doubt but she is well advised. *[Exit.*

MARY BEATON

He is but dead by this then. I did know it ;
And yet it strikes upon me sudden and sharp,
As a thing unforethought on. It is strange
To have one's foot as mine is on the verge,
The narrowing threshold of a thing so great,
To have within one's eyeshot the whole way,
The perfect reach of fate from end to end,
From life to life replying and death to death.
This is the first hour of the night, and I
The watcher of the first watch, by whose lamp
The starless sky that grows toward birth of stars
And the unlit earth and obscure air are seen
Pale as the lamp's self yet not well alight.
Yet by the light of my heart's fire, and mind
Kindled, I see what fires of storm, what flaws,
What windy meteors and cross-countering stars,
Shall be through all the watches to the dawn
And bloodlike sunrise of the fire-eyed day.
I am half content already ; and yet I would
This watch were through.

Enter the QUEEN, RIZZIO, and MARY SEYTON

QUEEN

Nay, it is later, sure :
I am idle, I am idle, and flattered ; you say wrong,
To find my sloth some pardonable plea,
Which is not pardonable ; a perfect sin,
One writ among the sorest seven of all ;
Enough to load the soul past penitence.
Am I not late indeed ? speak truth and say.

RIZZIO

To watchers the sun rises ever late
Though he keep time with summer ; but your grace
Keeps earlier than the sun's time.

QUEEN

'Tis but March,
And a scant spring, a sharp and starveling year.
How bitter black the day grows ! one would swear
The weather and earth were of this people's faith,
And their heaven coloured as their thoughts of heaven,
Their light made of their love.

RIZZIO

If it might please you
Look out and lift up heart to summer-ward,
There might be sun enough for seeing and sense,
To light men's eyes at and warm hands withal.

QUEEN

I doubt the winter's white is deeper dyed
And closer worn than I thought like to be ;
This land of mine hath folded itself round
With snow-cold, white, and leprous misbelief,
Till even the spirit is bitten, the blood pinched,
And the heart winter-wounded ; these starved slaves
That feed on frost and suck the snows for drink,
Hating the light for the heat's sake, love the cold :
We want some hotter fire than summer or sun
To burn their dead blood through and change their
veins.

RIZZIO

Madam, those fires are all but ashen dust :
'Tis by the sun we have now to walk warm.
If I had leave to give good counsel tongue
And wisdom words to work with, I would say
Rather by favour and seasonable grace
Shall your sweet light of summer-speaking looks
Melt the hard mould of earthen hearts, and put
Spring into spirits of snow. Your husband here,
Who was my friend before your lord, being grown
Doubtful, and evil-eyed against himself,
With a thwart wit crossing all counsel, turns
From usward to their close fierce intimacy
Who are bitterest of the faction against faith,
And through their violent friendship has become
His own and very enemy, being moved
Of mere loose heart to vex you. Now there stands
On the other hand, in no wise bound to him,
But as your rebel and his enemy
Cast forth condemned, one that called home again
Might be a bond between the time and you,
Tying the wild world tamer to your hand,
And in your husband's hot and unreined mouth
As bit and bridle against his wandering will.

QUEEN

What name is his who shall so strengthen me?

RIZZIO

Your father gave him half a brother's name.

QUEEN

I have no brother ; a bloodless traitor he is
Who was my father's bastard born. By heaven,
I had rather have his head loose at my foot
Than his tongue's counsel rounded in mine ear.

RIZZIO

I would you had called him out of banishment.

QUEEN

Thou art mad, thou art mad ; prate me no more of
him.

RIZZIO

He is wise, and we need wisdom ; penitent,
And God they say loves most his penitents ;
Stout-hearted and well-minded toward your grace,
As you shall work him, and beguizable
Now at your need if you but will he be ;
And God he knows if there be need of such.

QUEEN

No need, no need ; I am crowned of mine own heart
And of mine own will weaponed ; am I queen
To have need of traitors' leave to live by, and reign
By the God's grace of these ? I will not have it ;
Toward God I swear there shall be no such need

RIZZIO

Yet if there were no need, less harm it were
To have him easily on your royal side
While the time serves that he may serve you in—
Less harm than none, and profit more than less.

QUEEN

He is a misborn traitor and heretic ;
And of his own side baffled, a flat fool,
Who thought to have comfort of Elizabeth,
Large furtherance of my sweet-souled sister's love,
Grace and sure aid of her good plighted word,
Her honourable and precious plighted word,
And secret seal to help him ; as she durst not,
Yea, she would fain and durst not.

RIZZIO

Please you note——

QUEEN

It shall not please me ; I say she hath made him
kneel,
(And this does please me indeed) hath seen him down,
Seen him and spurned him kneeling from her foot,
As my born traitor and subject. David, nay,
But hath thy careful love not made thee mad,
Whose counsel was my sword against him once ?
Why, thou wast sworn his slayer, and all that while
He held up head against us thy one word
Bade strike him dead of all men. What, hast thou
Fairly forgot his purpose, were I taken,

To speed thee out of life ? his secret bond,
Sealed with himself in spirit, thou shouldst die ?
Wast thou not trothplight with that soulless boy,
Ere he might thee, to rid him out of life ?
Nay, and thou knowest how dear a cause I have,
And thou, to slay him when the good chance comes,
Which God make speedy toward us ; by my hand,
Too little and light to hold up his dead head,
It was my hope to dip it in his life
Made me ride iron-mailed, a soldieress,
All those days through we drove them here and there,
Eastward from Fife, and hither and forth again,
And broken to the border ; yea, all day
I thought how worth his life it were to ride
Within the shot-length of my saddlebow
And try my poor and maiden soldiership.
And now I am bidden, and you it is bid me,
Reach my hand forth forgivingly and meek
To strike with his for love and policy ?
He is beaten and broken, without help of hope,
Who was mine enemy ever, and ever I knew
How much he was mine enemy ; and now maimed,
Wounded, unseated from his power of place,
Shall I raise up again and strengthen him,
Warm and bind up his cold and o'erbled wounds
With piteous cordials ? nay, but when I do,
May he have strength to wreak his will on me,
And I be flung under his feet ! beside,
He was your mocking-stock this short while since,
You swore, men tell me, Daniot told it me,
Your ghostly man of counsel—why, to him,
He says, you swore the bastard should not bide
With you in Scotland ; it made anger at you,
Put passion in their mouths who bear you hard,

That you should threaten kinglike. Hath he moved
you

To change your heart and face toward him at once,
Or do you mock, or are struck mad indeed,
That now you turn to bid me cry him home,
Make much of him and sing him to my side?

RIZZIO

For all this, madam, if I be not mad,
It were well done to do it. He is a man
Well-loved, well-counselled, and though fast in faith,
Yet howsoever in strong opinion bound,
Not so much overridden of his own mind
As to love no man for faith's single sake ;
No fire-brained preacher nor wild-witted knave,
But skilled and reared in state and soldiership.
What doth it need you to misthink of me ?
Say it is but this jewel he sends me here
That pleads his part before you ; say I am his
And not your servant, or not only of you
Made and again unmakeable ; 'tis truth,
He hath given me gifts to be his counsel to you,
And I have taken, and here I plead his part,
Seeing my life hangs upon your life, and yours,
If it be full and even and fortunate
In spite of foes and fears and friends, must hang
On his, unbound from these and bound to you.
We have done ill, having so mighty a match,
So large a wager on this turn of time,
To leave the stakes in hand of a lewd boy,
A fool and thankless ; and to save the game
We must play privily and hold secret hands.

QUEEN

I will not have his hand upon my part,
Though it were safe to sweep up gold and all.

RIZZIO

But till our side be strong ; then cast him off,
When he hath served to strengthen you so much
You have no need of any strength of his.
Bear with him but till time be and we touch
The heart of the hour that brings our chance to catch
Hope by the flying hair, and to our wheel
Bind fortune and wind-wavering majesty,
To shift no more in the air of any change,
But hang a steady star ; then, when the faith
Sits crowned in us that serve her, and you hold
The triple-treasured kingdom in your lap,
What shall forbid you set a sudden foot
Where it may please you, on their hearts or heads
That in their season were found serviceable,
And now are stones of stumbling ? Time shapes all :
And service he may do you, or else offence,
Even as you handle this sharp point of time,
To turn its edge this wary way or that ;
And for the land and state, why, having served,
He may be seasonably stript out of these
When you would do some friend a courtesy
Who has still been found secret and Catholic,
A lantern's eye of counsel in close dark,
While he did blind man's service ; but till then
Let him keep land and name, and all he will,
And blindly serve to the blind end in trust,
To wake a naked fool. That this may be
I am firm in faith, may it be but with your will.

QUEEN

He will not help us beat his own faith down ;
He is no hawk to seel and then to unhood,
Fly at strange fowl and pluck back blind again.

RIZZIO

Bethink you, madam, he only of all his kind
Stood out against men hotter in heresy,
Spake down their speeches, overbore Pope Knox,
Broke with his cardinal's college of shrewd saints,
In your free faith's defence, that would have barred
you
From custom of religion ; and I wot,
Save for his help, small help had found my queen
From Huntley or Hamilton, her faith-fellows,
Or any their co-worshippers with her.

QUEEN

Thou art ever saying them wrong ; they are stout
and sure,
Even they that strove for honour's sake with us :
Their one least fault I am minded to forgive ;
True friends in faith, my dear own blood and kin,
No birthless bastards nor mistitled men.
It pleased me bid him into banishment,
And shall not lightly please me bid him back.

RIZZIO

Yet some men banished for no less a cause
It has been known you have loosed from banishment.
I tell you for true heart.

QUEEN

Nay, I well know it ;
You are good and faithful to us, God quit it you,
And well of us loved back ; how much, you know,
But more than is our fear of men's missaying.
For me, I find no such foul faultiness
In the lord Bothwell but might well be purged
After long trial of English prison-bands
And proof of loyal lips and close true heart
Whereout no gaoler could pluck dangerous speech,
And then with overpassing to and fro
The strait sea wide enough to wash him white
'Twixt France and us : and all this jarring year
You have seen with what a service, in full field,
Oft in our need he hath served us ; nor was it
Such matter of treason and nowise pardonable
To mix his wits with Arran's broken brain
In their device to entrap mine hand with his
For high state's sake and strong-winged policy,
When he was matched with me in most men's mouths
And found not yet for changeling or for fool.
But howsoever, it pleased me pardon him ;
And a stout spear for warden have I won.
I have help myself in help of him, who now
Hath with good works undone his dead misdeeds,
And left their memory drowned in the under sea
That swept them out and washed him in again,
A man remade ; and fail me whoso fails,
Him I hold fast my friend ; but those cast out
That rose up right between my will and me
To make me thrall and bondslave to their own,
Giving me prison and them swift banishment
Whom I gave honour, and cast the crown away,

And break the old natural heart of royalty,
For foul faith's sake or craft of their miscreed ;
That smote with sword or speech against all state,
Not through blind heat or stumbling hardihood,
But hate of holiness and height of mind,
Hateful to kingly truth, haters of kings ;
Them though I pardon I would not take to trust,
Nor bind up their loose faith with my belief,
For all assurances of all men born.
Besides, I hate him, singly.

RIZZIO

I have said, and say ;
Do you as time will turn it ; time turns all.

QUEEN

I do believe there is no man's estate
So miserable, so very a helpless thing,
So trodden under and overborne as mine.
For first the man that I set up for lord,
For master of mine and mate of only me,
Have I perforce put forth of my shamed bed
And broken on his brows the kingless crown,
Finding nor head for gold nor hand for steel
Worth name of king or husband, but the throne
Lordless, the heart of marriage husbandless,
Through his foul follies ; then in the utter world,
In the extreme range and race of my whole life
Through all changed times and places of its change,
Having one friend, I find a foe of him
To my true sense and soul and spirit of thought
That keeps in peace the things of its own peace,
Secret and surely ; in faith, this frets my faith,

Distunes me into discord with myself,
That you should counsel me against my soul.
I pray you do not.

RIZZIO

Nay, I will no more.
But if you take not Murray again to trust
At least in short sweet seeming for some while,
So to subdue him as with his own right hand
And all chief with him of his creed and crew,
Then, cleaving to the old counsel, suddenly
Have him attainted, and being so brought in
By summons as your traitor, with good speed
Have off his head ; let him not live to turn ;
Choose you sure tongues to doom him, hands to
rid,
And be his slaying his sentence ; for the rest,
Make to you friends Argyle and Chatelherault
And such more temperate of their faction found
As may be servants to your pardoning hand
If they be separable ; but anywise
In pardoning these forgive not half his fault
With half their pardon ; cut no branch of his
But the root only ; strike not but at heart
When you strike him ; he hath done and borne too
much
To live 'twixt that and this unreconciled,
Having on this hand his conspiracy,
On that your proclamation ; his head priced,
His life coursed after with hot hound and horn,
His wife thrust forth hard on her travelling time
With body soft from pangs and delicate
To roam in winter-bound and roofless woods ;
These things not wholly with your grace wiped off

And washed with favour and fair-faced love away
Must work within him deadly and desperate.

QUEEN

Now

I find your counsel in you, no strange tongue,
But the old stout speech and sure ; and this same
day

Will I set hand to it. I have chosen the lords
That shall attain in council these men fled
Of mortal treason ; and some 'two hours hence
My tongue through their strange lips shall speak him
dead

Who is only my heart's hated among men.
I am gay of heart, light as a spring south-wind,
To feed my soul with his foretasted death.
You know the reason I have, you know the right
And he the danger of it, being no fool,
For fool he is not ; I would he were but fool.
O, I feel dancing motions in my feet,
And laughter moving merrily at my lips,
Only to think him dead and hearsed, or hanged—
That were the better. I could dance down his life,
Sing my steps through, treading on his dead neck,
For love of his dead body and cast-out soul.
He shall talk of me to the worm of hell,
Prate in death's ear and with a speechless tongue
Of my dead doings in days gone out. Sweet lord,
David, my good friend and my chancellor,
I thank you for your counsel.

RIZZIO

May it be
Prosperously mine ! but howsoever, I think

It were not well, when this man is put down,
Though Lethington be wily or Melville wise,
To make your stay of any other man.

QUEEN

I would I had no state to need no stay ;
God witness me, I had rather be reborn
And born a poor mean woman, and live low
With harmless habit and poor purity
Down to my dull death-day, a shepherd's wife,
Than a queen clothed and crowned with force and
fear.

RIZZIO

Are you so weary of crowns, and would not be
Soon wearier waxen of sheepfolds ?

QUEEN

'Faith, who knows ?

But I would not be weary, let that be
Part of my wish. I could be glad and good
Living so low, with little labours set
And little sleeps and watches, night and day
Falling and flowing as small waves in low sea
From shine to shadow and back, and out and in
Among the firths and reaches of low life :
I would I were away and well. No more,
For dear love talk no more of policy.
Let France and faith and envy and England be,
And kingdom go and people ; I had rather rest
Quiet for all my simple space of life,
With few friends' loves closing my life-days in
And few things known and grace of humble ways—

A loving little life of sweet small works.
Good faith, I was not made for other life ;
Nay, do you think it ? I will not hear thereof ;
Let me hear music rather, as simple a song,
If you have any, as these low thoughts of mine,
Some lowly and old-world song of quiet men.

RIZZIO

Then is the time for love-songs when the lip
Has no more leave to counsel ; even so be it ;
I will sing simply, and no more counsel you.

QUEEN

Be not unfriends ; I have made you wroth indeed,
Unknowing, and pray you even for my no fault
Forgive and give me music ; I am athirst
For sweet-tongued pardon only.

RIZZIO

If this be harsh,

The pardon be for fault enforced of mine.

Love with shut wings, a little ungrown love,
A blind lost love, alit on my shut heart,
As on an unblown rose an unfledged dove ;
Feeble the flight as yet, feeble the flower.
And I said, show me if sleep or love thou art,
Or death or sorrow or some obscurer power ;

Show me thyself, if thou be some such power,
If thou be god or spirit, sorrow or love,
That I may praise thee for the thing thou art.
And saying, I felt my soul a sudden flower
Full-fledged of petals, and thereon a dove
Sitting full-feathered, singing at my heart.

Yet the song's burden heavier on my heart
Than a man's burden laid on a child's power.
Surely most bitter of all sweet things thou art,
And sweetest thou of all things bitter, love ;
And if a poppy or if a rose thy flower
We know not, nor if thou be kite or dove.

But nightingale is none nor any dove
That sings so long nor is so hot of heart
For love of sorrow or sorrow of any love ;
Nor all thy pain hath any or all thy power,
Nor any knows thee if bird or god thou art,
Or whether a thorn to think thee or whether a flower.

But surely will I hold thee a glorious flower,
And thy tongue surely sweeter than the dove
Muttering in mid leaves from a fervent heart
Something divine of some exceeding love,
If thou being god out of a great god's power
Wilt make me also the glad thing thou art.

Will no man's mercy show me where thou art,
That I may bring thee of all my fruit and flower,
That with loud lips and with a molten heart
I may sing all thy praises, till the dove
That I desire to have within my power
Fly at thy bidding to my bosom, love ?

Clothed as with power of pinions, O my heart,
Fly like a dove, and seek one sovereign flower,
Whose thrall thou art, and sing for love of love.

QUEEN

It sings too southerly for this harsh north ;
This were a song for summer-sleeping ears,
One to move dancing measures in men's feet
Red-shod with reek o' the vintage. Who went there ?
What, hear you not ?

MARY SEYTON

My lord of Bothwell's foot :
His tread rings iron, as to battle-ward.

QUEEN

Not his, it was not. See if it be indeed.
'Twas a good song. Something he had with me—
I thank you for your song—I know not what.
Let him come in. Sir, be with us to-night—
I knew it was late indeed—at supper-time.

RIZZIO

Madam, till night I take my loyal leave.
God give you good of all things. [Exit.

QUEEN

Doth he mock me ?
I care not neither ; I know not. Stay with us.

Enter BOTHWELL

Good morrow, sir ; we bade you, did we not ?
Be with us after noon ; 'tis not noon near,
And you are truer than your own word ; and that,
'Tis a true man's and trusty.

BOTHWELL

True it should be,
Madam, if truth be true, and I your thrall
And truth's for your sake.

QUEEN

I would know of you—
I know not what—something there was to know.
I would you were not warden—as in truth
I think to unmake you—of the marches there.
'Tis a fierce office. You have a royal sword,
At least a knightly ; I would not see it hacked rough
In brawling border dangers.

BOTHWELL

Anywhere
Hand, hilt, and edge are yours, to turn and take,
Use or throw by, you know it.

QUEEN

I know it indeed.
I have not many hearts with me, and hold
Precious the hearts I have and the good hands.
Ladies, we have somewhat with our servant here
That needs no counsel and no ear of yours,
So gives you leave. [*Exeunt* MARIES.
I know not why they are gone ;
I have nothing with you secret.

BOTHWELL

Yea, one thing ;
You cannot help it ; your face and speech and look
Are secret with me in my secret heart.

QUEEN

I know not that ; I would I did know that.
'Tis yet not twelve days since I saw you wed
To my dear friend, and with what eye you know
Who would not, for all love that I might make
And suit to you, give ear to me and be
In mine own chapel at the holy mass
Made one with her ; for all the feast we kept,
No jewel of mine bequeathed your wife might buy
Consent of you to take her wedded hand
After the church-rite of her faith and mine ;
And how much love went with your policy
I cannot tell ; yet was my will content
That you should wed her name and house, to bring
The race of Gordon on our side again,
And have its ruin rebuild'd and its might
Restored to do us service ; so you said,
And so I thought I knew your mind to stand ;
Being so fast bound to me, I need not doubt
She could but hold you by the hand, and I
That had you by the heart need grudge not that,
While time gave order, and expediency
Required of us allowance ; but in faith
I know not whether there be faith or no
Save in my heart wherein I know too sure
How little wisdom is to trust in man.
So comes it, as you see, for all my show,
I am ill at heart and tired.

BOTHWELL

'Tis your own blame.

QUEEN

Yea, now, what would you have me? I am yours
to do it :

But you say nothing ; yet you say too much.
My blame it is, my weary waste of breath,
My wretched hours and empty bloodless life,
My sleepy vigils and my starting sleeps,
All by my fault—if it be fault to be
More than all men loving, all women true,
To hunger with the foodless heart of grief
And wither with the tearless thirst of eyes,
To wander in weak thought through unsown fields
Past unreaped sheaves of vision ; to be blind,
Weak, sick and lame of spirit and poor of soul,
And to live loveless for love's bitter sake
And have to food loathing, and shame for drink,
And see no cease or breach in my long life
Where these might end or die ; my fault it is,
And I will kill my fault : for I that loved
Will live to love no living thing again.

BOTHWELL

As you will, then.

QUEEN

Nay, do not tread on me ;
I am lying a worm out of your way, and you
Turn back to bruise me. I am stricken sore enough ;
Do not worse wound me ; I am hurt to the heart.
You change and shift quicker than all good things,
That all change quickly : I am fast, and cannot
change.

If you do hold me so, fast in your heart,
You should not surely mock me.

BOTHWELL

I mock you not.
You are looser and lighter-tempered than the wind,
And say I mock you : 'tis you mock yourself,
And much more me that wot not of your mind,
What would you have and would not.

QUEEN

Nothing, I,
Nothing but peace, and shall not. By my faith,
I think no man ever loved woman well.
You laugh and thrust your lips up, but 'tis truth,
This that I think, not your light lewd man's thought,
But in my meaning it is bitter true.
By heaven, I have no heart for any on earth,
Any man else, nor any matter of man's,
But love of one man ; nay, and never had.

BOTHWELL

I do believe it, by myself I do,
Who am even the self-same natured ; so I know it.

QUEEN

What heart have you to hurt me ? I am no fool
To hate you for your heat of natural heart.
I know you have loved and love not all alike,
But somewhat all ; I hate you not for that.
When have I made words of it ? sought out times
To wrangle with you ? crossed you with myself ?

What have I said, what done, by saying or deed
To vex you for my love's sake? and have been
For my part faithful beyond reach of faith,
Kingdomless queen and wife unhusbanded,
Till in you reigning I might reign and rest.
I have kept my body, yea from wedded bed,
And kept mine hand, yea from my sceptre's weight,
That you might have me and my kingdom whole ;
What have these done to take you, what to keep,
Worth one day's doing of mine yet? Ah, you know,
For all the shape and show of things without,
For all the marriage and the bodily bond
And fleshly figure of community,
I have loved no man, man never hath had me whole,
I am virgin toward you : O my love, love, love,
This that is not yours in me I abhor,
I pray God for your sake it may be false,
Foolish and foul : I would not have it man,
Not manlike, and not mine, it shall not be,
Being none of love's, and rootless in my soul,
Not growing of my spirit but my blood ;
I hate myself till it be born.

BOTHWELL

Ay, sweet,
You talk now loud of love, but ten days since
Was I not bid love well your friend, and be
True husband to her? what sweet-tongued preacher
then
Taught me how faith should best be kept by change
Of passionate fear and pleasure and bright pain
And all their strange sharp sweet solitudes
For such good gifts as wisdom gives and takes

From hand to married hand of them that wed?
Whose counsel was this wisdom? whose command
This that set sorrow and silence as one seal
On the shut lips of foolishness and love?

QUEEN

I bade you not be wise; or if I bade,
It was to be obeyed not.

BOTHWELL

Then indeed
I did obey not, who did foolishly
To do your bidding.

QUEEN

Mine? did I say, go?
Did I say, love her? did I say, hate me?
As you must hate to love her. Yea, perchance
I said all this; I know not if I said;
But all this have you done; I know that well.

BOTHWELL

Indeed I have done all this if aught I have,
And loved at all or loathed, save what mine eye
Hath ever loathed or loved since first it saw
That face which taught it faith and made it first
Think scorn to turn and look on change, or see
How hateful in my love's sight are their eyes
That give love's light to others.

QUEEN

Tell her so,
Not me ; I care not though you love your wife
So well that all strange women's eyes and mine
Are hateful to you. O, what heart have I,
That jest and wrangle ? but indeed I thought
You should do well to love her not, but wed,
And make you strong and get us friends—but, nay,
God knows I know not what I thought, or why,
When you should wed her : now I think but this,
That if one love not she does well to die,
And if one love she does not well to live.
I pray you, go ; not for my love who pray,
But that for love's sake we thought well to part,
And if we loved not it was well indeed.
Go.

BOTHWELL

To what end ? and whither ? whencesoe'er,
I must come back.

QUEEN

Not to my feet, not mine ;
Where should his end be for a married man
To lie down lightly with all care cast off
And sleep more sound than in love's lap ? for sleep
Between the two fair fiery breasts of love
Will rest his head not oft, nor oft shut eyes,
They say, that love's have looked on.

BOTHWELL

By that law
Mine eyes must wake for ever.

QUEEN

Nay, for shame,
Let not the fire in them that feeds on mine
Strike fire upon my cheeks ; turn off their heat,
It takes my breath like flame and smothers me.
What, when I bid ?

BOTHWELL

You have bid me do before
What you have chid me doing, but never yet
A thing so past all nature hard, nor now
Shall chide me for obedience.

QUEEN

Well-- ah me !—
I lack the heart to chide ; I have borne too much
And haply too much loved. Alas, and now
I am fain too much to show it ; but he that made
Made me no liar, nor gave me craft with power
To choose what I might hide at will or show.
I am simple-souled and sudden in my speech,
Too swift and hot of heart to guard my lips
Or else lie lightly : wherefore while I may,
Till my time come to speak of hate or love,
I will be dumb, patient as pity's self
Gazing from Godward down on things of the earth
And dumb till the time be : would I were God,
Time should be quicker to lend help and hand
To men that wait on him. I will not wait,
Lest I wait over long, no more than need,
By my long love I will not. Were I a man,
I had been by this a free man.

BOTHWELL

Be content.

If I have any wit of soldiership,
'Tis not far off from this to the iron day
That sets on the edge of battle, the bare blow,
All that we fight or fret for. 'Tis not like
Men will bear long with their own lingering hopes
And hearts immitigable and fiery fears
That burn above dead ashes of things quenched
Hotter for danger, and light men forth to fight,
And from between the breaking ranks of war
The flower must grow of all their fears and hopes,
Hopes of high promise, fears made quick by faith,
Angers, ambitions ; which to gather and wear
Must be our toil and garland.

QUEEN

My heart's lord,

I put my heart and hands into your hand
To hold and help ; do you what thing in the world
Shall seem well to you with them, they content
Live with your love or die. For my one part,
I would I had done with need of forging words
That I might keep truth pure upon my lips.
I am weary of lying, and would not speak word more
To mock my heart with and win faith from men
But for the truth's sake of my love, which lies
To save the true life in me.

BOTHWELL

It may be

You shall not long need to dress love in lies ;

This plighted plague of yours hath few men friends
To put their bodies between death and his.

QUEEN

Nay, I think not ; and we shall shape us friends
Out of the stuff of their close enmities
Wherewith he walks enwoven and wound about
To the edge and end of peril ; yet God knows
If I for all my cause would seek his death,
Whose lips have stained me with report as foul
As seem to mine their kisses that like brands
Sear my shamed face with fire to think on them ;
Yet would I rather let him live, would God
Without mine honour or my conscience hurt
Divide from mine his star or bid it set
And on my life lift up that light in heaven
That is my day of the heart, my sun of soul,
To shine till night shut up those loving eyes
That death could turn not from it though the fire
Were quenched at heart that fed them. Nay, no
more :
Let me go hence and weep not. [*Exit.*

BOTHWELL

Fire, in faith,
Enough to light him down the way of the worm
And leave me warmer. She went suddenly ;
Doth she doubt yet ? I think by God's light no—
I hold her over fast by body and soul,
Flesh holds not spirit closer. Now what way
To shift him over the edge and end of life
She laughs and talks of, yet keep fast my foot

On the strait verge of smooth-worn stony things
That we stand still or slide on ? 'Tis a shoal
Whereon the goodliest galleon of man's hope
That had no burning beacon such as mine
Lit of her love to steer by, could not choose
But run to wreck.

Re-enter MARY BEATON

MARY BEATON

Pray you, my lord, a word.
If you know aught of any new thing here
You will not be about the court to-night ;
If not, of my good will I counsel you,
Make hence in speed and secret, and have hope
Till the next day lighten your days to come.

BOTHWELL

I had rather the close moon and stars anight
Lit me to love-bed : what warm game is here
That I must keep mine hand out ?

MARY BEATON

Such a game
As you shall win and play not, or my wit
Is fallen in sickness from me. Sir, you know
I am your friend, I have your hap at heart,
Glad of your good and in your crosses crossed ;
I pray you trust me, and be close and wise,
For love of your own luck.

BOTHWELL

Tell me one thing ;
What hand herein shall Master David hold ?

MARY BEATON

I think he will not hold the like alive. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *The High Street*BURGESSES *and* PEOPLE

FIRST CITIZEN

Was it not shown long since when she came in
If God were glad of her? Two days and nights
Ere she brought strife among us, and again
Two nights and days when first we saw her face,
We saw not once by day the sun's in heaven,
The moon's by night, or any space of stars,
But thick sick mist corrupting the moist air
With drench of darkness, so that scarce at noon
Might man spy man a bow-shot's length away ;
And in man's memory on that day of the year
Was never a more dolorous face of heaven
Seen so to scowl on summer, as to speak
What comfort should come with her to this land ;
But then were most eyes blind.

SECOND CITIZEN

These five years since
Has God filled full of signs that they might see,

And sent his plagues to open them ; and most
This year or twain what portents of his hand
Have writ us down in heaven and trembling earth
For fearful flatterers and for faithless friends
Whose fear and friendship have no part in him,
Who knows not or can read not? famine, frost,
Storms of stars crossing, and strange fires in the air,
Have these no tongues to chide with ?

THIRD CITIZEN

Why, at first

A man that was no seer might see what end
Should come on us that saw the mass come in
And held our hand when man by man fell off
And heart by heart was cooled of all its heat
By sprinkled holy-water of the court
In five days' space, tempering the fervent edge
That had been fieriest on God's side ; Lord James,
Whose heart should weep now for it, or burn again
With shame to think how he made strong their hands
Who have cast him out among the banished lords
That lack their life in England, kept himself
The chapel-door, that none who loved God's law
Might slay the idolatrous and whorish priest
In his mid sin ; and after mass was said
Lord Robert and Lord John of Coldingham,
Who then had put not off our cause, but sat
With faithful men as fellows at God's board,
Conveyed him to his chamber : there began
The curse that yet constrains us, and must fall
On more than these ; of whom ye know this John
Is now before the face o' the fire of God,
And ere he died in desperate penitence,
Men say, sent warning to his sister queen

To turn her feet from those unquiet ways
Wherein they tread behind the Pope's to hell.

FIRST CITIZEN

His life was like his brother's of St. Cross,
As foul as need or friar's or abbot's be
That had no shameful part in a king's race,
And made such end as he that lives may make,
Whose bastard blood is proud yet, and insults
As might a prince's or a priest's indeed,
Being truly neither, yet with either name
Signed as in scorn ; these are our lords, whose lust
Breaks down men's doors to fetch their daughters
forth,

Even as his townsmen vexed the doors of Lot
Till God sent on them fire, who spares but these
For our shame's sake, because we spare, being men,
And let our hands hang swordless, and the wrath
Faint in our hearts, that though God send none down
Should be made fire to make a fire of them.

THIRD CITIZEN

These fools and foul that with them draw the king
To shame and riotous insolence which turns
Past hope and love to loathing—these, though vile,
Have in them less of poison than men's tongues
Who for the queen's love boast in what brief while
They will pluck down God and plant Antichrist,
And pull out Knox by the ears : thus Bothwell did,
And yet stands higher than any head save his
Who in disdain of danger fills his hands
As full of gold as are his faithless lips

Of lies and bloody counsels, and requires
No less than part in all their forfeit lands
That live in exile, so to turn his name
From loon to lord, from stranger into Scot,
And next the Pope's exalt it : while this king
Sets all his heart to fleshly foolishness,
The beastlike body that eats up the soul
As a bird snared and eaten : and in fear
Of God and Rimmon, with a supple soul,
Crooks his lithe knee for craft and bows his back
In either's house, yet seeks no prophet's leave,
Nor hears his saying that God shall spew the like
Out of his mouth.

SECOND CITIZEN

Yet this good grows in him,
That he has fallen in anger with the queen
For her knave's sake that was his closest friend,
Chief craftsman and main builder of the match ;
Yea, half his heart, brother and bedfellow,
Sworn secret on his side.

THIRD CITIZEN

There are who think
They have changed beds in very and shameful deed,
And halved more than their own hearts.

FIRST CITIZEN

He came here
On the Pope's party, against our kindly lords,
Against the duke, our first more natural head,
Against the good will of all godliness ;
And hath he now cast their cords from him ? nay,

This is the stormy sickness of ill blood
Swelling the veins of sin in violent youth
That makes them wrangle, but at home and heart,
Whatever strife there seem of hands abroad,
They are single-minded in the hate of God.
Did he not break forth into bitterness,
Being warned by Knox of youth and empty heart,
Yea, rail aloud as one made mad with wine?
Did he not lay devices with this knave
That now ye say defiles him in his wife
To rid the noble Murray from their way
That they might ride with hotter spurs for hell?

SECOND CITIZEN

God hath set strife betwixt them that their feet
Should not be long time out of their own snares.
Here be the men we look for comfort from,
Men that have God's mark sharp upon the soul;
Stout Ochiltree, and our main stay John Knox.

Enter JOHN KNOX *and* OCHILTREE

OCHILTREE

Have you yet hope that for his people's sake
God will leave off to harden her hard heart,
That you will yet plead with her?

JOHN KNOX

Nay, I know not;
But what I may by word or witness borne,
That will I do, being bidden: yet indeed
I think not to bring down her height of mind
By counsel or admonishment. Her soul

Is as a flame of fire, insatiable,
And subtle as thin water ; with her craft
Is passion mingled so inseparably
That each gets strength from other, her swift wit
By passion being enkindled and made hot,
And by her wit her keen and passionate heart
So tempered that it burn itself not out,
Consuming to no end. Never, I think,
Hath God brought up against the people of God
To try their force or feebleness of faith
A foe than this more dangerous, nor of mood
More resolute against him.

OCHILTREE

So long since
You prophesied of her when new come in :
What then avails it that you counsel her
To be not this born danger that she is,
But friends with God she hates and with his folk
She would root out and ruin ?

JOHN KNOX

Yet this time
I am not bidden of him to cast her off ;
I will speak once ; for here even in our eyes
His enemies grow great and cast off shame.
We are haled up out of hell to heaven, and now
They would fain pluck us backward by the skirt.
And these men call me bitter-tongued and hard
Who am not bitter ; but their work and they
Who gather garlands from the red pit-side
To make foul fragrance in adulterous hair,
And lift white hands to hide the fires of God,

Their sweetness and their whiteness shall he turn
Bitter and black. I have no hate of her,
That I should spare ; I will not spare to strive
That the strong God may spare her, and not man.

OCHILTREE

Yea, both, so be we have our lost lords home,
And the Pope's back-bowed changeling clean cast
out
And of a knave made carrion.

JOHN KNOX

For your first,
It grows as fruit out of your second wish ;
Come but the day that looks in his dead face,
And these that hate him as he hates all good
Shall have their friends home and their honour high
Which the continuance of his life keeps low.

OCHILTREE

Surely, for that, my hand or any's else
Were hot enough to help him to his end.
Yet when this thing is through and this plague purged
There stands a thorn yet in our way to prick—
The loose weak-witted half-souled boy called king.

JOHN KNOX

It is of him I am bidden speak with her,
Having but now rebuked him backsliding
In God's sight and his name. It may be yet,

Whether by foolishness and envious heart
Or by some nobler touch left in his blood,
Some pulse of spirit that beats to a tune more high
Than base men set their hearts by, he will turn
Helpful to Godward, serviceable in soul
To good men's ends in hate of that they hate :
I cannot say ; howbeit I fear not much
Her love of him will keep him fast to her ;
If he be drawn in bonds after her wheels,
It will be but of subtle soul and craft
The cords are woven that hold him. But, for me,
Love they or hate, my way is clear with them ;
Not for her sake nor his sake shall our Lord
Change counsel and turn backward ; and save his
What will or wit I have to speak or live
He knows who made it little for myself,
But for him great ; and be you well assured
Love of their love nor doubt of their dislike
Hath upon me more power than upon God.
For now I have seen him strive these divers years
With spirits of men and minds exorbitant,
Souls made as iron and their face as flame
Full hard and hot against him, and their wits
Most serpent-strong and swift, sudden of thought
And overflowing of counsel, and their hands
Full of their fortune, and their hearts made large
To hold increase of all prosperities ;
And all these are not, and I poor man am,
Because he hath taken and set me on his side
And not where these were ; I am content alone
To keep mine own heart in his secret sight
Naked and clean, well knowing that no man born
Shall do me scathe but he hath bidden him do,
Nor I speak word but as he hath set it me.

FIRST CITIZEN

Goes he to Holyrood ?

SECOND CITIZEN

Ay, sir, by noon.

FIRST CITIZEN

There is a kindling trouble in the air ;
The sun is halting toward the top of day ;
It will be shine or rain before he come.

OCHILTREE

What ails this folk to hover at our heel
And hang their eyes on you so heedfully ?

JOHN KNOX

They should be naturally disquieted
Seeing what new wind makes white the wave o' the
time
We ride on out of harbour. Sirs, ye have heard
News of your scathe and of shame done to God,
And the displeasure bites you by the heart,
I doubt not, if your hearts be godly given ;
Make your souls strong in patience ; let your wrath
Be rather as iron than as fuel in fire,
Tempered and not consumed ; heat that burns out
Leaves the hearth chillier for the flameless ash
Than ere the wood was kindled.

FIRST CITIZEN

Master Knox,
You know us whereto we would and by what way ;
This too much patience burns our cheeks with shame
That our hands are not redder than our face
With slaying of manslayers who spill blood of faith
And pierce the heart of naked holiness ;
It is far gone in rumour how the queen
Will set on high and feed on gold that man
Who was a scourge laid long since on the saints,
The archbishop of St. Andrew's, and perforce,
Dyed as he stands in grain with innocent blood,
Will make him mightier for our scathe and shame
Than eré the kindly people of the word
Had made him bare of bad authority.

SECOND CITIZEN

Likewise she hath given her seal imperial
To a lewd man and a stranger, her own knave,
Vile, and a papist ; that with harp and song
Makes her way smoother toward the pit of hell.

JOHN KNOX

What needs us count and cast offences up
That all we know of, how all these have one head,
The hateful head of unstanchèd misbelief ?
For sins are sin-begotten, and their seed
Bred of itself and singly procreative ;
Nor is God served with setting this to this
For evil evidence of several shame,
That one may say, Lo now, so many are they ;
But if one seeing with God-illuminèd eyes

In his full face the encountering face of sin
Smite once the one high-fronted head and slay,
His will we call good service. For myself,
If ye will make a counsellor of me,
I bid you set your hearts against one thing
To burn it up, and keep your hearts on fire,
Not seeking here a sign and there a sign,
Nor curious of all casual sufferances,
But steadfast to the undoing of that thing done
Whereof ye know the being, however it be,
And all the doing abominable of God.
Who questions with a snake if the snake sting?
Who reasons of the lightning if it burn?
While these things are, deadly will these things be;
And so the curse that comes of cursed faith.

FIRST CITIZEN

It is well said.

SECOND CITIZEN

Ay, and well done were well.

THIRD CITIZEN

We have borne too long for God, we that are men,
Who hath time to bear with evil if he would,
Having for life's length even eternity;
But we that have but half our life to live,
Whose half of days is swallowed of their nights,
We take on us this lame long-suffering,
To sit more still and patienter than God,
As though we had space to doubt in, and long time
For temperate, quiet, and questionable pause.

FIRST CITIZEN

Let the time come—

SECOND CITIZEN

Nay, we must make the time,
Bid the day bring forth to us the fruit we would,
Or else fare fruitless forth.

THIRD CITIZEN

It is nigh noon ;
There will be shine and rain and shine ere night.

SCENE III. *Holyrood*

*The QUEEN and RIZZIO ; MARY SEYTON and
MARY CARMICHAEL in attendance*

QUEEN

Is he so tender-tongued ? it is his fear
That plucks the fang out from his hate, and makes
A stingless snake of his malignant heart ;
He hath a mind, or had he a mind at all,
Would have a mind to mischief ; but his will
Is a dumb devil.

RIZZIO

Why, fear then and no love
Will make faith in him out of falsehood's self,
And keep him constant through unstableness.

QUEEN

Fear that makes faith may break faith ; and a fool
Is but in folly stable. I cannot tell
If he indeed fear these men more than me ;
Or if he slip their collar, whether or no
He will be firm on my side, as you say,
Through very lightness ; but I think not of him,
Steadfast or slippery. Would I had been that day
Handless, when I made one his hand with mine !
Yet it seemed best. I am spirit-sick and faint
With shame of his foul follies and loathed life,
Which hath no part but lewdness of a man,
Nor style of soul nor several quality,
Dividing men from men, and man from beast,
By working heart or complement of brain—
None, very none. I will not see him to-night.
I have given command to ensure our privacy.
Is it past noon ?

Enter DARNLEY and MARY BEATON

DARNLEY

You say she hath asked for me ?

MARY BEATON

Ay, and complainingly, as though her love
Were struck at by your absence.

DARNLEY

Love ! her love !
It were a cunning stroke should print a wound

In that which hath no substance, and no spirit
To feel the hurt. Well, I will speak to her.

QUEEN

How like a chidden bondman of his lord
Looks my lord now ! Come you from penance, sir ?
Has the kirk put you to no private shame
Besides the public tongue of broad rebuke ?
We are blessed in your penitence ; it is
A gracious promise for you.

DARNLEY

Penitence ?

QUEEN

You have a tender faith and quick remorse
That will bear buffets easily ; pray God
It pluck you absolution from their hands
Who are godly sparing of it. We have heard
A priest of theirs cast for incontinence
Hardly with thrice purgation of his shame
Redeemed himself to kirkward.

DARNLEY

I hear nought.

QUEEN

Nay, but you hear when these rebuke you of sin
In the full face and popular ear of men ;
You hear them surely, and patiently you hear,
And it shows in you godliness and grace
Praiseworthy from them ; for myself, my lord,
I have some foolish petulances in me

And stings of pride that shut me out from grace
So sought and bought of such men ; but your course
May teach me timelier humble-mindedness
And patience to get favour : which till now
I have never needed beg, and now should prove
A very witless beggar. Teach me words,
Pray you, to move men's minds with ; such great
men's
As your submission purchases to be
Good friends and patrons to you ; for I fear
Your Knox is not my friend yet.

DARNLEY

So I think.

Madam, I know not what you make of me,
Nor if your jest be seasonable or no ;
I am no fool nor implement of theirs,
Nor patienter of their irreverences
Than the queen's self ; if you endure such tongues,
Why, I may bear them.

QUEEN

Well and patiently ;
I praise your manhood's temper for it, and am
The happier for your royalty of spirit
That will not feel wrong done of baser men
To be at all wrong done you.

DARNLEY

Will you think it ?

Well then, I am so, I am just your thought,
You read me right, and this our friend reads too,
For I am plain and easy to read right.

QUEEN

Have you made time to say so?

DARNLEY

Ay, and this,
That it mislikes me—it gives me discontent
That men should——

QUEEN

Ay? that men should—anything—
Bear themselves manlike, or that men should be,
It is offence done openly to you?

DARNLEY

Nay, not offence, nor open; nought it is,
Or to me nought.

QUEEN

Nought as I think indeed.
You were about to chide us? well it is
You have so humble a wife of us and true,
To make your chidings fruitful, that your words
Bear and bring forth good seed of bettering change.
I pray you, when you chide me, that you make
Your stripes the gentler for my humbleness.

DARNLEY

I have no mind to jest and jape, and will—
And will not wrangle with you.

QUEEN

Will, and will not ?

They say a woman's will is made like that,
But your will yet is wilfuller than ours.

DARNLEY

Not as I think.

QUEEN

God better the king's thought,
And mind more tyrannous than is his place !

DARNLEY

If I be king——

QUEEN

And I be kingdomless,
And place be no place, and distinction die
Between the crown and curch—Well, on, our lord.

DARNLEY

Why am I out of counsel with you ? Whence
Am I made show of for a titular fool
And have no hand in enterprise of yours,
Nor tongue, nor presence ? Not alone my name
That is rubbed out and grated off your gold,
But myself plucked out of your register,
Made light account of, held as nothingness,
Might move me——

QUEEN

Whither ?

DARNLEY

To some show of wrath
More than complaint, if I were minded ill.
Here is a breach made with the English queen,
Our cousin of England, a wide-open breach,
A great-grown quarrel, and I no part of it,
Not named or known of.

QUEEN

You are the happier man
Heavenward, if blessed be the peaceable.

DARNLEY

The happier heavenward, being the worldlier shamed ;
The less I like it. You have suddenly cast forth
A man her servant and ambassador,
With graceless haste and instance, from the realm,
On barren charge of bare complicity
With men now banished and in English bounds,
But not attain of treason toward us yet
Nor deadly doomed of justice.

QUEEN

Not attain ?
Give not your spirit trouble for that ; the act
Is drawn by this against them, and the estates
Need but give warrant to their forfeiture
Now it has passed the lords of the articles ;
Take no care for it ; though it be sweet in you
And gracious, to show care of your worst foes
You have on earth ; that would have driven you forth

A shameful rebel to your cousin queen
And naked of our foreign favour here
That clothed you with unnatural royalty
And not your proper purple. Forth ; you say
I have done this wrong ?

DARNLEY

I do not say you have done
Wise work nor unwise ; but howbeit, I say
I had no part in aught of it, nor knew
With what a spur's prick you provoked her spleen
Who is not stingless to requite it you,
Nor with what scant of reason.

QUEEN

'Tis sad truth,
She shows no less disquiet mind than yours
Nor a less loud displeasure ; she was kind,
She says, well-willed to meward, but my sins,
Unkindliness, and soul's obduracy,
Have made her soft heart hard ; and for this fault
She will not ever counsel me again,
Nor cease to comfort my dear brother's need
With gold and good compassion : and I have
Even such a sister as brother of her as him,
And love alike and am like loved of them.
He wills me well, she swears, as she herself,
And, I'll re-swear it, she wills as well as he.

DARNLEY

Ay, we know whence this well-spring of your will
Takes head and current ; who must have brave wars
We know, fair field, broad booty to sweep up,

Space to win spurs in ; and what English gold
Must after battle gild his heels with them,
When he shall stand up in my father's stead
Lieutenant-general for you of the realm :
And who must have your brother's lands we know,
Investiture must have, and chancellorship,
And masterdom in council. Here he stands,
A worthy witness to it ; do you look on me ?
Is it not you must be the golden sir,
The counsel-keeper, the sole tongue of the head,
The general man, the goodly ? Did you send
Lord Bothwell hard at heel of him cast forth
To make his wrong sweet with sweet-spoken words,
And temper the sharp taste of outrage done
And heat in him of anger, with false breath ?
Why made you not your own tongue tunable
Who are native to soft speaking, and who hate
With as good heart as any Scot that hates
England ? or is her messenger your fool
To take blows from you and good words alike
As it shall chance him cross your morning mood
Angry or kindly ?

QUEEN

Sir, our chancellor,
We charge you that you answer not the duke.

DARNLEY

Duke ?

QUEEN

Ay, the duke of Rothsay ; whom we pray
Seek elsewhere some seemlier talking-stock
To flush his hot and feverish wit upon.

DARNLEY

Your chancellor? why went not such a man
With you before the lords of the articles
Now, an hour back, and yet but half day through,
To help you speak the banished lords to death?
Is't not the heart of the office, to see law
Punish law's traitors, as you bid them be
In the proof's teeth, who are honester than some
You bid be law's justiciaries of them?
Why went he not? 'twere no more shame nor praise
Than here to swell in state beside your own.

QUEEN

Must we crave leave to bid you twice take leave,
Or twice to ask what would you?

DARNLEY

Truly this,
A mere mean thing, an insignificance,
If you will once more hear—oh, nowise me,
But just the man whose name you take in mouth
To smite me on my face with—Master Knox.

QUEEN

Are you his usher going before his grace
No less than servant to his master-word?
Or is it penitence and submission makes you
In the holy way of honour and recompense
So high in office with him? Say, this time
For the usher's sake I'll speak with the usher's lord:
Yet if I mind 'twas I bade send for him

To speak of you his servant : for I hear
You did not at first stripe submit yourself
Nor take all penance with all patience, being
Brought hardly in time to harsh humility
Such as we see now ; which thing craves excuse
To make you gracious in your master's eyes,
If it be true—I would not think it were—
You brake in anger forth from the High Kirk,
Being there rebuked, and would not sit at meat,
But past away to hawking in pure rage
After an hour or twain of high discourse
Heard with plain show of sharp unthankfulness ;
Which that you now repent and would redeem
I will bear witness for you to your lord
To make your penitential peace with him.
Let him come in.

DARNLEY

I am no messenger.

QUEEN

Where is my chamberlain ? bid Marnock here—
Let the man in and one man only more,
Whoever it be ; we'll see him privily.
Our chancellor, and our no messenger,
We have no need of to dispute with him.

DARNLEY

If I go hence——

QUEEN

Why then you stay not here.

DARNLEY

But if I go at bidding——

QUEEN

Why, you go :
With the more speed, the less of tarriance made.
Let me not hold you half-way back : farewell.

[*Excunt DARNLEY and RIZZIO.*

I have not begun so luckily, nor set
So good a face on the first half of day,
Now to keep terms with mere tongue-traitors more.

Enter JOHN KNOX and JOHN ERSKINE OF DUN

So once we are met again, sir, you and I.
Set him before us.

JOHN KNOX

I am before your grace
Without man's haling or compulsive word :
Nor at these divers times you have sent for me
Have you found need to use me forcefully.

QUEEN

Well, let that be ; as verily meseems
'Tis I find forceful usage at your hands,
And handling such as never prince has borne
Since first kings were ; yet have I borne with it,
Who am your natural princess, and sat by
To hear your rigorous manner of speaking through
As loud against my kinsfolk as myself ;

Yea, I have sought your favour diligently
And friendship of my natural subject born
And reconcilment by all possible means ;
I have offered you at your own choice and time
Whenso it pleased you ever admonish me
Presence and audience ; yea, have shamed myself
With reasonless submission ; have endured
The naked edge of your sharp speech, and yet
Cannot be quit of you ; but here to God
I make my vow I will be once revenged.
Give me my handkerchief. I should take shame
That he can shame me with these tears, to make
Mine eyes his vassals.

JOHN KNOX

Madam, true it is
There have been divers seasons of dispute
Between your grace and me, wherein I have never
Found you offended : neither now would find
The offence I sought not ; yea, I knew this well,
If it shall please God break your prison-house
And lighten on your disimprisoned soul,
That my tongue's freedom shall offend you not.
For surely being outside the preaching-place
I think myself no breeder of offence
Nor one that gives man cause of wrath and wrong ;
And being therein, I speak not of myself
But as God bids who bids me, speaking plain,
Flatter no flesh on earth. Lo, here I stand,
A single soul and naked in his eye,
Constrained of him, to do what thing he will,
And dare and can none other. Hath he sent me
To speak soft words of acceptable things

In ladies' chambers or kings' courts, to make
Their ways seem gracious to them? I wot, no.
I am to bring God's gospel in men's ears,
And faith therein, and penitence, which are
The twain parts of it; but the chief o' the land
And all the main of your nobility
Give God no heed nor them that speak for God
Through flattering fear and ill respect of you;
And seeing if one preach penitence to men
He must needs note the sin he bids repent,
How should not I note these men's sin who choose
To serve affections in you and wild will
Rather than truth in God? This were lost breath,
To chide the general wrong-doing of the world
And not the very present sin that burns
Here in our eyes offensive; bid serve God,
And say not with what service.

QUEEN

Nay, but so
What is it to you or any saving me
How this man married to me bears himself?
With what sign-manual has God warranted
Your inquisition of us? What am I
That my most secret sanctuaries of life
And private passages of hours should be
Food for men's eyes or pavement for men's feet
To peer and pasture, track and tread upon,
Insult with instance? Am I only bound
To let the common mouth communicate
In my life's sweet or bitter sacrament,
The wine poured, the bread broken every day?
To walk before men bare that they may judge

If I were born with any spot or no,
And praise my naked nature ? to subject
Mine unsubmitted soul subordinate
To popular sight and sentence ? What am I
That I should be alone debarred, deposed,
From the poor right of poor men, who may live
Some hour or twain unchallenged of the day
And make to no man answer what they do
As I to mine must render ? who is this
That takes in hand such hard things and such high ?
Sir, what man are you that I need account
For this word said or that, or such things done,
Only to you or mainly, of myself ?
Yea, what are you within this commonwealth ?

JOHN KNOX

A man within it and a subject born,
Madam ; and howsoever no great man,
Earl, lord, nor baron to bear rule therein,
Yet has God made me a profitable man.
How abject I seem ever in your eye,
No member of the same unmeritable.
Yea, madam, this pertains not less to me
Than any of all your noble-nurtured men,
To warn men of what things may hurt the same,
So as I see them dangerous : and herein
My conscience and mine office with one tongue
Crave plainness of me : wherefore to yourself
I say the thing I speak in public place,
That what great men soever at any time
Shall be consenting to your lord's unfaith
Or flattering furtherance of unfaith in you,
They do what in them lieth to cast out Christ,

Banish his truth, betray his liberty
And free right of this realm, and in the end
Shall haply do small comfort to yourself.
And for him too, your husband, it may be
That as he spares not to dishonour God
For your delight, by service of the mass,
God will not spare to smite him by your hand
That faithlessly he fawns on to his loss.

QUEEN

When was there queen so handled in the world?
I would I could not weep ; for being thus used
I needs must never or now. Is this light day?
Am I asleep, or mad, or in a trance,
That have such words to beat about mine ears
And in mine eyes his present face who speaks?

ERSKINE OF DUN

Madam, I pray your grace contain your mood,
And keep your noble temperance of yourself,
For your high sake and honour, who are held
For excellence of spirit and natural soul
As sovereign born as for your face and place,
Kingdom and kingly beauty ; to whose might
The worthiest of the world, all Europe's chief,
Her choice of crowns, might gladly bow themselves
To find your favour. I beseech you think
That here is no disloyalty designed
Nor thing dishonourable ; for were men mad
Whose wits are whole, and false whose faiths are
 sound,
The very mouth of madness would speak sense,

The very tongue of treason would speak truth,
For love and service of your royalty ;
Blind curses bless, and red rebellion bow,
That came to burn and threaten. Do not dream
That a man faithful Godward and well loved
Can be to youward evil-willed, who have
Power on your natural and your born unfriends
To bind their goodwill to you.

QUEEN

Words, all words ;

I am weary of words : I have heard words enough
To build and break, if breath could break or build,
Centuries of men. What would they with me, sir ?
These my liege folk that love me to the death,
Their death or mine, no matter—my fast friends
Whose comfortable balms so bruise my head
It cannot hold the crown up—these good hands
That wring my wrist round to wrench out the staff
God set into mine own—these loving lips
That take my name upon them as to kiss
And leave it rank with foam of hateful speech ?
Must I be dead deposed, or must I live
Stript shameless, naked to the very name,
A crestless creature and displumed, that feeds
On charities and chances ? will they give
Me, their queen born, me, bread or dust to eat,
With a mouth water-moistened or a dry,
Beggared or buried ? shall I hold my head
In shameful fief and tenantry of these
For their least wind of any wrath that blows
To storm it off my shoulders ? What were I
That being so born should be born such a thing
As bondsmen might bemock the bondage of

And slaves contemn for slavery? Nay, no words :
A word may wound and no word heal again,
As none can me—whom all men's words may wound—
Who am liable to all buffets of men's tongues,
All stripes of all their scandals—and was born
To no such fear—and have nor tongue nor wit
To plead and gather favour—no such grace
As may get grace, no piteous skilfulness—
Only my truth and tears—and would to God
My tears and truth for you were wind and fire
To burn and blow corruption from the world,
And leave pure peace to breed where you plant war
And make the furrows fat with pestilence
And the grain swell with treason—but, too sure,
They too can hurt and heal not. I am soul-sick
With shame and bitter weakness ; yet, God's will,
I may take strength about me to put off
Some part of shame. Sir, you that make me weep,
By these my tears and my sharp shame of them
I swear you will not laugh to see me laugh,
When my time comes : you shall not ; I will have
Time to my friend yet—I shall see you, sir,
If you can weep or no, that with dry eyes
Have seen mine wet—I will try that—look to it.

JOHN KNOX

Madam, I speak in very eye of God,
I never took delight in any tears
Shed of God's creatures ; yea, for my self-sake,
I can but very hardly abide the tears
Of mine own boys whom mine own hand and love
Chastens, and much less can take any joy
In this the weeping of your majesty.

But seeing I have given you no offensive cause
Nor just occasion, but have spoken truth
After mine office as mine own place craves
Lest I, God's man, be mansworn to God's truth,
I must sustain, howbeit unwillingly,
Rather these tears drawn of your majesty
Than blood of mine own conscience stabbed to death
Or through my silence of my commonwealth
By my dumb treason wounded.

QUEEN

A fair word—

I thought it was forgotten of men's mouths
And only lived in the inner heat of the heart
Too sure to want the spelling of their speech.
Sir, you shall find it in my very tears,
This blood you fear for of your commonwealth,
And in the hurts of mine authority
The wounds it lies abed with ; what, God help,
Can the head bleed and not the body faint ?
Or wherein should the kingdom feel such maim
As in the kingship stricken ? there are you,
If you be true man, and each true man born
Subject and circled with the bound of rule,
Hurt to the heart. But heartless things are words ;
Henceforth I will not mix my speech with yours
In the way of disputation ever more,
Nor set against your tongue the plea of mine
To reason as its equal. Wait you here,
Here in the chamber : you, sir, come with me
To counsel in my cabinet sometime ;
We will return his answer.

[*Exeunt* QUEEN and ERSKINE OF DUN.]

MARY CARMICHAEL

She wept sore ;
I never saw her spirit, so chafed, so melt
And thaw to such mere passion ; this one time
He is sure attained.

MARY BEATON

Ay, she fain would dare
Upon the spur of the hour attaint him ; yet
What none dare else she durst not ; they will put
Force of fair words as bridle in the mouth
Of her wild will and reinless.

MARY SEYTON

She is wise,
And fights not wisdom, but being counselled well
Takes truce with time and tongueless policy.
What, will the man speak to us ? he looks so hard
With such fast eyes and sad—I had not thought
His face so great, nor presence.

JOHN KNOX

Ah, fair ladies,
How fair were this your life and pleasurable
If this might ever abide, and so in the end
With all this gay gear we might pass to heaven :
But fie upon that knave, Death, that will come
Whether we will or will not : and being come,
When he has laid on his assured arrest,
The foul worms will be busy with this flesh,
Be it never so fair and tender ; and the soul,

The silly soul shall be so feeble, I fear,
It can bear with it neither gold nor pearl,
Painting of face, garnish, nor precious stones.

MARY BEATON

Sir, for myself, small joy this were to me
That this life should live ever : nor would I
Care much by praying to stretch my days of life
Into more length, nor much to take with me
Garnish or gold ; but one thing I would fain
Have to go gravewards with me and keep it safe,
That you have cast no word or warning on,
And yet women, whose hearts are worldly worn
And by no creed of yours consolable
Nor gladness of your gospel, love its name
As dear as God's ; and its name is but rest.

JOHN KNOX

Rest has no other name but only God's.

MARY BEATON

But God has many another name than rest :
His name is life, and life's is weariness.

JOHN KNOX

Ay, but not his ; that life has lost his name ;
Peace is his name, and justice.

MARY BEATON

Ah, sir, see,
Can these two names be one name ? or on earth

Can two keep house together that have name
Justice and peace ? where is that man i' the world
Who hath found peace in the arms of justice lain
Or justice at the breast of peace asleep ?
Is not God's justice painted like as ours,
A strong man armed, a swordsman red as fire,
Whose hands are hard, and his feet washed in blood ?
It were an iron peace should sleep with him,
And rest were unrest that should kiss his lips.
What man would look on justice here and live,
Peace has no more part in him.

JOHN KNOX

Lady, nay,

That only peace indeed which is of God
Hath in the just man not a part but all,
But the whole righteous life and heart in him
Still peacefully possesses ; who hath not
Or loves not justice, he can love not peace,
For peace is just ; and that thing is not peace
That such men love, but full of strife and lies,
A thing of thorns and treasons. This were even
As if a man loving a harlot should
Praise her for maiden and himself for pure
To love such maidenhood, when any says
That he loves peace who loves not holiness,
For peace is holy. Yea, and if one seek
He shall find peace where bitterest justice is,
In the full fire and middle might of wrath,
Rather than where sloth sucks the lips of shame
Or fear with her foul brother unbelief
Lives in adultery ; strife is that which springs,
As a winged worm and poisonous, of their sheets ;
And in the slumberless and storm-strewn bed

That very war's self spreads for righteousness
Peace as a babe is born.

MARY BEATON

Would God it were,
For 'tis a bitter childbed : these long years
We look for fruit and none comes forth of it,
But yet more iron travail ; and ourselves,
Desiring justice, quite lose hold of peace,
And are distracted with our own fierce want
And hungry need of right unreachable.
Yet it may come, and then shall peace indeed.

JOHN KNOX

You talk against your habit.

Re-enter ERSKINE OF DUN

ERSKINE OF DUN

Master Knox,
The queen will no more hear you at this time,
But with good will and gracious mind will weigh
Your worth and worthy meaning in your words.

JOHN KNOX

It may be she will never hear me more.
Farewell, fair ladies ; may God look on you,
And give you chiefly comfort, which is grace.
[*Exeunt* JOHN KNOX and ERSKINE OF DUN.]

MARY SEYTON

Why did you prate so preacher-like with him ?

MARY BEATON

I cannot tell by asking of myself
Nor answer for your asking. Which of you
Shall wait at supper on the queen to-night?

MARY CARMICHAEL

None but her counsel of close hours, Argyle.

MARY BEATON

She sups with them—and in attendance there
Some two or three I heard of—one of these
No man of arms.

MARY SEYTON

What should they do with arms?
More need of lips to sing with.

MARY BEATON

Ay, to sing—
It is no matter of state they meet upon?

MARY SEYTON

Are your wits lost indeed, or do you jest?

MARY BEATON

True, it should be for no affairs of state
They sup at nightfall in the lesser room—
They three, and three to make the music up.

MARY SEYTON

What ails you at it ?

MARY BEATON

Nothing ; I ail nought.
I did but think what music he should make
After this preacher. Let us to the queen.

SCENE IV. *Darnley's Lodging*

DARNLEY and SIR GEORGE DOUGLAS

DARNLEY

I think our friend of Morton had grown slack
But for my spurring, uncle.

SIR GEORGE DOUGLAS

Nay, he is firm ;
You do him less right than you do yourself
To think he should need quickening.

DARNLEY

O, I know not,
What should I know ? what wit have I to know ?
I am a fool and have no forethought ! Why,
But for my resolute instance at this need—
I said to him, be resolute—and since then,
Some six or eight hours gone, I have heard such
things

As would put sense and passion in dead bones—
By God I have ; it shall be seen I have.
But are you sure it should be done to-night ?

SIR GEORGE DOUGLAS

Ay, surely.

DARNLEY

Well, I see no surety in it—
Methinks now every day we let him live
Blows hot the popular wrath of all the land
And makes us surer when we strike indeed
That all men's hearts will stab him with our hands.

SIR GEORGE DOUGLAS

By which account he might live long and die
An old white death and woundless. Is not this
The man whereof you told me some while since
How at close midnight, your wife's doors being
 locked,
You burst them open, and gat hold of him
Hid in a closet of her bedchamber,
Save for furred gown and shirt about the knave
Naked ? and must you take him so again
And he so twice get clear of you and laugh ?
You swore me that—what need to tell or swear,
If he must live still ? weeping, with clenched hands,
You swore it, praying me for our shame's sake send
Word to your uncle Ruthven ; but what need,
If there were no shame in the thing at all
Or but so little, as now so little it seems,
There is no haste to slay him ?

DARNLEY

Nay, you carp—
'Tis thus men ever catch at my good words
To turn them on their tongues and spit them out
Changed and discoloured. He shall die to-night.

SIR GEORGE DOUGLAS

Assuredly.

DARNLEY

I say so—mark, I say it,
I that have cause—how else could it be sure?
But sure it is—I say he shall not live.
Let us go seek Lord Morton out again
And tell him it is sworn we strike to-night.
How many of us have hands in it with me,
Who cannot with mine own hand as I would
Strike—it were shameful to me—were it not?
For mine own hand's sake.

SIR GEORGE DOUGLAS

There are hands enough
Without the shame done to your highness' hand :
Sufficeth us we have it set to the bond
That signs him dead ; nor need we sum their names
Whose hands will strike, not spare, for their own
sakes.

DARNLEY

Well, let us go to make my lord's faith sure
That it shall be no later than to-night.

SCENE V. *The Queen's Cabinet*

The QUEEN, RIZZIO, COUNTESS OF ARGYLE, LORD
ROBERT STUART, ARTHUR ERSKINE, *in attendance*

QUEEN

Have I not done a queenlike work to-day ?
I have made attaint my traitors of myself,
With no man at my hand to strengthen me
Have gone before the lords of the articles
And set my will upon them like a seal,
And they for their part set on their old friends
The bloody seal of treason signed of death
And countersigned of burning ignominy.
You were half fearful, you, lord chancellor,
You my good servant ; but I knew their necks
Were made to take the impression of my foot,
Their wills and souls the likeness of mine own,
And I have used them for the things they are.

COUNTESS OF ARGYLE

You have been right royal, madam, and your lovers
Have joyful cause to praise you.

QUEEN

Will you say it,
Who bear as much part in his blood as I
Of our dead father's giving ? then I think
No other tongue for love of Murray slain
Shall sting me though mine own speak off his head,
Once caught up out of England ; nay, I think
We shall get vantage of your lord's friend Knox
Ere many days be.

COUNTESS OF ARGYLE

Speed your majesty !
The cord were hallowed that should silence him.

QUEEN

Ay, though mine own hands twist it. To spin hemp
For such a throat, so loud and eloquent,
Should better please me and seem a quæulier thing
Than to weave silk and flower it with fine gold.
He hath a tongue to tame a tiger with,
Fright into fierce and violent reverence
The fearfulest earth's monsters. I do think
I like him better than his creed-fellows
Whose lips are softer toward me ; 'tis some sport
To set my wit to his, and match with mine
The shrewd and fiery temper of his spirit
For trial of true mastery ; yet to-day
He made me weep, weep mightily—by faith,
If there be faith in any lips of earth,
I think to live and laugh at his tears yet.

ROBERT STUART

I would the hand were on him that might make
His eyes weep red and drop out of their rings,
Looking on death. What reason gives him leave,
What right makes room for him to take his way
So past men's patience grown so masterful ?
Had I one half word's warrant of your grace
His tongue should not be long inside his lips.

QUEEN

I am no wife of Antony, to try
My needle's point against his tongue's edge ; yet
I have cause as good as Fulvia's, though his speech
Ring somewhat short of Roman. Here is one
That has that southern honey on his lips
Frozen as it seems up with this galling air
And not a note left golden, but his tongue
Nipt with the chill to death as with a knife
That cuts us short of music.

COUNTESS OF ARGYLE

Yea, my lord,
Why will you so discomfort the good hour
With tongueless sadness ? we have cause to chide
That having cause to sing find song to seek
And thought to find it ready.

RIZZIO

I have been sad
These two hours back ; I know not what it was
So struck me out of mirth, for I was merry,
And knew not why.

QUEEN

Nay, if you love me, sir,
You had reason to be merry with my mirth
Who am blithe to be found queen over my foes ;
I have been glad all this good day thereof
Save some few minutes that my subject-saint

Vexed even to mere intemperance ; but few tears
Wept out that little bitter part of day
And left it sweet. Have you not heard men say
This heaviness without a root of fear
Goes oft before some good ? now should there be
Some new thing hard upon us that will make
All good hearts glad. Have you no song to mock
The doubt away that mocks you ?

RIZZIO

At your will.

I am something yet in tune for such a song
As joy makes out of sorrow, when the thought
Plays with false grief for joy's sake. Please you
hear it
With such light audience as its worth is light ?

QUEEN

Ay, such a note should fit me for this time ;
After the tuneless toil of talking day
A light song lightly brings ill thoughts asleep.

RIZZIO (*sings*)

Lord Love went Maying
Where Time was playing,
In light hands weighing
Light hearts with sad ;
Crowned king with peasant,
Pale past with present,
Harsh hours with pleasant,
Good hopes with bad ;

Nor dreamed how fleeter
Than Time's swift metre,
O'er all things sweeter
How clothed with power,
The murderess maiden
Mistrust walks laden
With red fruit ruined and dead white
flower.

How close behind him
Ere man's faith find him,
How strong to bind him
With fears for bands,
Lest once beholden
Of man the golden
God's face embolden
All hearts and hands ;
For if doubt were not,
Whose sore shafts spare not,
Large life would care not
For death's poor hour,
Seeing all life's season
By love's sweet reason
Made wise would seem in his eyes a flower.

COUNTESS OF ARGYLE

Did you hear that ?

ROBERT STUART

What ?

QUEEN

Nothing but sweet words.

COUNTESS OF ARGYLE

I heard a cry i' the wind as of one hurt.

ARTHUR ERSKINE

There is no wind up, madam.

QUEEN

Peace, I pray ;
It was your own sense mocked you. Hear it through ;
There should be more, and sadder.

COUNTESS OF ARGYLE

Nay, I heard.

RIZZIO (*sings*)

By Love's side flying
As Time when crying
Glad news and lying
In all men's ears,
With blind feet gliding
She came deriding
Their joyous tiding
That ends in tears ;
From Time's side failing
As Love sank quailing,
Her strong wings sailing
Made all heads cower,
Her wings untethered,
With fleet thoughts feathered,
Made weak the summer and bleak the
flower.

Hope found no cover
Wherein to hover,
And Love no lover,
And Joy no place ;

Till when Time creeping
Had left him sleeping,
Love knelt down weeping
 Before her face,
And prayed, soul-stricken,
One flower might quicken,
Though spring should sicken
 And storm devour ;
She from her bosom
Flung one sere blossom,
 Then passed him dead on the last dead
 flower.

ROBERT STUART

Hark ! some one laughed there.

QUEEN

What does death i' the song ?
Can they not let love live, but must needs make
His grave with singing ? 'Tis the trick of song
That finds no way to end else.

RIZZIO

An old trick ;
Your merrier songs are mournfuller sometimes
Than very tears are.

QUEEN

Do you hear noises still ?

Enter DARNLEY

Who sent you to us ?

DARNLEY

My love to my sweet lady.
[*Kisses her.*]

QUEEN

What feet are theirs behind you? Who stands there?

DARNLEY

Nay, nothing, nay, sweet, nothing.

QUEEN

Judas ! I should know—
[*Seeing RUTHVEN in the doorway.*]

DARNLEY

I tell you——

RUTHVEN

Let that man come forth ;
He hath been here too long.

QUEEN

What hath he done?

RUTHVEN

So please your highness, how he hath done you
wrong
To offend the honour of your majesty
I dare not boldly say ; but this I dare,

He hath done the king your husband's honour wrong
In this past all the rest, to hinder him
Of the crown matrimonial, which your grace
Made his by promise ; other wrongs than this
Are more than I need speak of ; for the lords,
He hath caused you banish a great part of them
And the most chief, and at this parliament
Forefault them as for treason, that himself
Who jets here in his cap and damask gown
Might of your grace be made a lord, and tread
On men more noble : wherefore with good cause
For very love I pray your majesty
Make not yourself his buckler who lacks heart
Save to pluck forth his hanger and not strike,
But cower behind and clasp your gown for shield.
Stand from before the window, lest perforce
I hale him hence by the hair.

QUEEN

Help us, our friends !
Thrust out this death-faced traitor.

ARTHUR ERSKINE

Sir, give way.

ROBERT STUART

Out of this presence !

RUTHVEN

Lay no hands on me ;

[*Draws.*

Stand ; I will not be handled.

Enter FAULDONSIDE and SIR GEORGE DOUGLAS

QUEEN

Out with him !

RIZZIO

Save, save me, madam !

QUEEN

You are within my ward.
Stand from him, sirs ; what ! treason !

FAULDONSIDE

Nay, then, thus.
[Putting a pistol to her breast.

QUEEN

Do him no wrong ; ye dare not murder me :
If he have sinned let justice pass on him.

FAULDONSIDE

This cord shall justify him.

RIZZIO

Help me ! help !

SIR GEORGE DOUGLAS

Let go the queen.

RIZZIO

Help me, my mistress !

FAULDONSIDE

Out !

QUEEN

Have mercy !

RIZZIO

Mercy ! nay, I am innocent !
Save me, sweet lady !

QUEEN

Will ye slay me too ?

FAULDONSIDE

Drag him away ; pluck his hands off her.

RIZZIO

Help !
[*They force him out.*]

QUEEN

Why does that sheath sit empty on your side ?
Where is the dagger ?

DARNLEY

Why, I know not where.

QUEEN

It will be known hereafter ; it shall be
Dear blood to some of you if David's here
Be spilt, my faithful servant's ; but may God,
My poor true friend, have mercy on your soul !

RUTHVEN

Here, take your wife into your arms, my lord,
and bid her fear not. Madam, have no fear ;
We had sooner spend the blood of our own hearts
than you should suffer harm ; and what we do
is but your husband's bidding. Let them pass :
He shall be kept for this time safe enough
in my lord's chamber here.

DARNLEY

Ay shall he, safe—
in that same chamber where you used of old
before this fellow grew so in your grace
to come and seek me ; but since he so fell
in credit with you and familiar use,
even if I come to yours I find of late
small entertainment of you, save so far
as David may sit third with us, and set
to cards with you even till an hour or twain
be gone past midnight.

QUEEN

I have heard not said
it was a duteous gentlewoman's part
to seek her husband's chamber, but the man's
to seek the wife when he would aught with her.

DARNLEY

Why came you to my chamber then at first,
and ever till these few months back that he

Became familiar with you ? or am I
In any part now of my body failed,
To fall out of your grace ? or what disdain
Have you of me ? or what offence of mine
Makes you not use me at all times alike,
Seeing I am willing to do all good things
That may become a husband to his wife ?

QUEEN

My lord, of all the shame here done to me
You have the fault : for which sake I henceforth
Shall never be your wife nor lie with you,
Nor ever shall have liking of my life
Till I may make you bear as sore a heart
As I bear now.

RUTHVEN

Madam, for honour's sake,
Be reasonably and timely reconciled
To your wed lord ; and with him take advice
Of such good friends as love you. Give me leave :
I am faint, and cannot stand to plead with you. [*Sits.*
Bring me to drink, for God's sake.

DARNLEY

Give my lord

A cup of wine.

QUEEN

Is this your malady ?
If ye shall slay me or my six months' child

By this night's force and fear, my friends yet live
To wreak me of Lord Ruthven.

RUTHVEN

Be content.

QUEEN

When word goes forth how I am handled here—
What, am I kinless, think you, without help?
Mine uncles and my brother king of France,
All lords of all lands living, all heads crowned,
Shall be one storm to shake you from the world;
And the Pope with me, and the Catholic king,
And all that live or of my faith or blood,
Shall all make way upon you.

RUTHVEN

I am too mean
That these so many and mighty should take aim
At one such poor man here as I am. See,
If you will weigh it worthily yourself,
This is no treason; never till this night
Was so good service done you. For myself,
I will make answer to God's charge and man's
How I have served you in it.

QUEEN

What have I done?
What thing am I that ye should use me thus?
O miserable and desertless that I am,
Unkingdomed of mine honour! I that had
Lordship of land and natural rule of men
Am poorer here than any landless man
And weaker than all women. Pray you, sir,

By what law's sentence am I made man's thrall?
What lord have I offended that can bid
My face for shame be covered in your sight?
Whom have I wronged? or who hath power on me,
What thing soever I be, to do me wrong?
Who hath given forth judgment on me? what man's
right
Calls me his servant? Nay, there is no slave
Men strike without a sentence; and ye strike
Your own right in me and your name to death
With one self-ruinous violence.

RUTHVEN

Be at peace;
We strike but your own sickness off yourself
Who cut off him to save you: the disease
That dies of the physician leaves no cause
That you should curse but thank him.

QUEEN

Thank? ay, thank—
God give me grace to give you thanks! be sure
Ye shall not lack my memory to it, nor will
To make me worthy of you. What, no more?

[Exit RUTHVEN.]

I thought his wrath was large enough for me
To find a murderous part in where to die
And share it with my servant. Must I live?
Sir, you that make death warm between your lips,
And, silent, let fall murder from your mouth,
Have you no kiss to kill me? no love left
To give me poison? Why is he gone forth?
Hath the hot falsehood eaten through your tongue?
Speak.

DARNLEY

Why, I bade him look to those your friends
That might have risen upon us ; hear you that ?

[*Noise outside.*

There is a clamour of them in the courts,
But nought to help or hurt now. He is gone
To read our will out in the general ear,
And by proclaiming of my share with them
In this their new-born justice to make sure
Men's hearts that hearken ; and lest fear shake our
friends,

Or illwill toward us and goodwill toward you
Make our foes strong in malice of design,
To warn them of your brother's present speed,
Who must be here with morning : my device,
My trick to win all faiths that hang on him
And tie them to my service with his hand.
So have we all souls instant on our side,
And you no way to wound us : for by this,
Even with the hearing of my name given forth
As parcel of the bond that writes him dead,
Which is now cancelled with his bloodshedding,
This your good town is with us, and your lords
That stood for you with this man fled or dead,
If they dare strike or stand yet. What shift now ?
What wit ? what craft ?

QUEEN

My friends driven forth the court ?
No help upon my side ? The town raised too ?

DARNLEY

We had no heart nor wit to work with, ha ?
We were your fools, and heartless ?

QUEEN (*at the window*)

Help, all friends !
All good men help your queen here ! Ho, my lord,
My lord the Provost !

DARNLEY

He is raised indeed.

QUEEN

Help for the queen ! help, Provost !

DARNLEY

Peace, I say ;
You may fare worse : these are wild hours.

VOICE WITHOUT

Sit down ;
You shall be hewn in pieces if you stir
And flung into the Nor'-Loch.

DARNLEY

Nay, be wise ;
Pluck not their madness on you.

QUEEN

O, your love !

It shows now kindly in you.

Re-enter RUTHVEN

RUTHVEN

All is sped ;

The lords of the adverse party being roused up
And hearing with what large applause of men
The reading of our sentence in the bond
And names subscribed, and proclamation made
Of Murray even at heel of the act returned,
Was of all mouths made welcome, in fierce haste
Forth of their lodging fled confusedly
With no more tarriance than to bring their lives
Clear of the press and cry of peril at hand,
And their folk round them in a beaten rank
Hurled all together ; so no man being left,
The earls of Huntley and of Bothwell gone,
To lift a hand against the general peace,
The townsmen, of their surety satisfied,
Brake up with acclamation of content
For the good comfort done them in this deed.

QUEEN

What have ye made my servant ?

RUTHVEN

A dead dog.

His turn is done of service.

DARNLEY

Yea, stark dead?

RUTHVEN

They stabbed him through and through with edge on
edge
Till all their points met in him ; there he lies,
Cast forth in the outer lodge, a piteous knave
And poor enough to look on.

QUEEN

I am content.

Now must I study how to be revenged.

DARNLEY

Nay, think not that way : make it not so much ;
Be warned, and wiser.

QUEEN

Must I not, my lord?

You have taught me worthier wisdom than of words ;
And I will lay it up against my heart.

ACT II

BOTHWELL

TIME FROM MARCH 10, 1566, TO FEBRUARY 9, 1567

SCENE I. *The Queen's Chamber*

Enter DARNLEY and ARTHUR ERSKINE, severally

DARNLEY

Is the queen risen?

ARTHUR ERSKINE

She has not slept, my lord.
They say she is in some peril of mishap
Through the sore handling of this violent night;
Mortal mishap it may be.

DARNLEY

Ay! who say it?
What should be mortal to her? she was not sick
Nor near enough her danger.

ARTHUR ERSKINE

I am no leech;
Haply the fright of murderous menaces
And noise of swords is held medicinal;
The savour of a slain friend comfortable

And his blood balm : if these be healthful things,
You have given her weakness physic.

Enter the QUEEN

QUEEN

Ah, our lord !

Comes he with death about him ? I could take it
As readily as condemned men take reprieve,
For of a life much deadlier than itself
Death would reprieve me.

DARNLEY

I am come to bring you help.

QUEEN

You are ever helpful, even at all needs good,
For stroke or speech, good always. I am weak ;
Let me have execution swift or soft ;
Here is no strength to suffer.

DARNLEY

Sit, and rest.

QUEEN

Nay, I can stand ; or should I kneel, my plight
Were one with my new fortune. You may go :
I have but private penitence to do,
And privy grace to get me ; for indeed
I were stark mad to hope by any mean
For public pardon ; I am condemned, and have

No hope but of such pity as dead men gain
Who living found no grace in the great world.

[*Exit* ARTHUR ERSKINE.

Now, what death, sir ?

DARNLEY

You think not as you speak ;
Your thought has other business than your tongue,
And death has no part in it.

QUEEN

I am assured

I must not live.

DARNLEY

Whose doom has passed on you ?
Not mine ; I would not have you go in fear ;
You may be safe as I am.

QUEEN

As you, my lord ?
I think I may, and yet may chance but find
A little day of surety.

DARNLEY

By mine honour,
My word and place of sovereignty is pledged
For your fair usage ; they that unseat you
Shall find no king in me.

QUEEN

Nay, I think not.

DARNLEY

As they would have me friend and firm to them,
I told them, they should use you royally,
No state or privilege plucked off you ; nay,
I have no thought by stolen strength of yours
To increase myself out of your weakness ; only
I would have royalty remade in you,
And in your honour an honourable part ;
See the state in you and the name shine fair,
And in your praise mine own praise perfected
As parcel of it, and in your good fame
Mine own fame stablished ; as from your repute
Shaken or sullied, my name too takes soil,
And in your insufficiency I wax weak,
So would I have the grace I gain and strength
Redound to youward ; who being queen indeed,
I cannot seem unkingly.

QUEEN

'Tis well thought.
It was my curse to know not in good time
How high a sense and royal of itself
I had in you so near me.

DARNLEY

That your thought,
Misdeeming me worth no more weight with you,
Hath brought us to this breach. Now lies it in you
To make all whole ; these lords that in my name
And for mine ends and with my leave rose up
To rid out peril and scandal from us all,

And make red-handed witness of themselves
Against the shame and scathe of royalty,
Are not the traitors of your thought, but keep
Faith flawless toward the personal empire here
And spirit of rule, dishonouring not the law
By forceful chastisement of secret breach
That did it bloodless violence ; this blood shed
Must heal indeed the privy hurt of law
And all but death of kingship, in such pass
Wasted and wounded ; but no hand of theirs
Would stab through you your holy majesty,
Cut off all life of law with yours, and make
Authority die with you one visible death ;
No thought put out your office, though yourself
Were found come short thereof, to leave this land
A kingless kingdom ; wherefore with good will
I counsel you make peace with their designs
And friends with mine intent, which for us both
Is but all power and honour.

QUEEN

So you see it ;
But were your eyes no flatterers of themselves
The sight were other : yet for my poor part
I cannot care though power be out of sight,
Save that mine honour visibly is marred
By wreck in you of either ; for indeed
Nor power nor honour shall hang on to you
If you must wear them but at will of men
And by strange leave of chance authority
Reign or not reign ; but all concerns me not ;
Rule as you may, be lord of that you can,
I can contend not with your lords or you,

Their master-servant. Pardon me ; I am weak,
A feeble simple woman, without stay,
And witless of your worth ; yet I might fear
Their policies were no good friends of yours,
Could we see all ; men's hearts are manifold,
Not made of glass like women's such as mine,
At once transpicious and perceptible
To eyes like yours that look their faults through ; yet
Perchance you see more faults than lie there, spots
That are not natural to us ; or make too much
Of our light thoughts and weakness ; yet, your
pardon :

You have reason in it, being more wise than we
And stronger in your regency of soul ;
It may be you do well to bear me hard,
And I do ill who think to counsel you ;
'Tis no great matter ; for in no great while
My weakness will be medicine to itself
And end as I do : no default of mine
But must by dying be curable ; and God knows
I little think to live.

DARNLEY

Why, have no fear ;
You see I stand 'twixt you and all such threat.

QUEEN

Nay, I see not ; but though you be my friend,
How far soever you stand out for me,
There is one threat that no man's help in the world
Can bring to nothing ; here it speaks in me
Mortal ; I know the word inevitable

That without breath or sound has called me dead ;
I would not plead against it.

DARNLEY

Nay, you dream ;
You jest or dream.

QUEEN

I do not ; I am dead ;
What, have you slain in jest, or in a dream
Have I seen death and felt him in my flesh,
Felt my blood turn and my veins fill with death
And the pang pass and leave me as I am,
Dead ? for my state is pangless, and my pain
Perished ; I have no life to bring forth pain,
Or painful fruit of life ; I think in pity
God willed one stroke of sheer mortality
Should kill all possible pain and fear in me,
All after chance of ill ; I cannot die
Twice, and can live not with my dead self here
Violently slain ; I am sure I have no child ;
I would but pray, if I had breath to pray,
For mere shame's sake and pity's, I might have
My women with me ; and was not born to want
What our most poor bare natural womanhood
Seeks not in vain of meanest people ; more
I seek of no man's mercy.

DARNLEY

You shall have it ;
But this is fear and shaken heart in you—
I trust not very danger.

QUEEN

I that know
Must bear the peril and the sense alike
And patiently can bear, so but I have
Hope of your heart made soft towards me ; sir,
Howe'er I have been untoward and confident
In my blind state and sovereign folly, now
God knows me if I have not need of love
Who have so much of pardon.

DARNLEY

Is this sure,
Such instant and such perilous press of time—
Or but your thought it may be ?

QUEEN

Nay, my thought !
Is it my thought I am stricken to my death ?
Is it my thought you have no pity of me ?
Is it my thought I had looked at other time
For other joy of childbed, and such pangs
As bring glad women honour ? not this death
That sunders me from fruit of mine own years
And youth and comfort, and mere natural hope,
And love that looks on many a worse than me ?
Is it my thought that for small fault of mine,
And little lack of love and duteousness,
I am brought to shame and mortal chastisement ?
Is it my thought love is not dead in me
For all this chastening ? and my penitence
Wherewith I weep on my least wrong-doings past,
And faith wherewith I look for pardon yet,
For grace of you—is all this but my thought ?

DARNLEY

By heaven, I will not have you wronged of them.
You shall live safe and honourably.

QUEEN

My lord,

Who lives in such times honourably or safe,
When change of will and violence mutable
Makes all state loose and rootless? Think you, men
Who have dipped their hands in this red act with you
Will, as they wash them, so wash off their hearts
The burning spot of raw malignity
And fire and hunger of ambition made
So proud and full of meat, so rank in strength,
So grossly fed and fattened with fresh blood?
Is it for love of your name more than mine
These men that fought against my love of you,
And made rebellious wars on my free choice,
Smite now my very head and crown of state
In this night's hot and present stroke? Be sure
It is the throne, the name, the power in us
That here is stabbed and bleeds from such a wound
As draws out life of you no less than me
If you be part of majesty indeed.
Yea, howsoe'er you be now borne in hand,
They will but use you as an axe to smite,
A brand to set on fire the house of state
And in the doing be burnt up of itself.
Why, do but think with now more temperate blood
What are they that have helped you to this deed?
What friends to you? what faith toward royalty,
And what goodwill and surety of sound mind,
Have you found in them? or how put in proof?

What bond have their loves given you to confirm
Their hearts toward you stable ? Nay, if this
Be all my pledge for honour and safe life,
They slide upon a slippery ground indeed.

DARNLEY

The pledge is mine, not theirs ; you have my word ;
No warrant of their giving, but of me ;
What ails you to go yet in fear of them ?

QUEEN

Alas, I know not whom I need yet fear.
What men were they who helped you to this deed ?
Yet it avails not me to know. I think
The fierce first root of violence was not set
Of you nor of your uncles, though I know
They of your mother's kinship love me not ;
But though their hearts, albeit one blood with yours,
Be bitter toward me, yet being of your blood
I would fain think them not so hard ; and yet
It was no gentle sight I had of them,
Nor usage ; I can see their eyes burn still,
And their brows meet against me. Such a sight
Again might wind all suffering up in me
And give it full release.

DARNLEY

It was their plot ;
That is, for love of me they felt the offence
Eat at their hearts ; I did not set them on ;
But wrath and shame's suspicion for my sake
Edged and envenomed ; then your policies too,

And injuries done the popular weal, the state
So far mishandled ; this was all men's talk,
Mine uncle's chiefly, Ruthven's, and his word
Was hot in the ear of Maitland and Argyle,
Showing the wrong done and the further fear,
More wide in issue and large in likelihood
Than all wrong done already ; nay, and plain ;
You would have given the state up to strange hands,
And for strange ends ; no dreaming doubt of mine,
But very vision, proof ; they held it so ;
And, by my faith, I with them.

QUEEN

Morton too ?

Was not his wit part of your wisdom ?

DARNLEY

Ay ;

Why, all heads highest, all subtlest, could not choose
But be one judgment and one counsel here,
In such a biting need ; yea, common fools,
Poor senseless knaves might see it

QUEEN

Yea, visibly.

The sharpest wits and hands put armour on
To go forth strong against me ; little doubt
But fools and ignorance and the common mouth,
The very dust o' the street, the dross of man,
Must needs take fire with blowing of such wind
And stir at such men's passage : their mere feet
Moving would raise me up such enemies
From the bare ground. Ruthven—you said his breath

Was first to heat men's hearing with strange words
And set their hearts on edge—and at his touch
The quick-eyed Maitland and loose-souled Argyle,
Keen to catch fire or fear from other men's—
And the full-counselled Morton—by my life,
(That's but a little oath now) I think strange
To be at all alive, and have such men
So sore unfriends and secret, and their wits
So sharp to set upon so slight a thing.
How grew this up amongst you ?

DARNLEY

Why, you see it ;
No need to set men on ; their swords were made
Of your own follies ; yet have comfort ; I,
That was so little made of, so less worth,
In your late judgment, will alone be guard
And buckler of you ; come what counsel may,
It shall not hold against you with my will,
And cannot work without.

QUEEN

Nay, that were hard.
I thank you ; but what counsel will they take,
Think you, which way to deal with me ? my soul
Is womanly distempered and distract
With doubts of them—no fear of your good mind,
Of your firm love and fruitful—but, alas,
I am no strong man as you my guard, and ache
With new faint fear of their fresh angers : then,
This watch on me, my ways and rooms barred up,
No help nor issue, shakes and sickens me

With pangs for every stroke in the hour, that says
I am so much more time prisoner.

DARNLEY

For your guard,

It must be later taken off ; the rest
I will find mean of help for. They are now
In council with your brother, new brought home
With seal from me of pardon to reverse
Your fresh and rash attainder, in my name
Now cancelled and made strengthless ; and I think
There must three judgments be debated of ;
Whether for hurt done to the common state
And treason to succession you must bear
Penance of death or life's imprisonment,
Which fear not I will have them put in form
Nor see it pass upon you ; the third mean
Is for some season that you be in ward
In Stirling Castle, till your warrant given
And free consent to this late justice done,
And to the new faith stablished in the realm
By right and rule of law, religiously,
And to mine own investiture as king.
Now for no fear at all or doubt of them
But very love and good desire toward you
I will go plead your part and take them sign
Of seasonable submission ; with which word
I doubt not but to reconcile their thoughts
And bring their loves back bounden to your feet.

QUEEN

Neither do I doubt. Let them draw this bond,
I will set hand to what they will of me ;

To seal you king needs now no grace of mine,
Hardly my leave ; and for their faith, it has
Too firm a foot for my poor power to shake,
Had I the will now molten in me strong
As ere the fire of fierce necessity
Had made it soft and edgeless ; for their deed,
Say, if they hold my word of pardon worth
More than mere scorn, I am bound to thank them,
being

Masters of me and of my wrath or will,
And needing show me no such courtesy ;
And if it please them take mine oath and hand
To sign them safe and mark them from all charge
Sackless and scatheless, let them take it ; alas,
I thought well they might rather take my life,
And yet I think well they would take indeed
But for your safeguard of me ; would they not
Slay me ? nay, by your honour tell me—nay,
I know they would, had I no guard in you,
Slay me defenceless.

DARNLEY

Have no fear ; I have sworn
They shall not touch you roughly.

QUEEN

Swear again,
That I may quite rest confident ; and yet
Swear not ; I would not seem to hold you fast
To your own peril ; better were I dead
Than you fell in their danger for my sake.
Ah, and I know not, I may hardly think
I have you surely on my side.

DARNLEY

By heaven,
You shall want nothing of my help or love.

QUEEN

How had you heart to go so near my death?

DARNLEY

I had no mind to hurt you.

QUEEN

None? well, none—
I will not think it; yet I was nigh dead.
You saw my very death here at my breast
Where your child is not yet—I did not think
To feel instead there murder's iron lips
For his soft suckling mouth.

DARNLEY

Come, think not of it.

QUEEN

I had not time to think of it indeed.
But I think now you will have hardly power
To match your will to save me, if their will
Shall yet be mortal to me; then I saw
You had not power or had not will; and now
I know not which you have yet.

DARNLEY

They shall find
I have power enough and will to turn them.

QUEEN

Well—

I lean then on your hand. If you were mine,
Though they were subtler and more strong in hate,
They should not hold me here in peril.

DARNLEY

How?

QUEEN

No matter, so their guard were less on me.

DARNLEY

You would take flight then?

QUEEN

Ay, with you for wing
To lift me out of prison.

DARNLEY

Whither?

QUEEN

Nay,
I am but the fool of your keen flattering wit,
Who let you see my little hope that lives
To see my some day sunnier : yet God knows

Without light of you it were lustreless.
I can look forth not or heave up my hand
But with your help to stay me.

DARNLEY

Surely no,
As you stand now you cannot ; and I were
A faithless fool to mine own fortune, if
I loosed you out of sight for wantonness,
Who have you now in hand : but for all this
It may be flight were no such unwise mean
To assure our free and mutual power on them
And show them simply subject ; as it is,
They have some show of hold on us which makes
Our reign and freedom questionable and slight :
I see some reason in it.

QUEEN

Why, do you think
That you being here their gaoler in their eye
Can be their king too, or not rather they
Lords both of gaol and warder ? they will hold you
But as the minister of their power on me,
Of no more office than a door-keeper
Nor honour than their headsman : but fled hence
You are very king indeed, by your own hand,
Lord of the life you give and majesty,
By no man's furtherance and no grant of theirs
Made pensioner and proxy for their reign
Who should bear rule and you the semblance, worn
As mask of all their faces, glove of hands,
And hollow trumpet blown of all their mouths,
But mine and all their free and sovereign king.

DARNLEY

Why, so I say ; they must be borne in hand ;
Look you, we must not set their fears on edge,
They shall suspect not : I will take them word,
And bring them to you for your bond.

QUEEN

Meantime,

I will but walk an hour here hand in hand
With my good brother ; let me speak to him
While they shall draw the schedule.

DARNLEY

I will bid him

Attend you, and your women ; but be sure
You take him not to counsel : he is wise,
And full of malice : let him not be part
Of our new mind.

QUEEN

He shall not.

DARNLEY

But you smile—

What should he do to know it ?

QUEEN

He shall not know.

DARNLEY

Well, you shall see him, and they take off your
guard ;
I will make sure : but when and by what means
Think you to fly ?

QUEEN

To-night.

DARNLEY

God help your wit !

To-night ?

QUEEN

Before the change of watch ; I have said ;
Weak as I stand, and burdened, and soul-spent,
I will be hence. Mistrust me not for strength ;
My soul shall make my body like itself,
A servant armed to wait upon my thought
And page my purpose as its minister
Till the end be held in hand. This guard removed,
I will find ways out to win forth to-night,
Fear not, and servants. Go now to the lords
With all submissive mild report of me,
And bring them to receive my word and hand
To confirmation of what bond they please
For pardon and possession of their will ;
And for your kingship—sir, assure yourself
That in few hours it shall be seen and sure
You shall need never seek their loves again
Or hands to help you to it or tongues to cry,
Nor be called king by will of any man
Nor lord by choice of any friend on earth.

DARNLEY

Nay, I would need no voices.

QUEEN

And be sure

You shall not build your power on loves of theirs
Nor live by their election. Go, and thrive :
Think how my faith and hope and love in you
Find all their rest and stronghold, and on them
Set up your trust and standard of your strength.

[*Exit* DARNLEY.]

So much is done ; go thou then first to death ;
For from this hour I have thee. Heart, lie still,
Till I may make those mightier traitors mine
That shall be swords for me to smite him with,
And then be free as fire.

Enter MARY BEATON

Hast thou no news ?

MARY BEATON

The lord of Bothwell lies at secret ward
To bear you forth of peril here by force ;
He has gathered up his men beyond the walls
To break this guard upon you when you will,
If at your suit it shall not be withdrawn ;
Here is his token brought me privily
For your own hand.

QUEEN

No, in my heart it is,
My love and lord, thy token ; this poor heart
That ere mine ear is smitten with thy name
Hears it and turns to springing fire. What thanks

Would I not rather pay than these of words
For this thy loving speed? Yet send him these,
And bid him, I would fain say come, but wait
Till I have tried my traitors; if my tongue
Win them to slack their hold on me to-night,
We may speed surelier; if their hands hold fast,
Then let him smite and slay and set me free.
I would have all their heads here in my lap,
Tell him, not one or two slain suddenly,
That their blood shed may seem not spilt by chance
Nor lost and won in hazard of affray
But sacrificed by judgment, and their names
Who would have made of royalty in me
Ruin, and marred the general name of king,
Shall with their lives be perfectly put out,
Royally ruined; wherefore if I may
I will steal forth with subtle help of words,
Not break their bonds with violence; in which hope
Bid him watch close. [Exit MARY BEATON.

And when his watch is done

It will be morning, and the sun shall break
As fire for them that had their hour by night
And light for wrath to see them and to slay.

Re-enter ARTHUR ERSKINE, introducing MURRAY

ARTHUR ERSKINE

Madam, my lord of Murray.

QUEEN

Ah, my brother,
Had you been here they had not used me thus.

MURRAY

I am sorry, madam, such things should be done
As even the strain of sharp necessity
Can make but fierce and bitter.

QUEEN

Is this all?

Nay, it was necessary then and just,
Or I must seem and strive to think it was,
If you say so. But in my present sight,
Now when a feather's or a flower's weight borne
Might make life stoop within me, sense break down,
All strong capacities of nature fail ;
Now when the hardest heart with iron bound
Might turn to very mercy for my sake,
Here in mine eye to do my friend to death—
For howsoe'er ye hold him, yet being dead
I will not say but he was friend of mine
Who lies now dead and slaughtered—nay, by heaven,
I will not cast that name of friend away
Because the man my friend is slain for me—
I say, to kill him at my knee, to stain
An unborn child's brow with his murdered blood,
To affray with sanguine hands, shake with sheer blows,
The weak and holy warders of the womb,
The reverence and remembrance of us all
For that which bare us hidden before birth
And after was called mother—O, this deed,
This, though all law were cast out of the world,
All grace forgotten—this, you will not say
But they did ill who did it. What, you weep ?
These tears are made of our dear father's blood,

Who left in each of us such part of him
As must yearn each toward other, and divide
At need their mutual suffering : I knew well
I need not fear to find not in your heart
Some natural seed of comfort.

MURRAY

That I weep
I take no shame, to see you ; but mine eyes
Receive more comfort than their tears can give
To see, for all this rash and ruthless night,
Yet you stand up unwounded, and your heart
Is left you to put spirit in your speech
Not like a sick man's ; if you have no hurt,
No hurt is done though they did violently :
For this man's life was as a present death
To the well-being and peace of all your state,
Which by the force of justice done on him
Stands now in surety. I would pray you make
Your profit of your pain herein, being wise,
As you well may ; for this was not the man
That you saw slain, but the man's policy,
Stabbed through with all their daggers ; and you see
How it lies dead and outcast. I beseech you,
For your own love and honour of high rule,
Set not your heart toward it to raise it up
That men would bury, lest the graveyard reek
Of dead men's craft and strange men's creeds brought
back
Prove poison to you.

QUEEN

I will do what men will.
I must not die then ?

MURRAY

There are those would have it,
For scandal and offence cast on the realm
By shame done to the popular commonwealth
In majesty made shameful ; as they say
Through you it hath been, and your dealings known
With this dead friend ; some that would leave you
 life
Spake of life spent in sharp imprisonment
Unto your death's day ; but by mine award
You are quit of either danger ; you must live
But under guard till you by word approve
This man's despatch for necessary and just,
Submit yourself to call your husband king,
And own the true faith rooted in this realm
For lawful and for sovereign here of rule.
So much you shall.

QUEEN

Nay, I will more than this.
I will seal now what you will have me seal,
What bond soever : let them come to me
Who wrought this murderous matter but last night
That I may sign their pardon with my tongue
Ere they can crave or threaten. Let them come ;
So shall my perfect purpose be more plain
Freely in all things to submit myself—
I have your word already—to their will :
Ay, even with all my new submissive heart,
As else I cannot choose ; for what am I
That I should think much to submit myself ?

MURRAY

You shall do wisely to keep faith with them
And make your word your action's measure ; so
Shall hearts now loosened from you be made fast
And love reclaimed wait on you loyally
Through all your land's length. See, the lords are
come.

Enter DARNLEY, MORTON, and RUTHVEN

QUEEN

Good morrow, sirs ; ye gave me no good night,
Yet are you welcome even as life or death
Were welcome to me, coming with your will ;
For without love of my good lords my life
Were scarce worth holding out against their will,
But if it please them I should die not yet,
For their love's sake I give it welcome. Sirs,
I have heard what terms ye lay upon mine head,
And bow beneath them willingly, being sure
It is but meet I should submit myself,
It is but fit mere majesty bow down
To take the burden by good men and wise
Imposed upon it ; nor shall this be hard ;
For what ye did so suddenly and swift,
If there be power of pardon in me, here
With as good heart even as ye did the deed
Do I forgive it ; nay, I should give you thanks
That ye vouchsafe of me to be forgiven ;
For what am I among you ? Let the bond
Be drawn between us presently to sign,
While for an hour's space I will walk and wait
Here with my noble brother, hand in hand,

And heart reposed on heart, eyes answering eyes,
With pure plain faith ; for what now in the world
Should lies or dumb dissembling profit me
Though I were natural liar ? as I do trust
Ye shall not find me but most faithful ; yet,
If I were falser than the foam of the sea
And wilfuller than wind, what should I do,
Being yours, to mock you and myself, and lie
Against mine own life ? for ye see me, sirs,
How I stand bare between you, without strength,
At your mere mercy, with no friend on earth
If ye will be mine unfriends ; and I think
To live but by your grace and leave, who might
If ye were minded speak me out of life
Or sign me dead with smiling ; I were mad
To play with lies, who feel your hands on me
So heavy as they are, and have no hope
Save to be pitied and believed of you.
I pray you then have faith in me, who live
In your faith only, and if it fail me here
Must die the lowliest death in all the world,
And no man's hand to help me.

DARNLEY

She says truth ;

There is no hand.

MORTON

Madam, though faith stand fast,
Yet fear hath something here to say of you,
And wisdom to remember ; we must think
That what is done in service of yourself
You cannot hold good service when it comes

So masked in blood, so vizarded like death,
As this of ours doth ; and that yet in time
You may find mean to wreak your wrath on us
For having strangely served you, and perforce
Given desperation and the dangerous time
So desperate a deliverance from despair.
We have saved you in this service done the state,
Who must have else been broken in the breach
Of the state's order and the popular law
By this man living violently misused ;
But cannot hope yet for such thanks of you
As even the deed deserves whose fierce despatch
Has shaken you with thunder, and its flame
Still makes your eyes blind to the good work done
And sharp need felt of it ; so must this be,
And so must we take heed lest being yet blind
We give you scope and mean to hurt yourself.

QUEEN

I did not think the thing was yet alive
That could fear me.

DARNLEY

Nay, look you, she says right ;
We have no room to fear her.

QUEEN

Lo, my lords,
How dangerous and how strong a thing it is
That threatens here your state and safety ; see,
It is no less than woman, and unarmed,
Half dead, unfriended, hard on childbearing,

Naked of arms or means ; it were not wise
To leave unguarded, without spies or swords
About her path, so great a danger ; yea,
Wise men would rather fear her force too much
Than good men show compassion. Do your wills ;
I am well content to know you wise, and so
To bear what hard or lighter weight ye please ;
How sore soever, God knows, I believe
It shall not long afflict me.

MURRAY

In my mind,
It now shall less distract the general eye
With apprehension of strange times and strife
To see the ways again made clear, and gates
Not crowded up with guard.

DARNLEY

Why, so I said.

RUTHVEN

So I say not. Bear with me though I seem
Less confident or free of heart than men,
Whose minds are gentle as their names, should be
In things of common care ; what hurt may come
By fault of us we know not, but we know
It is no private peril ; if we err,
Not we nor ours must only ache for it,
But the whole popular heart of this great land
Must bleed and break for our false friendship shown
And confident remission of our cause

And very duty toward her, through mere wish
To be called gentle toward her enemies.

QUEEN

I am her enemy then : where lies my strength ?
What field ? what weapon ? how shall we make war,
Take truce and break it, with what equal face
Stand brow to brow for battle ? By this hand,
I knew not yet how strong it was, nor worth
How many hands of swordsmen ; were this true,
I might wax proud to be so terrible,
Seeing in such great men's eyes so great a fear
And only mine own fearful face therein
As in a mirror shadowed.

DARNLEY

'Tis mere truth ;
We should be shamed to seem in fear of her,
Yea, made a mockery in men's eyes and mouths
For base and blind misgiving.

RUTHVEN

You, my lords
And equals with me in the proof of years,
In the age of counsel and experience borne
Of common service done our natural state,
Shall best pass judgment if in hate or fear
I speak for mine own ends or enmities
To turn your hearts from honour ; for the queen,
As she shall be toward God, so I toward her
Would be fast friend and servant ; but wherein

She is not friend with heaven nor with the state
I were no friend to serve her, nor to say
There were no danger and no sin to serve.
Ye must all think I think not to live long ;
And being so signed of sickness for my grave
With such a mortal seal, I speak alive
As one being dead that speaketh ; if ye lose
The grace of God here won by your own hands,
The power ye have to serve him, and the effect
Of his good hour, through negligence of will
Or pride or pity, ye shall see the state
Break from your hands, and for one devil cast out
Seven entered in its body. Sirs, take heed ;
The least thing lightly overlooked or done
May undo all things wrought. Keep fast your
 guards ;
By the king's counsel If they be withdrawn,
Upon his head that bade them go shall rest
What bloodshed ever follows ; yet in time
Think nothing weak that is not with us ; each
May have some sting or weapon of itself
That till sloth feel it sees not.

QUEEN

A wise rule :

So should the wary wolf pen up the lambs,
The falcon set good guard upon the wren,
For fear of teeth or talons.

MURRAY

 We will give
To the king's hand the bond for yours to sign ;
Meantime all ease and reverence shall you have,

And freedom for your household folk to serve
As best your need may bid them.

QUEEN

Sirs, farewell.

I will not pray you do but what ye will,
Which shall seem wisely to me.—Let me have
Word of their instant sentence. [*Aside to DARNLEY.*

DARNLEY (*aside*)

With all speed.

[*Exeunt DARNLEY, MURRAY, MORTON, and RUTHVEN.*

QUEEN

Where are my servants Standen and Traquair?

ARTHUR ERSKINE

At hand to serve your highness.

QUEEN

Ah, to serve!

My highness is brought low, too low to claim
Service of men; if I may find but love
Or only pity of any, this shall be
All utmost service I desire of them.
I have but my sorrows to my subjects left,
And these rebellious; yet I keep what state
And rule I may upon them. Tell those twain
I pray their patience lend me but the time
To hear what I would have them, and to choose
If they will do it for pity.

ARTHUR ERSKINE

Think them here
And your will done already. [Exit.

QUEEN

Yea, my will !

What knowest thou may my will be ? by this light,
I feel a heat and hurry of the heart
That burns like joy ; my blood is light and quick,
And my breath comes triumphantly as his
That has long laboured for a mountainous goal
And sets fast foot on the utmost cliff of all.
If ere the race be run my spirit be glad,
What when it puts the palm of peril on
And breathes clear air and conquers ? Nay, I think
The doubt itself and danger are as food
To strengthen and bright wine to quicken me
And lift my heart up higher than my need,
Though that be high upon me.

Re-enter ERSKINE with TRAQUAIR and STANDEN

Now, my friends,
Ye come unlike to courtiers, come to serve
Me most unlike a queen : shall I think yet
I have some poor part in your memories safe,
And you some care of what I was, and thought
How I fare now ? Shall I take up my hope,
That was cast down into the pit of death,
To keep the name God gave me, and the seal
That signs me royal, by your loves and faiths
Recrowned and reinstated ? Say but no,

Or say but nought, this hope of mine and heart
Are things as dead as yesterday : my cause
Lies in your lips, to comfort or confound,
As ye see reason. Yet, as power is yours,
So let remembrance in you be for light
To see the face of the time by ; so let faith,
Let noble pity and love be part of you,
To make you mindful what a cause it is
That ye must put in judgment, and what life
For fame or shame to you through all time born
Ensues upon your sentence ; for ye choose
If ye will match my dangers with your faiths
And help me helpless with your hearts, who lie
By grief and fear made heartless ; or lend hand
To make my weakness weaker, and break down
My broken wall of sovereignty ; which now
Ye wot were no sore labour.

STANDEN

Let him die
As heartless toward the grace of God, who hath
No heart in him to give its blood for yours !

TRAQUAIR

So say we all your servants.

QUEEN

Did I know it ?
Methinks I knew when I bade send for you.
Ye should so say. Ah friends, I had no fear
But I should find me friends in this fierce world,
Or I had died unfriended. Shall I thank you

For being the true men and the kind ye are,
Or take your service thankless, since I thought
Ye could not else, being young and of your kinds,
But needs must be my help? ye have not hearts
To strike but at men weaponed; ye would not
Lay hard hand on a woman weak with child,
A sick sad woman that was no man's queen
Of all that stood against her; yet her son,
The unborn thing that pleads again with you
As it could plead not with them, this dumb voice,
This sightless life and sinless, was their king's,
If ever they would let it come to life.
Lo, here their aim was; here the weapons went
That should have stabbed to death the race of kings
And cut their stem down to the root; here, here
The pistol's mouth that bruised my breast, the hand
That struck athwart my shoulder, found their mark,
Made here their point to shoot at; in my womb
By them the bud of empire should have died
That yet by you may live and yet give thanks
For flower and fruit to them that saved the seed.

STANDEN

They shall die first.

TRAQUAIR

Command us what next way
There is to serve you, though the way were fire
We would be through it.

QUEEN

To-night then at first watch
I purpose with the man's help—nay, what name

Shall his be now ? king, husband, or, God help,
King's father ?—with the man that you called king
As I called husband, to win forth of bonds
By the close covered passage underground
That by strange turns and strait blind working ways
Winds up into the sovereign cemetery
Whose dust is of my fathers ; therewithout
Wait you with horse ; and when you see us rise
Out of the hollow earth among the dead,
Be ready to receive and bear us thence.
Some two hours' haste will speed us to Dunbar,
Where friends lie close, and whence with sudden
strength

I trust to turn on these good lords again.
Do this for such poor love's sake as your queen's,
And if there be thanks worthy in the world,
Them shall she give ; not silver, sirs, nor gold,
Nor the coined guerdon that is cast on churls
To coin them into service ; but a heart,
If not worth love, yet loving, and a faith
That will die last of all that dies in me
And last of all remembrances foregone
Let your names go. God speed you, and farewell.

SCENE II. *Ruins of the Abbey of Holyrood*

Enter ARTHUR ERSKINE, TRAQUAIR, *and* STANDEN

STANDEN

It must be time ; the moon is sick and slow
That should by this be higher.

ARTHUR ERSKINE

It is your eye
Whose sight is slow as sickness ; for the moon
Is seasonable and full : see where it burns
Between the bare boughs and the broken tombs
Like a white flower whose leaves were fire : the
 night
Is deep and sharp wherein it hangs, and heaven
Gives not the wind a cloud to carry, nor
Fails one faint star of all that fill their count
To lend our flight its comfort ; we shall have
Good time of heaven and earth.

TRAQUAIR

Be shared among us? How shall the steeds

ARTHUR ERSKINE

If she keep her mind,
My English gelding best shall bear the queen,
And him the Naples courser. Hark, they come.

STANDEN

It was a word said of the wind to hear
What earth or death would answer. These dead
stones
Are full of hollow noises though the vault
Give tongue to no man's footfall ; when they come
It will speak louder. Lo how straight that star
Stands over where her face must break from earth
As it hath broken ; it was not there before,

But ere she rise is risen. I would not give
The third part of this night between us shared
For all the days that happiest men may live
Though I should die by morning.

TRAQUAIR

Till she come,
I cannot choose but with my fears take thought,
Though all be after her sweet manner done
And by her wise direction, what strange ways
And what foul peril with so faint a guard
Must of so tender feet be overpast
Ere she win to us.

ARTHUR ERSKINE

All these with laughing lips
Shall she pass through ; the strength and spring of
soul
That set her on this danger will sustain
Those feet till all her will and way be won.
Her spirit is to her body as a staff
And her bright fiery heart the traveller's lamp
That makes all shadow clear as its own light.

Enter from the vaults the QUEEN and DARNLEY

QUEEN

Here come the wind and stars at once on us ;
How good is this good air of that full heaven
That drives the fume back of the sepulchres
And blows the grave away ! Have no more fear ;
These are no dead men.

DARNLEY

Nay, I fear no dead ;
Nothing I fear of quick or dead but God.
Shall I not go before you ?

QUEEN

Not a foot.
See you, my friends, what valiant hearts are here,
My lord's and mine, who hardly have crept forth,
In God's fear only, through the charnel-house,
Among the bones and skulls of ancient kings
That thought not shame to stand for stumbling stones
In their poor daughter's way, whose heart had failed
But that his hardier heart held up her feet
Who even if winds blew did not shrink nor shake
For fear of aught but God. The night is kind,
And these March blasts make merry with the moon
That laughs on our free flight. Where stand your
steeds ?

ARTHUR ERSKINE

Madam, hard by in shadow of the stones ;
Please you, this way.

QUEEN

I will to horse with you.

DARNLEY

No, but with me.

QUEEN

It is not my good will.
Ride you alone, and safer. Friend, your arm.

SCENE III. *Murray's Lodging in Holyrood**Enter MURRAY, MORTON, and RUTHVEN*

MORTON

There is no present help ; the violent speed
Of these fierce days has run our chances down.
It is found certain she comes back to-day ;
Soon as their flight drew bridle at Dunbar,
Yet hot from horse, she sends for Bothwell in
With all his border thievery, red-foot knaves,
The hardiest hinds of Liddesdale ; next him
His new bride's brother, Huntley, more in care
To win the land back than revenge the blood
His father lost for treason ; after these
Caithness with Athol, and the queen's chief strengths,
The earl marshal and the archbishop ; in few days
Eight thousand swords to wait on that sweet hand
Was worth so little manhood ; then Argyle,
Who should have been a sea-wall on our side
Against the foam of all their faction, he,
Struck to the heart with spite and sharp despair
Through proof late made of English faith—as you,
My lord of Murray, felt it when ye twain
Sought help and found false heart there—casts
 himself
Over upon her side ; with him two more

Her last year's rebels, Rothes and Glencairn,
And pardon sealed for all that rose with them
Who were not of our counsel in this death.
Thus fare we without help or hope of these,
And from the castle here of Edinburgh
The hot Lord Erskine arms in our offence
His mounted guns, making the queen more strong
Than had her flight won first its darkling walls
And for a free camp in the general field
Set up her strength within the fortress here
Which serves her now for outwork, while behind
The whole force raised comes trooping to her hand.
In this deep strait that our own hands have dug
And our own follies channelled, to let in
Storm on our sails and shipwreck on our hopes,
My counsel is that whoso may stand fast
Should here in harbour bide his better day,
And we make land who may not ; you, my lord,
As by James Melville she solicits you,
May honourably assure your peace with her,
Being speckless in her sight of this man's blood ;
We that dipped open hand in it must hence,
And watch the way of the wind and set of storm
Till the sea sink again.

RUTHVEN

Sir, so say I ;
You serve not us a whit nor change our chance
By tarrying on our side. Let no man fly
For our deed's sake but we that made our deed
The witness for us not to be gainsaid
By foe of ours or friend we have on earth.

It was well done ; what else was done, and ill,
We must now bear the stroke of, and devise
Some healing mean in season. This is sure,
That faith or friendship shall have no long life
Where friendship is engrafted on breach of faith ;
But shame, despite, division, and distrust
Shall eat the heart out of their amity,
And hate unreconcile their heartless hands
Whom envious hope made fast or cunning fear.
This cannot be but nigh : and ye that live
Shall see more sure for this blind hour's default
And hold more fast and watch more heedfully
The new chance given for this chance cast away.
I shall not see it, how near soe'er ; and yet
The day that I shall die in banishment
Is not much nigher than must their doom's day be
Whose trust is in the triumph of their hour.
Mine is now hard on end ; but yours shall last,
I doubt not, till its service be all done
And comfort given our people. Take the Lairds
Grange and Pittarrow with you to the queen ;
Ye shall find peace and opportunity
With present welcome as for proffered love ;
Make swift agreement with her ; this shall be
The surest staff that hope may take in hand.
Farewell.

MURRAY

I would not say it, if ye not knew
My faith departs not with me from your side
Nor leaves the heart's bond broken of our loves ;
But in this trust, though loth, I take farewell,
To give you welcome ere the year be dead.

RUTHVEN

Me shall you not, nor see my face again,
Who ere the year die must be dead ; mine eyes
Shall see the land no more that gave them light,
But fade among strange faces ; yet, if aught
I have served her, I should less be loth to leave
This earth God made my mother.

MURRAY

Then farewell,
As should his heart who fares in such wise forth
To take death's hand in exile. I must fare
Ill now or well I know not, but I deem
I have as much as you of banishment
Who bear about me but the thought of yours.

SCENE IV. *Holyrood*

The QUEEN and SIR JAMES MELVILLE

QUEEN

Am I come back to be controlled again,
And of men meaner ? must I hold my peace
Or set my face to please him ? Nay, you see
How much miscounselled is he, strayed how far
From all men's hope and honour, and to me
How strange and thankless, whom in self-despite
You will me yet to foster : I would live
Rather the thrall of any hind on earth.

MELVILLE

I would but have your wisdom hide somewhere
The sharpness of your spirit, whose edge of wrath
There is no man but now sees manifest ;
As there is none who knows him that hath cause
To love or honour ; yet great pity it is
To see what nobler natural mind he had
And the first goodness in him so put out
By cursed counsel of his mother's kin,
The bastard Douglas, and such ill friends else
As most are unfriends : but this fire in you
Who chose him, being so young, of your own will,
Against the mind of many, for your lord,
Shall rather burn yourself than purge his mood,
And the open passion of your heart and hate
Hearten in him the hate he bears not you
But them that part you from him. Twice, you know,
Or now my tongue were less for love's sake bold,
Twice hath it pleased your highness charge me speak
When time or need might seem for counsel ; then
That thus you charged me, now such need is come,
Forgive that I forget not.

QUEEN

I might well,
Did you forget, forgive not ; but I know
Your love forgot yet never any charge
That faith to me laid on it ; though I think
I never bade you counsel me to bear
More than a queen might worthily, nor sought
To be advised against all natural will,
That with mine honour now is joined to speak

And bid me bear no more with him, since both
Take part against my patience. For his hate,
Henceforth shall men more covet it than fear ;
My foot is on its head, that even to-day
Shall yield its last poor power of poison up,
And live to no man's danger till it die.

Enter DARNLEY and MURRAY

Welcome, dear brother and my worthy lord,
Who shall this day by your own word be clear
In all men's eyes that had ill thoughts of you.
Brother, to-day my lord shall purge himself
By present oath before our councillors
Of any part in David's murdered blood,
And stand as honourable in sight of all
Whose thought so wronged him as in mine he doth
Who ever held him such as they shall now.

MURRAY

Must he swear this ?

DARNLEY

Who says I shall not swear ?

QUEEN

He has given his faith to swear so much to-day,
And who so shameless or so bold alive
As dare doubt that ?

MURRAY

Not I : in God's name, no ;
No more than any other.

DARNLEY

Nay then, well ;

I am not angry.

QUEEN

'Tis the noblest mood
That takes least hold on anger ; those faint hearts
That hold least fire are fain to show it first ;
The man that knows himself most honourable
Fears least or doubts if others hold him so ;
But he that has small honour in himself
Is quick to doubt what men may deem of him
And thence most swift in anger as in fear
Of men's imagined judgments ; praised be God,
Our lord is none such. Is the deed not drawn
That gives into our servant Bothwell's hand
The forfeit lands of Maitland for his own
That by his former fault stand forfeited ?

MURRAY

Is it your purpose he shall have those lands ?

QUEEN

It is my very purpose.

MURRAY

I grieve at it.

QUEEN

Grieve or be glad, it stands my purpose yet.
We should be gone to meet our councillors ;

My heart thinks long till it shall know my lord
Held of the world as noble as of me.

DARNLEY

It is not time.

QUEEN

No, but much more than time.
Come with me, brother.

[Exeunt QUEEN and MURRAY.]

MELVILLE

I am sorry for your grace.

DARNLEY

You must not think I know not all this while
That she doth mock me.

MELVILLE

Nay, her mood may change.

DARNLEY

Never for me. I had been much better dead
Than cast off thus, who cast mine own friends off
And knew not for whose sake. She hath slain the
men
Who kept that night the gates while he was slain ;
I would she had rather taken too my blood
Than put my life to shame ; yet I may live
To put that off upon her ; had I friends,

Shame should go back from me to her, who thinks
To lay it on her wedded lord and laugh ;
As I may one day laugh yet. Hear you news
Of Morton and mine uncle ?

MELVILLE

They are fled ;
I hear but this, not whither.

DARNLEY

As they brewed,
So let them drink ; the hands were none of mine
That mixed that cup to them ; so much I swear,
And may so much with honour. Yet would God
I had not chosen to lose their loves for hers,
And found so cold her favour. Scarce escaped,
Scarce out of bonds, half breathless yet with flight,
No mind was in her of my help, my love,
My hand that brake her prison ; for all this,
My kin forsaken, mine own wrongs and griefs
Forgotten, mine own head imperilled, mine
For hers that I delivered and perchance
To leave within their danger had done well,
No thought or thanks I get of her : and these
That had I stood by them might stand by me
When I shall need, may mock me for her fool
And curse me for their traitor. Yet I think,
Were I once clear of her as now of these,
Please God, to make mine own strength by myself,
Being both ways free ; I know not well yet how,
But I will take mine own part yet or die. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V. *A Street**Enter* TWO BURGESSES

FIRST BURGESS

What is this news that flies so in the dark
Like a night-bird whereof we know it is
But of what wing we know not ?

SECOND BURGESS

This that comes

From the exiled lords in England, to make bare
The face of Darnley's falsehood, with what lips
He swore his deed away and damned himself?
They had no sooner knowledge of such shame
Than word was sent of him through all the land,
Large witness of his full complicity
And conscience with them of the work to be
For which they groan in barren banishment
While he crawls here before the scornful queen,
And has betrayed the blood of his allies
To the axe's edge of unjust judgment.

FIRST BURGESS

One

By treason of his tongue already slain
Now speaks of him with breathless mouth to God ;
And Maitland and two more lie under doom
Through but his witness : yet for all this shame
It seems he has won small guerdon save the shame,
But hath his treason for his treason's fee ;

And this more comfort, to behold the man
That by his lips and nobler hands than his
Was done to righteous death, and thrust in earth
Before the main door of this Abbey church,
Unearthed again and nobly reinterred
Hard by the grave's edge of Queen Magdalen,
That men may judge how near he grew alive
To the queen's side yet living ; where instead
A worthier stay now in her brother stands
For her false lord to look upon and loath
No less than David, and much more to fear,
Whom with that David he laid trains to slay
Aforetime, and again made vaunt but now
In the queen's sight to slay him ; or so herself
Gave word to the earl, and willed him make demand
Of the king's own false fearful mouth ; but he,
Whom thus perchance she sought to make the sword
To pierce her husband, modestly bespake
Before her face this caitiff like a friend,
And was put off with faint excuse ; and yet,
Heart-wrung to see him stand or any man
Fast in her favour, like one sick with grief
The king flies forth to Glasgow, where apart
His father's head is hidden ; and there as here
He sits not in men's sight now royally,
But with some six or eight goes up and down
Even where he lists, and none takes note of him ;
While the miscounselled queen, grown high in mind,
Holds privy commerce with the brood o' the Pope
Whose plots corrupt the northward English air,
And with the murderous Irish, to put out
The live light of our God from sea to sea
With insurrection of the fires of hell
And smoke of slaughter ; meantime she reclaims

Of the English queen for prisoners to her hand
The death-doomed lords in exile ; and men say
They find scant countenance of the southern court ;
Yet they think not she will deliver them.

SECOND BURGESS

One is there hath found sure deliverance ;
No chain of man's can mark him prisoner more,
Nor whence he rests can any banish him ;
Ruthven is dead.

FIRST BURGESS

God hath his friend then safe ;
For God's friend he was ever ; and hath died
Most fortunately ; seeing not what we live
Too soon to see.

SECOND BURGESS

He was a nobler man
Than his own name was noble ; no Scot born
More true to the old love of his natural land
Nor stouter-hearted on the gospel side
Of all that stood to serve it. Yet have these
As valiant servants ; Morton, though cast out,
Lives secret yet in England, whence the queen
Dares not I think for shame's sake yield him up
To this queen's bloody judgment, or for fear
And hostile heart she will not. We shall know
Shortly what upshot God will bring of all ;
Whate'er this be, there will be none again
That shall do Darnley good.

FIRST BURGESS

I saw him swear
That day before the council ; he was pale
As one half drunken, stammering as in wrath,
With insolent forehead and irresolute eyes,
Between false fear and shameful hardihood,
With frontless face that lied against itself,
And trembling lips that were not yet abashed
For all their trembling.

SECOND BURGESS

Ay, good cause was there
To shake him to the soul, having cast off
Friendship and faith of good men, yet being still
Signed with their enemies' blood too plain and broad
To gain the goodwill of unrighteousness.
When his day comes that men are weary of him,
God shall strike home.

FIRST BURGESS

Then should that stroke be swift ;
For evil and good alike are weary of him.

SCENE VI. *Castle of Alloa*MURRAY *and* DARNLEY

DARNLEY

Shall I not see her ? but if I see her not
I will be wroken of you that shut me out,

By God I will. What, are ye not combined,
You, my false-blooded brother, demi-prince,
And Bothwell, and the trustless fool Argyle,
With her to unmake me? I shall foil you though,
Yea, were all three made each a triple man
With thrice your heart and wit.

MURRAY

You strike too high
And shear but air in sunder : there's none yet
That wills you so much evil as yourself,
Would you but think it. Turn your wrath on me,
It cannot wound or fright out of its peace
A soul that answers not your hate, nor works
By night or light against you.

DARNLEY

Swear me that,
And if a devil there be I am rid of you
Whom he will gripe at once and hale to hell ;
You took not word to Melville from my wife
Of warning with rebuke for his past pains
To reconcile us, and with charge to be
No more familiar with me for her sake ;
You were not of her counsel to lie in
At Stirling, whence she fled from sight of me,
Who following hither was again cast off,
And till our child was born in Edinburgh
Might scarce have sight of her, and may not now
When scarce a month delivered she comes back
To take by sea and land her pleasure here
Of hunt or sail among the firths and hills

In such fair fellowship as casts out mine ;
It was not you that knew this and approved ;
I pray you swear it.

MURRAY

You are lesser than a child
That, being as simple, yet by innocence
Exceeds you naturally. What cause have I
Or power to wrong you ? what good thing of yours
Should I desire to strip from you and wear,
What gold or grace to gird myself withal
And stand up clad in thievish ornament
To take your place thrust out ? Conspiracy
Should have some gain for warrant of itself,
With vantage of some purpose ; none lays wait
To slay or steal save what may profit him ;
So sit you safe enough.

DARNLEY

I shall not see her ?

MURRAY

If you will be well counselled, no ; her mood
Is hard and keener since your child was born,
And she, new-risen from childbed, hither came
To taste the savour and sweetness of the sea,
I think, with no mind you should follow her ;
Nor am myself, howbeit you hold me hers,
And of one counsel to put down your hopes,
More near her favour ; one man's eye alone
Sees her face favourable, one only ear
Hears her speak soft ; if he be friend of mine,
You know as I know.

DARNLEY

Why, ye are reconciled ;
I have heard what care she had to appease both parts,
When you before her face had braved him, saying,
Ere he reft Maitland's forfeit land and state
Some score as honourable as he should die,
And she had cast herself across your wrath
With reconciling passion ; ay, my lord,
Take note we are not so dull of ear or brain
But we hear word of you and understand
The traitors that ye all are, all, to me,
The false heart and the lying lips that serve
The murderous meaning of your will, and hers
The first and worst. What, will ye have my life ?
Is it my helpless blood that she would take
To serve for christening water to her child,
And for the font no gift of English gold
Though bright and hollow and void as English love,
But the strait coffin, the vile shell of death,
That hides and bears me graveward ? but I live,
To save myself and to revenge I live,
And will not die for all you.

Enter the QUEEN and BOTHWELL

QUEEN

What is this
That makes such wrathful or such woful war
Even on our ears, and here ? We bade you not
Come brawl before us like a groom, and break
Our breath of peace with cries of contumely.
Here is not room enough for rioters' threats

To ring through and return ; in Edinburgh
You have leave to brawl and wail and swear and cry,
Feed where you list, and love ; here I would rest,
With thus much leave yet by your gracious grant,
That I may sometime sit apart, and think
What man I have to husband.

DARNLEY

I will go :
I would I had not come between your eyes
Nor now nor ever.

QUEEN

Then they had never learnt
What makes or makes not man worth looking on.

DARNLEY

Am I not worth your eye ?

QUEEN

I pray, go back ;
I would not say what you are worth or no.

DARNLEY

I am yet worth two bastards ; and this man,
If he shall do me less than right, by heaven,
Shall wear the proof upon him.

MURRAY

Sir, your words
Are as swords drawn of drunkards' hands, which first
Feel their edge bite ; me can they make not shrink,

You they may pierce, and slay your own good name,
If any man be that gives ear to you.

DARNLEY

You will not fight with me?

QUEEN

What, in our face?
Hath fear gone after shame?

MURRAY

Let him pass hence ;
He hath said truth once ; we shall not fight.

QUEEN

I charge you
Make straight atonement ; else, though shame be
dead,
I will find means to raise up fear alive.

DARNLEY

Nay, I spake hot and hastily ; my lord,
You know I bear no bitter heart toward you ;
I am more of quick tongue than of evil will.

MURRAY

Sir, so I hold you.

DARNLEY

So you do but right.
Nor will I stay to chafe your majesty

That has all power to bid me to and fro,
Who yet was called your lord once of the priest,
And am no lord but servant. [*Exit.*]

QUEEN

Said you, once?
Not once but twice he hath spoken truth to-day.
Yet sits it strange upon his lips.

MURRAY

I would
He had come not hither, or you not bidden him back.

QUEEN

What, should he stay? Fair brother, wot you well,
I had rather touch in the dark a serpent's flesh
And with its body and breath confound mine own
Than with his breath and body. Never more,
By Mary Virgin, while these limbs are mine
And these my living lips, never will I
Pollute myself with him ; by kiss nor touch
Shall ever he defile me. Nay too, see,
(You have not seen) what privacies he hath
With what strange friends ; here have I to my hand
Letters of his to Philip and the Pope,
That they should know I am slacker toward the faith
Than Rome would have me, or Spain ; he swears
I am cold,
I have cast off care (God wot) to serve the church,
And he it is, my lord, being strong in faith,
Expounds mine unfaith to them.

BOTHWELL

Hath he sworn
To sleep for their sakes in a naked grave?
If this were blown among the popular folk
Scant time there were to sew his shroud, I ween,
Ere earth were shed upon him.

MURRAY

Ay, but, sir,
They must not know it ; it were not well they knew ;
Nor shall it be put forth among them.

BOTHWELL

No !
It shall not ?

MURRAY

By my will it shall not be.

BOTHWELL

His will ! and shall not ! Is it queen or king
That holds the rod of rule in Scotland here ?
Madam, what says your sometime majesty
Of such a kingly will ? since, for your own,
It has no power, it shall not fight with his,
Shall not have way, nor shall not be at all,
Except it swim with his will.

MURRAY

This is nought.

BOTHWELL

Yea truly, nought shall be this will of yours,
This potent will that shall not tread us down ;
Yea, what you will or will not, all is nought,
Nought as your name, or title to bear rule
Within the realm possessed more royally.

MURRAY

'Tis not a score as big-voiced men as this
Shall make me weak with wagging of their tongues
That I should loose what lies into my hand.
Madam, what faith I bear you and goodwill,
If that you know not, let the time and proof,
Not mine own lips, be witness ; in this realm
I have some power to serve you, by no craft
Unjustly purchased nor by force of hand
Won masterfully : and for God's love and yours
That which I may I will do to keep fair
In the open eye of all men your good name
And power which if that name be blown against
With windy whispers of ill-minded folk,
Or such as see your marriage-bed lie cold
And know not wherefore, dies out of your hand
And is no more for ever. Therefore is it
I would not the worst cause of strife you have
Were opened to the people ; for himself,
You know if ever love between us were
Since first I fell under your stroke of wrath
For his sole sake, whose match then made with you
I would betimes have broken, but being made
Would not now see rent shamefully in twain
That men should speak you wrong.

QUEEN

You are honourable ;

But yet the whole worst cause you know not of,
That even his father Lennox writes me here
Letters to put the charge thereof away
And clear himself of fellowship therein,
Assuring his own honesty, albeit
His word is worthless with his son my lord
And his name held not as a father's name.
This letter will I lay before the lords
That they may see what manner of cause he hath
To plead against us with what likelihood,
When his own father shall forswear his cause.
I am assured he hath set his lewd light mind,
Out of what fear I know not or what shame,
To flee forth of the kingdom and take ship
For the islands westward of that southern cape
Where the out-thrust heel of England cleaves the
sea—

But God knows how to live there, if by spoil
Or what base mean of life ; only thus much
In parley with the French ambassador
He hath avowed, and wept to tell of wrongs
That as he swears have driven him down to this.

MURRAY

He is a fool, and vile ; yet let not him
Be the more dangerous to you even for this,
That he is vile and foolish ; there should be
Wise means to curb and chain the fool in him
Without the scandal of the full-mouthed world.

QUEEN

Such have I sought ; and presently I think
To have him brought again in Edinburgh
Before the lords in council, even those men
Who stood in arms against him with yourself
When first there grew debate upon our match
(Which I could pray now with too tardy tongue
That God had given you force to break indeed),
And were of counsel with him afterward
In David's bloodshed, and betrayed of him
Into mine hand again for perfect fear,
Fear and false heart ; even before these, I say,
Whose threefold memory of him so must knit
Their hearts to his, there shall he plead, and say
If he have aught against me blameworthy,
Or what he would ; so shall he be displayed
And we in the eyes of all men justified
That simply deal with him and honourably,
Not as by cunning or imperious hand,
But plain as with an equal.

BOTHWELL

By my head,
Your counsel, madam, is more than man's poor wit.

MURRAY

It may do well : would all were well indeed !
I see no clearer way than this of yours
Nor of more peaceful promise. I will go
To bid my friends together of the lords
Who will be counselled of me, and to show
Your purpose righteous : so I take my leave. [*Exit.*

QUEEN

Is not that light red oversea ?

BOTHWELL

Blood-red.

QUEEN

The wind has fallen ; but there the clouds come up ;
We shall not sail to-day.

BOTHWELL

No ; here will be
No woman's weather.

QUEEN

Yet I had in mind
Either to sail or drive the deer to-day.
I fear not so much rainfall or sea-drift
That I should care to house and hide my head.
I never loved the windless weather, nor
The dead face of the water in the sun ;
I had rather the live wave leapt under me,
And fits of foam struck light on the dark air,
And the sea's kiss were keen upon my lip
And bold as love's and bitter ; then my soul
Is a wave too that springs against the light
And beats and bursts with one great strain of joy
As the sea breaking. You said well ; this light
Is like shed blood spilt here by drops and there
That overflows the red brims of the cloud
And stains the moving water : yet the waves

Pass, and the spilt light of the broken sun
Rests not upon them but a minute's space ;
No longer should a deed, methinks, once done
Endure upon the life of memory
To stain the days thereafter with remorse
And mar the better seasons.

BOTHWELL

So think I.

QUEEN

If I were man I would be man like you.

BOTHWELL

What then?

QUEEN

And being so loved as you of me,
I would make use of love, and in good time
Put the scythe to it and reap ; it should not rot
As corn ungarnered, it should bring forth bread
And fruit of life to strengthen me : but, mark,
Who would eat bread must earn bread : would you be
King ?

BOTHWELL

Nay, but servant ever to my queen.

QUEEN

Let us go forth ; the evening will be fair.

SCENE VII. *Edinburgh. The Parliament-House*

The QUEEN seated in state ; near her DU CROC and MURRAY ; DARNLEY in front, as at his arraignment ; on the one side the Lords of the Congregation ; on the other those of the Queen's party, BOTHWELL, HUNTLEY, CAITHNESS, ATHOL, and the ARCHBISHOP of ST. ANDREW'S

QUEEN

My lords, ye hear by his own word of hand
How fair and loyally our father writes,
To purge his name that had indeed no soil
Of any blame to usward ; though he have
No power upon our wedded lord his son
To heal his heart's disease of discontent :
Which, for myself, before God's face and yours
I do protest I know not what thing done
Hath in my lord begotten or brought forth,
Nor of what ill he should complain in me.
Nay, here in very faith and humbleness
I turn me to him and with clasped hands beseech
That he would speak even all his mind of me,
In what thing ever I have given my lord offence,
And if before him I stand blameworthy
Would lay my blame for burden on my head
In this high presence ; which to bear shall be
At once for penance and instruction to me
Who know not yet my lightest fault by name.

OCHILTREE

So would we all be certified of you,
Sir, that your cause may stand forth visibly

And men take cognizance of it who see
Nor root nor fruit now of your discontent ;
We pray you then make answer to the queen.

DU CROC

My lord, you have held me for a friend, and laid
A friend's trust on me ; for that honour's sake
For which I am bounden to you, give me now
But leave to entreat you in all faith of heart
Dishonour not yourself nor this great queen
By speech or silence with a show of shame ;
Let it be seen shame hath no portion here,
But honour only and reconciled remorse
That pours its bitter balm into the wound
Of love somehow divided from itself
And makes it whole ; I pray you, be it so now.

QUEEN

An honourable petition, my good lord,
And one that comes reverberate from my heart.

DARNLEY

I will not stand the question. Are ye set
To bait me like a bonds slave ? Sirs, I think
There is no worthier man of you than I,
Whom ye would chide and bait and mock ; howbeit,
Ye shall not wring out of my smitten lips,
As from a child's ye scourge till he speak truth,
One word I would not ; rather being thus used
I will go forth the free man that I came,
No nobler, but as noble. For your grace,
I have stood too near you now to fall behind

And stand far back with vassal hat plucked off
To bow at bidding ; therefore with free soul
For a long time I take farewell and go,
Commending you to God ; and if as seems
I was or nought or grievous in your eye,
It shall not take offence this many a day
At this that here offends it. So I have done :
Enough said is said well.

BOTHWELL (*aside to the QUEEN*)

I never saw
Such heart yet in the fool. Madam, speak now ;
I wot he hath made a beard or two of them
Nod favourably.

QUEEN

What should I say ? not I.

BOTHWELL

Speak to the ambassador ; bid him take heed
This feather fly not shipward, and be blown
Out of our hand ; speak to him.

QUEEN

Have no such fear ;
He will not fly past arm's length ; the French lord
Will hold him safe unbidden. Look, they talk.

BOTHWELL

And yet I would he had spoken not so high.
I did not think but he would bend, and mourn
Like a boy beaten.

QUEEN

With what sorrow of heart,
My lords, we have heard such strange and harsh reply
To our good words and meaning, none of you
But must be as ourself to know it well.
But since nor kindliness nor humble speech
Nor honest heart of love can so prevail
Against the soul of such inveteracy,
But wilful mind will make itself more hard
Than modesty and womanhood are soft
Or gentleness can speak it fair, we have not
One other tear to weep thereon for shame.
So without answer, yea, no word vouchsafed,
As all ye witness, no complaint, no cause,
No reason shown, but all put off in wrath,—
I would not say, ourself in you, my lords,
Mocked with defiance,—it were but a scorn
To hold our session further. Thus in grief
Will we fare hence and take of you farewell,
Being southward bounden, as ye know, to hear
At Jedburgh what complaint of wrong there is
Between our own folk and the bordering men,
Whose wardens of the English side have wrought us
Fresh wrong but late ; and our good warden here
Shall go before us to prepare our way.

SCENE VIII. *Hermitage Castle**The QUEEN and BOTHWELL*

BOTHWELL

I did not think you could have rid so fast.

QUEEN

There is no love in you to lift your heart,
Nor heart to lift the fleshly weight, and bear
Forward : I struck my love even as a spur
Into the tired side of my horse, and made it
Leap like a flame that eats up all its way
Till I were here.

BOTHWELL

Why came you not before ?

QUEEN

What, am I now too slow ?

BOTHWELL

Ay, though you rode
Beyond the sun's speed, yea, the race of time
That runs down all men born. Forgive it me
That I was wroth and weary for your love,
Here lying alone, out of your eyes ; I could not
But chafe and curse, sending my spirit forth
From this maimed flesh yet halting with its wound
To move about you like a thought, and bring me
Word of your works and ways.

QUEEN

I could not come.

BOTHWELL

Was there so much work worthier to be done
Than this, to give love and to take again

Thus ? but for my part, of all things in the world
I hold this best, to love you ; and I think
God never made your like for man to love.

QUEEN

You are my soldier ; but these silk-soft words
Become your lips as well as mine, when love
Rekindles them ; how good it is to have
A man to love you ! here is man indeed,
Not fool or boy, to make love's face ashamed,
To abash love's heart and turn to bitterness
The sweet blood current in it. O my fair lord !
How fairer is this warrior face, and eyes
With the iron light of battle in them left
As the after fire of sunset left in heaven
When the sun sinks, than any fool's face made
Of smiles and courtly colour ! Now I feel
As I were man too, and had part myself
In your great strength ; being one with you as I,
How should not I be strong ? It is your deed,
By grace of you and influence, sir, it is
That I fear nothing ; how should I lift up
Mine eyes to your eyes, O my light o' the war,
And dare be fearful ? yours but looked upon,
Though mine were timorous as a dove's affrayed,
For very shame would give them heart, and fire
To meet the eyes of danger. What were I
To have your love and love you, and yet be
No more than women are whose name is fear
And their hearts bloodless—I, who am part of you,
That have your love for heart's blood ? Shall I think
The blood you gave me fighting for my sake
Has entered in my veins and grown in me

To fill me with you? O, my lord, my king,
Love me ! I think you cannot love me yet,
That have done nought nor borne for love of you ;
But by the eye's light of all-judging God
That if I lie shall burn my soul in hell,
There is not in this fierce world anything,
Scorn, agony, stripes, bonds, fears, woes, deep shame,
Kingdomless ruin, but with open hands,
With joyous bosom open as to love,
Yea, with soul thankful for its great delight
And life on fire with joy, for this love's sake
I would embrace and take it to my heart.

BOTHWELL

Why, there should need not this to love you well ;
What should you have to bear for me, my queen,
Or how should I more love you? Nay, sweet, peace,
Let not your passion break you ; your breast burns,
Your very lips taste bitter with your tears.

QUEEN

It is because—O God that pities us !—
I may not always lie thus, may not kneel,
Cling round your hands and feet, or with shut eyes
Wait till your lips be fast upon my face,
And laugh with very love intolerable
As I laugh now— look, now I do not weep,
I am not sad nor angered against heaven
That ever he divides us ; I am glad
That yet I have mine hour. Sweet, do not speak,
Nor do not kiss me ; let mine eyes but rest
In the love's light of yours, and for a space

My heart lie still, late drunken with love's wine,
And feel the fierce fumes lessen and go out
And leave it healed. O, I have bled for you
The nearest inward blood that is my life
Drop by drop inly, till my swooning heart
Made my face pale—I should look green and wan
If by heart's sickness and blood-wasting pain
The face be changed indeed ; for all these days
Your wound bled in me, and your face far off
Was as a moving fire before mine eyes
That might not come to see you ; I was dead,
And yet had breath enough, speech, hearing, sight,
To feel them strange and insupportable ;
I know now how men live without a heart.
Does your wound pain you ?

BOTHWELL

What, I have a wound?

QUEEN

How should one love enough, though she gave all,
Who had your like to love ? I pray you tell me,
How did you fight ?

BOTHWELL

Why, what were this to tell ?

I caught this reiver, by some chance of God,
That put his death into mine hand, alone,
And charged him ; foot to foot we fought some space,
And he fought well ; a gallant knave, God wot,
And worth a sword for better soldier's work
Than these thieves' brawls ; I would have given him
life

To ride among mine own men here and serve,
But he would nought ; so being sore hurt i' the thigh
I pushed upon him suddenly, and clove
His crown through to the chin.

QUEEN

I will not have you
Henceforth for warden of these borders, sir :
We have hands enow for that and heads to cleave
That but their wives will weep for.

BOTHWELL

Have no fear ;
This hour had healed me of more grievous wounds ;
When it shall please you sign me to your side,
Think I am with you.

QUEEN

I must ride—woe's me !
The hour is out. Be not long from me, love ;
And till you come, I swear by your own head
I will not see the thing that was my lord
Though he came in to Jedburgh. I had thought
To have spoken of him, but my lips were loth
To mar with harsh intrusion of his name
The least of all our kisses. Let him be ;
We shall have time. How fair this castle stands !
These hills are greener, and that singing stream
Sings sweeter, and the fields are brighter faced,
Than I have seen or heard ; and these good walls
That keep the line of kingdom, all my life
I shall have mind of them to love them well.
Nay, yet I must to horse.

BOTHWELL

Ay must you, sweet ;
If you will ride thus fifty mile a day,
But for your face you should be man indeed.

QUEEN

But for my face ?

BOTHWELL

If you will make me mad——

QUEEN

I dare not dwell with madmen ; sir, farewell.

BOTHWELL

But for your love and for its cruelty,
I would have said, you should be man.

QUEEN

Alas !

But for my love ? nay, now you speak but truth ;
For I well knew there was no love in man.
But we grow idle in this our labouring time ;
When we have wrought through all the heat o' the
day,
We may play then unblamed, and fear no hand
To push us each from other ; now farewell.

SCENE IX. *The Queen's Lodging at Jedburgh**The three MARIES*

MARY CARMICHAEL

What, will she die ? how says this doctor now ?

MARY SEYTON

He thinks by chafing of her bloodless limbs
To quicken the numbed life to sense again
That is as death now in her veins ; but surely
I think the very spirit and sustenance
That keeps the life up current in the blood
Has left her as an empty house for death,
Entering, to take and hold it.

MARY BEATON

I say, no ;
She will not die of chance or weariness ;
This fever caught of riding and hot haste
Being once burnt out, as else nought ails her, will not
Leave her strength tainted ; she is manly made,
And good of heart ; and even by this her brain,
We see, begins to settle ; she will live.

MARY CARMICHAEL

Pray God she may, and no time worse than this
Come through her death on us and all her land
Left lordless for men's swords to carve and share ;
Pray God she die not.

MARY BEATON

From my heart, amen !
God knows and you if I would have her die.

MARY SEYTON

Would you give up your loving life for hers ?

MARY BEATON

I shall not die before her ; nor, I think,
Live long when she shall live not.

MARY SEYTON

A strange faith :
Who put this confidence in you ? or is it
But love that so assures you to keep life
While she shall keep, and lose when she shall lose
For very love's sake ?

MARY BEATON

This I cannot tell,
Whence I do know it ; but that I know it I know,
And by no casual or conjectural proof,
Nor yet by test of reason ; but I know it
Even as I know I breathe, see, hear, feed, speak,
And am not dead and senseless of the sun
That yet I look on : so assuredly
I know I shall not die till she be dead.
Look, she is risen.

Enter the QUEEN, supported by attendants

QUEEN

What word was in your lips?
That I must die?

MARY SEYTON

Heaven hath not such hard heart.

QUEEN

I think I shall not, surely, by God's grace ;
Yet no man knows of God when he will bring
His hour upon him. I am sick and weak,
And yet unsure if I be whole of mind.
I think I have been estranged from my right wits
These some days back ; I know not. Prithee tell me,
Have I not slept ? I know you who you are ;
You were about me thus in our first days,
When days and nights were roseleaves that fell off
Without a wind or taint of chafing air
But passed with perfume from us, and their death
Had on it still the tender dew of birth.
We were so near the sweet warm wells of life
We lay and laughed in bosom of the dawn
And knew not if the noon had heat to burn
Or the evening rain to smite us ; being grown tall,
Our heads were raised more near the fires of heaven
And bitter strength of storms ; then we were glad,
Ay, glad and good. Is there yet one of you
Keeps in her mind what hovers now in mine,
That sweet strait span of islanded green ground
Where we played once, and set us flowers that died

Before even our delight in them was dead?
Now we are old, delights are first to die
Before the things that breed them.

MARY SEYTON (*aside*)

She roams yet.

MARY BEATON

I do remember.

QUEEN

Yea, I knew it ; one day
We wrangled for a rose' sake and fell out
With tears and words protesting each 'twas she,
She 'twas that set it ; and for very wrath
I plucked up my French lilies and set foot
On their gold heads, because you had chafed me,
saying
Those were her flowers who should be queen in France,
And leave you being no queen your Scottish rose
With simpler leaves ungilt and innocent
That smelt of homelier air ; and I mind well
I rent the rose out of your hand and cast
Upon the river's running ; and a thorn
Pierced through mine own hand, and I wept not then,
But laughed for anger at you and glad heart
To have made you weep, being worsted. What light
things
Come back to the light brain that sickness shakes
And makes the heaviest thought that it can hold
No heavier than a leaf, or gossamer
That seems to link two leaves a minute, then
A breath unlinks them ; so my thoughts are : nay,
And should not so ; it may be I shall die,

And as a fool I would not pass away
With babbling lips unpurged and graceless heart
Unreconciled to mercy. Let me see
That holy lord I bade be not far off
While I lay sick—I have not here his name—
My head is tired, yet have I strength at heart
To say one word shall make me friends with God,
Commending to him in the hour of unripe death
The spirit so rent untimely from its house
And ere the natural night lay hold on it
Darkly divided from the light of life.
Pray him come to me.

MARY BEATON

It is my lord of Ross
The queen would see? my lord is at her hand.

Enter the BISHOP OF ROSS

QUEEN

Most reverend father, my soul's friend, you see
How little queenlike I sit here at wait
Till God lay hand on me for life or death,
With pain for that gold garland of my head
Men call a crown, and for my body's robe
Am girt with mortal sickness : I would fain,
Before I set my face to look on death,
Mine eyes against his eyes, make straight the way
My soul must travel with this flesh put off
At the dark door ; I pray you for God's grace
Give me that holy help that is in you
To lighten my last passage out of sight.

For this world's works, I have done with them this day,
With mine own lips while yet their breath was warm
Commending to my lords the natural charge
Of their born king, and by my brother's mouth
To the English queen the wardship of her heir,
And by the ambassador's of France again
To his good mistress and my brother king
The care of mine unmothered child, who has
No better friends bequeathable than these :
And for this land have I besought them all,
Who may beseech of no man aught again,
That here may no man for his faith be wronged
Whose faith is one with mine that all my life
I have kept, and fear not in it now to die.

BISHOP OF ROSS

Madam, what comfort God hath given his priests
To give again, what stay of spirit and strength
May through their mean stablish the souls of men
To live or die unvexed of life or death,
Unwounded of the fear and fang of hell,
Doubt not to have ; seeing though no man be good
But one is good, even God, yet in his eye
The man that keeps faith sealed upon his soul
Shall through the bloodshedding of Christ be clean.
And in this time of cursing and flawed faith
Have you kept faith unflawed, and on your head
The immediate blessing of the spouse of God.
Have no fear therefore but your sins of life,
Or stains and shadows such as all men take,
In this world's passage, from the touch of time,
Shall fall from off you as a vesture changed
And leave your soul for whiteness as a child's.

QUEEN

I would have absolution ere I die,
But of what sins I have not strength to say
Nor hardly to remember. I do think
I have done God some service, holding fast
Faith, and his Church's fear ; and have loved well
His name and burden set on me to serve,
To bear his part in the eye of this thwart world
And witness of his cross ; yet know myself
To be but as a servant without grace
Save of his lord's love's gift ; I have sinned in pride,
Perchance, to be his servant first and fight,
In face of all men's hate and might, alone,
Here sitting single-sceptred, and compel
For all its many-mouthed inveteracy
The world with bit and bridle like a beast
Brought back to serve him, and bowed down to me
Whose hand should take and hale it by the mane
And bend its head to worship as I bade,
I, first among his faithful ; so I said,
And foolishly ; for I was high of heart ;
And now, behold, I am in God's sight and man's
Nothing ; but though I have not so much grace
To bind again this people fast to God,
I have held mine own faith fast and with my lips
Have borne him witness if my heart were whole.

BISHOP OF ROSS

Therefore shall he forget not in your hour
Nor for his child reject you ; and shall make
The weight and colour of your sins on earth
More white and light than wool may be or snow.

QUEEN

Yea, so my trust is of him ; though as now
Scarce having in me breath or spirit of speech
I make not long confession, and my words
Through faintness of my flesh lack form ; yet, pray
you,

Think it but sickness and my body's fault
That comes between me and my will, who fain
Would have your eye look on my naked soul
And read what writing there should be washed out
With mine own heart's tears, and with God's dear
blood,

Who sees me for his penitent ; for surely
My sins of wrath and of light-mindedness,
And waste of wanton will and wandering eyes,
Call on me with dumb tongues for penitence ;
Which I beseech you let not God reject
For lack of words that I lack strength to say.
For here as I repent and put from me
In perfect hope of pardon all ill thoughts,
So I remit all faults against me done,
Forgive all evil toward me of all men,
Deed or device to hurt me ; yea, I would not
There were one heart unreconciled with mine
When mine is cold ; I will not take death's hand
With any soil of hate or wrath or wrong
About me, but being friends with this past world
Pass from it in the general peace of love.

MARY BEATON

Here is some message from the world of friends
Brought to your brother : shall my lord come in ?

QUEEN

What lord? ye have no lord of any man
While I am lady of all you. Who is this?
Message? what message? whence?

Enter MURRAY

MURRAY

From Edinburgh

Your husband new alighted in sharp speed
Craves leave of access to your majesty.

QUEEN

By heaven, I had rather death had leave than he.
What comes he for? to vex me quick or dead
With his lewd eyes and sodden sidelong face
That I may die again with loathing of him?
By God, as God shall look upon my soul,
I will not see him. Bid him away, and keep
Far off as Edinburgh may hold him hence
Among his fellows of the herded swine
That not for need but love he wallows with
To expend his patrimony of breath and blood
In the dear service of dishonouring days.

MURRAY

Let him but bide the night here.

QUEEN

Not an hour;
Not while his horse may breathe. I will not see him.

MURRAY

Nay, for the world's sake, and lest worse be said ;
Let him sleep here and come not in your sight.

QUEEN

Unless by some mean I be freed of him
I have no pleasure upon earth to live.
I will put hand to it first myself. My lord,
See how this ill man's coming shakes my soul
And stains its thoughts with passionate earth again
That were as holy water, white and sweet,
For my rechristening ; I could weep with wrath
To find between my very prayer and God
His face thrust like a shameful thought in sleep.
I cannot pray nor fix myself on heaven
But he must loose my hold, break up my trust,
Unbind my settled senses, and pluck down
My builded house of hope. Would he were dead
That puts my soul out of its peace with God.
Comfort me, father ; let him not have way ;
Keep my soul for me safe and full of heaven
As it was late.—See that you rid him hence,
I charge you, sir, with morning.

MURRAY

Yea, I shall ;

'Twere best he saw you not.

QUEEN

I think so. Hark !
Who is there lighted after him ? I heard—

Nay, he is sick yet, wounded ; yet I heard—
Pray God he be not risen too soon, to ride
With his wound's danger for my sickness' sake.

MARY BEATON

It is my lord the warden.

QUEEN

What, I knew it—
So soon so far, and with such speed ! Ay, never
Had queen so ill befriended of her own
So fast a friend and loving. I will see him ;
I am stronger than I was. Give me your hands ;
I can stand upright surely. Come you in
And help to attire me like a living queen ;
These are as grave-clothes. One go bring me word
How he looks now, if weak or well indeed,
If stout of cheer or tired. Say, for his coming
And care unbidden of me, I thank him not
If he have done his own wound hurt thereby.
I will but rest, and see him : bring me in. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE X. *Craigmillar*

The QUEEN, MURRAY, BOTHWELL, MAITLAND,
HUNTLEY, *and* ARGYLE

QUEEN

If it must be, or all without it break, ,
I am content to have Lord Morton home ;
Nay, all of them ye will, save two I keep

To be the food of justice and my wrath,
Now hunger-starven ; his red hand who set
To my child-burdened breast the iron death,
And the uncle of my caitiff ; they shall bleed,
As Ruthven should, but for death's hastier hand
That plucked him up before me : for his son,
Let him come back too.

MAITLAND

It is nobly judged,
And shall content the lords and land alike
With such good counsel and such fair consent
To see your highness moved to rid yourself
Of their disease and yours, with all men's will
Purged from you by the readiest mean we may.

QUEEN

Ay, by divorce : I have then your tongues to that,
Yours, both my friends now that were ill friends
once
But handfast here in common faith to me
And equal-hearted ; and my brother's voice,
Joined with these good lords present : but you said,
Was it not you said, sir, that by divorce,
Though leave were given of them that might with-
hold,
And the priest's word that bound unbound us, yet
Some soil might fall from lips of evil will
On our son's birth-name ?

MAITLAND

Yea, from ill men's mouths
And all that hate you such rebuke might fall,

Which were foul shame to suffer and be dumb,
Though made by your divorce unanswerable.

QUEEN

In sooth, I thought so ; and howbeit yourself,
My lord of Bothwell, by the judgment given
That loosed your mother's from your father's hand
Stood undespoiled in fair inheritance,
It may be where the cast is of a crown,
And such a crown as in contention shakes
Two several-storied kingdoms, even the chance
Should stand not questionable, and friend nor foe
Have word to throw against it.

MAITLAND

So I said.

BOTHWELL

Yet must the queen be freed ; and for the fear
Lest England for his sake be moved, I know not
What hold it has upon us, who but now
Saw what good heart and loyal will they bear
To the right heirship of your majesty
Who bide on our south border, when their guns
From Berwick hailed you passing hither, and made
The loud-mouthed crags cry to their batteries back,
And tell the sundering Tweed and all green hills,
And all the clamorous concourse of the sea,
The name that had the lordship of both lands
In heritage to bind them fast in one.
There heart and tongue outspake of the true north
That for his caitiff sake should not be moved

Nor alter from its faith though he were cast,
With haltered throat or millstone round his neck,
From a queen's bed into the naked sea.

MAITLAND

Madam, we are here for service of your grace,
Chief of your council and nobility :
We shall find mean whereby without wrong done
To your son's title, you shall well be quit
Of your ill-minded husband ; and albeit
My lord of Murray present here be one
As scrupulous of his faith a Protestant
As is your grace a Papist, he will look
As through his fingers on the work we do
And say no word, I am well assured, of all
His eye may wink on.

QUEEN

Nay, I cannot tell ;
I would not have mine honour touched, nor buy
My peace with hurt of conscience ; being so wise
As silence proves you or as speech proclaims,
Ye shall do well to let this be ; perchance
The good ye mean me being untimely done
Might turn to my displeasure, and your hands
Leave me more hurt than holpen.

MURRAY

You say well ;
For none but honourable and lawful ends
Have I desired this council, to procure
Your just and honest freedom, and repeal

The banished Morton, whose advice thereto
Shall not be fruitless ; for no further aim
To no strange mean have I put hand. Farewell.
[*Exit.*

ARGYLE

He will not know of us enough to thwart ;
And so not least may serve us ; but if here
These hands whose help would hurt you not be set
To such a bond as may put forth our cause
And bind us to sustain it with one soul,
Shall they more hurt than help you ?

QUEEN

Nay, ye are wise ;
I know not ; but I think your helpful hands
Could not be set but to my service.

HUNTLEY

Then
Should we set down what reason of resolve
We have to make it manifest and sure
That this young fool and tyrant by our will
Shall bear no rule among us, and thereto
For divers causes shall he be put forth
One way or other, and what man soe'er
Shall take this deed in hand or do it, all we
Shall as our own and general act of all
Defend and fortify it.

QUEEN

Must all set hands
To one same bond for warrant ?

BOTHWELL

Who should fail ?

Not we that shall devise it, nor Balfour,
My kinsman here and friend.

QUEEN

Must you sign too ?

BOTHWELL

How must I not ? am I not fit to serve
As being or coward or faithless or a fool,
Or all or any ? or what misdoubt of yours
Should wash my writing out or blur my name ?
What faith a faithful servant of his hands
May freely challenge of the king they serve,
So much I challenge of your majesty.

QUEEN

Nay, my fair lord, but for your known faith's sake
And constant service the less need it were
To have your hand here on our side ; lest men
Should lay the deed but on mine ancient friends,
Whose names not all men love yet for my sake,
And call it but our privy plot and hate
Which is the judgment of all wisest lords
And equal sentence of the general land.

MAITLAND

So we that were not counted with your friends
Should bear the whole deed and its danger up,
We whom you have loved not, madam, for the stand

We made against the perilous loves and hates
That loosened half your people's love from you.
Yet must we have his hand too.

BOTHWELL

Ay, and shall.
I wear no glove when hands are bared to strike.

QUEEN

Be it as you will ; I am nothing in your count ;
So be it ; my council shall not cumber you.
Do all ye list.

MAITLAND

And all that shall be done
Will be the more strength to your majesty
And comfort to your cause : which now we go
With all our help to hearten.

QUEEN

Go, and thrive.

[*Exeunt* MAITLAND, HUNTLEY, and ARGYLE.]

I would we had no need of such men's tongues.

BOTHWELL

He has the wisest name on all their side ;
And by the tether that holds fast his faith
We lead their lesser wits what way we will.
Sharp-spirited is he surely, deep of soul,
Cunning and fearless ; one that gives, men say,
Small heed or honour to their faiths or fears

And breath of holy custom ; undistraught
By doubt of God's hand paddling in our clay
Or dream of God's eye slanted on our sin ;
As one that holds more worthily of God,
—Or would not hold at all—whate'er he be,
Than of a sidelong scrupulous overseer
That pries askance upon our piteous lives
To judge of this and this, how ill or well,
And mark souls white or black with coal or chalk
For crowning or for burning, palms or fires ;
One therefore that through all shut ways of life
Lets his soul range, even like the all-winnowing
wind,

And ply her craft in all life's businesses
Not like a blind man burdened ; sure of hand
And great of counsel, like an under fire
That works in the earth and makes its breach by night
And leaps a league's length at the first stride forth
Of its free foot, blackening the face of men ;
So strong and keen and secret is his soul.

QUEEN

So he keep trust, I care not if his creed
Be faced or lined with craft and atheism,
His soul be close or open ; but what bond
Shall bind him ours so sure that fraud nor force
May serve against us more ?

BOTHWELL

Doubt me not that ;
By hilt, not edge, we hold him as a sword
That in our hand shall bend not till we break,
If we would break it when our work is done.

QUEEN

Have we the strength ? I doubt not of this hand,
That holds my heart, if it be strong or no,
More than I doubt of the eyes that light mine eyes,
The lips that my lips breathe by—O my life,
More than I doubt of mine own bitter love,
More than of death's no power to sunder us,
Of his no force to quench me who am fire,
Fire for your sake, that would put all these out
To shine and lighten in your sight alone
For warmth and comfort, being to all eyes beside
Or fear or ruin more fleet of foot than fear.
I would I had on breast or hand or brow
In crown or clasp the whole gold wrought of the earth,
In one keen jewel the store of all the sea,
That I might throw down at your hand or foot
Sea, land, and all that in them is of price,
Or in the strong wine of my piercing love
Melt the sole pearl of the earth, and drink dissolved
The cost of all the world's worth.

BOTHWELL

Yea, my queen ?

Have then no fear what man shall deem or do ;
For by this fire and light of you I swear
That is my sunlight and my fire of day.
We shall not walk as they that walk by night
Toward our great goal uncertainly, nor swerve
Till we strike foot against it. Kiss me now,
And bid me too speed on my way with them
To bring back all their hands here to the bond
Set fast as mine, or as your heart is fast
Set on his death whose life lies nigh burnt out,

Half brand half ash already in the heat
Of that bright wrath which makes as red as flame
Your fearful and sweet splendour ; nay, by heaven,
It flushes all the light about your face
With seven times kindled colour of pure fire,
And burns mine eyes beholding, as your lips
And quick breath burn me kissing. My sweet fear,
Had you not been the sweetest, even to me
You must have been the fearfulest thing alive.

QUEEN

For love is so, and I am very love,
And no more queen or woman ; have no heart,
No head, no spirit or sense at all of life,
Save as of love that lives and that is I,
I that was woman, and bore rule alone
Upon myself ; who am all diskingdomed now,
Made twice a slave, mine own soul's thrall and yours
Who wield the heart that wields me at your will.
I can but do as wills the spirit in me
Which is your spirit's servant. Ah, my lord,
My one lord every way, my poor heart's blood,
Breath of my lips and eyesight of mine eyes,
How did I live the life that loved you not ?
What were those days wherein I walked apart
And went my way and did my will alone
And thought and wrought without you in the world ?
Then I did evil and folly ; the more need
I purge me now and perfect my desire,
Which is to be no more your lover, no,
But even yourself, yea more than body and soul,
One and not twain, one utter life, one fire,
One will, one doom, one deed, one spirit, one God ;

For we twain grown and molten each in each
Surely shall be as God is and no man.

BOTHWELL

God speed us then till we grow up to God !
Me first, who first shall clear our way to climb
By carving one weed's earthly coil away
That cumpers our straight growing : pray for me !
I will have all their hands to it in an hour.

SCENE XI. *Courtyard of a Hostelry
at Whittingham*

BOTHWELL and MORTON

MORTON

Fled in pure fear of me ? well, he knows best.
Towards Glasgow, said you ?

BOTHWELL

Soon as came the word
You were brought home with welcome of the queen,
He spurs from Stirling with all heat of speed
Even from her arms new-reconciled and face
That favourably had received him ; leaves the feast
Half made and his unchristened yeanling there
Not yet signed God's and dewy from the font
Long waited for, till the English golden gift
Was grown too strait to hold and hallow him ;
Flies from all sight and cheer of festal folk,
And on the way being smitten sick with fear

Cries out of poison working in his flesh
Blue-spotted as with ulcerous pestilence,
Weeps himself dead and wails himself alive,
As now he lies, but bedrid ; and has lain
This Christmas through, while the queen held her feast
At Drummond Castle.

MORTON

Yea, I heard so ; and you
At Tullibardine likewise, or men lie,
Kept the feast high beside her. Well, my lord,
Now have you time and room to say for each
What ye would have of me, the queen and you,
Who are hand and tongue at once of her design ;
Here am I newly lighted, hot from horse,
But fresh come forth of exile and ill days
To do you service ; let me have her hand
For warrant of what dangerous work she will,
And mine is armed to do it ; but till I have,
Expect of me, who have seen times strange as this,
Nothing.

BOTHWELL

I have her warrant in my lips ;
By me she speaks you safe in serving her.

MORTON

Let that secure yourself ; I must have proofs.

BOTHWELL

You shall have all, and written ; but your hand
Must be in this with ours.

MORTON

I have cause enough,
Good reason and good will to see it performed ;
But will not strike through mine own side at him.
Make your mind sure of that.

BOTHWELL

Well, you shall have it ;
Myself will fetch your warrant from her hand
That from my mouth assures you not ; and then——

MORTON

Then shall my hand make answer to her own.
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE XII. *Callander**The QUEEN and LADY RERES*

QUEEN

I do not feel as at past partings ; then
My heart was sick and bitter, and mine eye
Saw not beyond the grievous hour at hand ;
Now when of all time I should be most sad,
Being parted at love's highest of height from love
And bound to meet love's poison and my plague,
My life's live curse yet married to my life,
Yet am I light and fuller of sweet hope
Than even sweet memory fills me.

LADY RERES

It is well

When dawn discomforts not the whole sweet night.

QUEEN

There be stars sure that die not of the day,
Or in this hoariest hour of dusk and dew
How should my heart be warm with last night's fire?

Enter BOTHWELL

What, risen so soon, my lord?

BOTHWELL

What, not yet forth?

That was the question laughing on your lips,
And this my plea to kill the question with.

[Kissing her.]

I must ride now. There waits a messenger
From our wed lord in Glasgow.

QUEEN

Ay? would God

He had slipt his saddle and borne his charge to hell!
Must we part here? I ask but what I know,
Only to have a breath more of your mouth,
A smile more of your eye, turn of your head,
Before you kiss and leave me. Why should love,
That can change life, seat and disseat the soul
In heaven or hurl it hellward, break and build,
Root and unroot the very springs o' the heart,

Have not the force to pluck but twelve hours back,
And twice consume and twice consummate life,
Twice crowned and twice confounded ? I would give
All but love's self, all hope and heat of life,
But to have over this scant space again,
Since yesterday saw sunset.

BOTHWELL

You shall win
A better prayer than this ; for one poor hour
Caught from the gripe of all good-grudging time,
An hundredfold in long-lived happiness,
Secure and scatheless of all change or fear.

QUEEN

Yet this joy waited on by fear and doubt,
Plucked casually, a flower of accident,
On the rough lip and edge of danger's breach,
How sweeter is it than the rose to smell
We gather from our garden with gloved hand,
And find nor thorn nor perfume ! You must go,
And I part hence ; yet all through life and death
I shall have mind of this most gracious place,
Poor palace of all pleasure, where I found
Brief harbourage in long travel of my life.
Now take farewell of me.

BOTHWELL

Fair lips, farewell,
And love me till we kiss again and sleep. [Exit.

QUEEN

So may my last sleep kiss me at your lips,
And find me full of you as heaven of light
When my time comes of slumber.—Bid this man
Come in that waits : he shall bear word of me
Before I stand in his lord's sight again.

Enter CRAWFORD

What message from our lord your master, sir ?

CRAWFORD

Madam, with all his heart my lord commends
His heart's excuses to your majesty
For the great grief and doubt wherein it stands
Of your unstanch'd displeasure ; of which fear
He lies soul-sick, and sends that heart by me
To crave its pardon of you, and for grace
From your dread lips some comfortable word
That may assure him who now lives in pain
Through the evil news he hears from all winds blown,
In all mouths open ; whence as one distraught,
And knowing not how to bear himself secure
Or dare put forth to meet you, for the words
He hears you have said, though fain, I know, to come
And clear himself of aught that you suspect
By present inquisition—this I know,
Though now he laid no charge on me to say—
He hath writ you word already of his grief,
And finds no answer but of bitter sound,
Nor any light of pity from your face,
Nor breath of healing ; wherefore on my knees
He kneels before you to require his doom.

QUEEN

I have no remedy for fear ; there grows
No herb of help to heal a coward heart.
Fears were not rank were faults not rank in him.

CRAWFORD

It is no caitiff doubt that pleads with you,
No rootless dread sprung of a craven mood
That bows him down before your highness' foot
To take the sovereign sentence of your eye
And bide and bear its judgment given as God's :
He knows, he says, by proof and speech of men
What cause he has what friends of yours to fear.

QUEEN

What, must I ride alone to comfort him ?
Tell him he may sleep sure then though I come ;
Lord Bothwell is bound back to Edinburgh ;
There is no man to affright him in my train
But grooms and lacqueys ; and for all I hear
He never feared my women.

CRAWFORD

Please it you,
My master doth but wish all hearts of men
Were on their faces written with their faith.

QUEEN

Hath he no more than this, our lord, to say?
Then let him hold his peace; and bear him word

That of our grace we come to cherish him
With not a man's face to procure his dread.
Tell him so much and bid him keep good heart,
If heart he have, even for my sake who swear
He shall not long live in this fear of me.

SCENE XIII. *Darnley's Lodging in Glasgow*

DARNLEY *on a couch, as sick*; CRAWFORD *in attendance*

DARNLEY

She is come in then?

CRAWFORD

Presently she comes.

DARNLEY

You found her yet more sharp of eye than tongue?

CRAWFORD

Ay.

DARNLEY

Would I had but strength to bring myself
Forth of this land where none will pity me,
No, not the least of all you, though I die.
Who comes with her? what household? I would
 speak
With Joachim her French fellow there, to know
Why she should come—you cannot show me—ay,

And if for good—and if they come with her,
Her outland folk and Bothwell's—or at least
If she have mind yet to send off or no
Joseph, her dead knave's brother? Are you sure
Himself shall come not? wherefore being come in
Should she not lodge beside me? Nay, I hear
More than she wots of, and have spies that see
What counsels breed among the crew of them.
What talk was that of marriage that should be
Between her fiddler and no maid of hers,
To what fair end? Would God I might take ship,
I would make speed for England; there at least
They durst not lay their nets about my life:
Here every wind that blows hath smells of blood.
I am lost and doomed; lost, lost.

CRAWFORD

Have better thoughts.
Take hope to you, and cheer.

DARNLEY

Ay, ay, much cheer!
Ye are all in one to abuse me, snare and slay—
Ye are all one heart to hate, one hand to smite;
I have none to love nor do me good, not one,
One in the world's width, of all souls alive.
I am dead and slain already in your hearts:
By God, if ever I stand up strong again,
I will be even with all you. Doth she think
I fear her? there is none that lives I fear.
What said she to you?

CRAWFORD

With her last breath she said
You should no longer live in fear of her.

DARNLEY

Why, so I do not : nay, nor ever did.
Let her come now and find I fear her not,
What shall she say ?

(*Without*) Make way there for the queen.

Enter the QUEEN, attended

QUEEN

How is it with our lord ?

DARNLEY

Ill is it, ill,
Madam, and no lord but your servant here.
Will you not kiss me ?

QUEEN

Nay, you are sick indeed.
Let me sit here, and give me but your hand.
I have a word with you to speak for love,
And not for chiding.

DARNLEY

I beseech you, no :
I have no force to bear man's chiding now,
Being sick, and all my sickness is of you,
That look so strange and heavily on me ;

Howbeit I could now die, I am made so glad,
For very joy to see you ; if I die,
Look, I leave all things to your only will,
And of my pure love make no testament,
Nor lay no charge on any else for love.

QUEEN

I will rebuke you not but tenderly,
As a right wife and faithful woman ; sir,
What word was that you wrote me, and wherein
And wherefore taxing some for cruelty,
Of what suspicion misconceived and born,
That came forth of your hand to strike my heart ?
You that have found no cause, and will not say
You have found or shall find ever cause of fear,
So to misdoubt me—what could sting you so,
What adder-headed thought or venomous dream,
To make you shoot at this bared breast to you
Suspicion winged and whetted with ill thoughts ?
What words were these to write, what doubts to
 breed,
Of mere mistrust and stark unfriendliness ?
Nay, and I know not, God can witness me,
So much as what you doubt or what misdeem
Or wherein hold me dangerous or my friends,
More than I know what source your sickness hath,
Whereof I would fain think all this is bred
And all ill fears grown but of feverish nights.
What cause most ails you ? or what think you on ?

DARNLEY

I think how I am punished—ay, God knows
I am punished that I made my God of you.

What should I mean of cruelty but yours
That will not look on my sore penitence
For my least sin, as God would look on all?
Though I confess wherein I have failed indeed,
Yet never in worse kind than was avowed,
And many a man for such revolt as mine
Hath had your pardon ; in this kind I have sinned,
Not in such wise as ever I denied,
And am yet young ; and though you should cast up
How often being forgiven I have gone back
And fallen in fresh offence of you that late
Forgave me, may not any twice or thrice
So slip that is none older than I am,
Or slack his promise plighted, yet in the end,
Repenting, by experience be chastised ?
If my weak years and grief may get but grace,
I swear I never shall make fault again ;
And this is all, and honest, that I crave,
To have again my wife to bed and board,
Which if I may not by consent of you
Out of this bed I never will rise more.
I pray you tell me whereof you resolve,
That I may die or live, who have no thought
But only of you ; and at such luckless time
As ever I offend you, even the offence
Grows of yourself ; for when I am wronged or wroth
If I for refuge might complain to you
Of any that offends me, I would speak
Into no ear but yours ; but being estranged,
What now soe'er I hear, necessity
Binds me to keep it in my breast, and hence
I am moved to try my wit on mine own part
For very anger. Now, being at your foot,
Will you forgive me ? that for love indeed

And fear of you have trespassed, being so young,
And had no good man's counsel, and no guard,
No light, no help, no stay,—was yet scarce man,
And have so loved you whom I sinned against.

QUEEN

Why would you pass in the English ship away ?

DARNLEY

I swear by God I never thought thereon ;
I spake but with the men ; but though I had,
I might have well ta'en hold on such a thought,
To hear much less things than the least I heard.

QUEEN

What inquisition was it that you made
To hear such things as fright you ?

DARNLEY

Nay, by heaven,
I have made none ; I never sought man out
To speak with any ; I swear I see no spies.

QUEEN

Must I return to your own ear again
The very words were spoken ?

DARNLEY

I did hear
There was a letter brought you to subscribe
By certain of the council, to the intent

should be cast in prison, and with power
To slay me by your warrant, should I make
Resistance ; Highgate said so ; I confess
Spake with him ; my father that first heard
Brought him to speech of me.

QUEEN

Spake he so much ?

But Walcar, that at Stirling brought me word
Of this man's speeches here, had heard of him
That you with certain of our lords had laid
A plot to take our son, and having crowned
A leign for him king of Scots ; whereon the man
Being had before our council with good speed
Wore he knew no such tale, and had but heard
Some rumour blown of your imprisonment,
But nothing of your slaying ; to which again
His witness summoned gave him straight the lie.
Yet would I not conceive the tale for true
That being incensed with some our loyal lords
Who were not of the faction that should lay
Such regency upon you for your son,
You had threatened them aloud with wrath to come.
What say you to it ?

DARNLEY

I say you do me wrong
To speak to me of him that as you say
Delied me to you ; who saith so of me lies,
And I will pluck his ears from off his head,
The knave whose tongue so misdelivers me.
And I beseech you think he lies that saith
Would be wroth with any man your friend,

Or would not rather give away my life
Than by despite toward such displease you ; yet
I have heard strange things here of a trustier tongue
The Laird—you know him—of Minto, my fast friend
If any friend be fast on earth to me,
He told me to what bond what hands were set ;
Yea, and more hands than those that signed me dead
He swore, were set to slay me ; but God knows
I gave no faith to it—would not dream or doubt
You could devise, that were my proper flesh,
To do me any evil ; nay, I said
It was well seen you would not, by their writ
Against my life that you subscribed not ; else,
Could I think once you hungered for my death,
God knows I would not hold you hungering long,
But make mine own throat naked for your knife
As readily as your hand could pluck it forth :
Howbeit the best man of mine enemies else
Should buy me dear—ay, any of all but you,
Except he took me sleeping ; as indeed
Were now not hard to take me : had I but
A hand to help my heart, and health to go,
A foot to stand against them, God and you,
Madam, should oversee us and judge ; but now
You see what power I have, what hope of help,
What strength to serve my will and my best heart
Lies in my broken body ; ay, these know that,
What force is left to second my goodwill
They know who durst not else devise or do,
Had I the natural might yet of my limbs,
What now—but you, if you have pity of me,
Seeing me how faint I am and how sore sick,
And cannot eat for weakness, though I faint,
That makes me loathe my meat—but will you not

Feed me, and kiss me? surely I could live,
Being quickened of your hands and piteous lips,
So sweet you are and strong and large of life.
Nay, do but kiss me once though I must die,
Be it but lest all men say you loved me not.

QUEEN

I have a pain here takes me in my side—
I pray you—where my sickness left it sore
And liable to swift pains yet—pardon me.

DARNLEY

'Tis I you cannot pardon, I, woe's me,
You cannot love or pardon; but I swear,
So be it you will not leave me, I will go,
So but I may not lose you out of sight,
Borne in a litter, such as here I lie,
So weak, so full of sickness, where you will,
Be it to Craigmillar, though death went with me,
Or to the world's end, going in sight of you.

QUEEN

Have here my hand then and my faith to it, sir,
When there the healing springs have washed you
whole,
As they shall surely, with cold cleansing streams
Whose medicinal might shall bathe your veins
And kill the fire that feeds upon their blood,
I will once more dwell with you as your wife,
In all the lovely works and ways of love
And dues of duteous life and unity
That man may claim of woman. Tell me now,

Ere we go thither, where the leech and I
May help you, nor be far off from my son,
What are those lords you are wroth at? since I hear
Some are there that you threaten, as in doubt
Their minds are bitter toward you; shall I say
You stand in fear of Maitland?

DARNLEY

Him? not I—

I pray you speak not of him for my sake—
I stand in fear of no man; I beseech you,
Speak me not of him; I will see no man,
To be our makebate and your talebearer;
I have heard too of your brother, how he says
I spake with him at Stirling, where I swear
I came not in his chamber, spake not half
Of all whereof he has rounded in your ear
That I made plaint to him concerning you;
For all my faults are published in your eye,
And I deny not one, and nought put off;
What should it boot me to deny my speech?
But there are they that think the faults they make
Shall to all time lie still unspoken of,
Yet will they speak aloud of small and great
And tax alike all faults of other folk,
The least fault as the worst, in men like me
That have not craft to hide or most or least;
God save you from such friendship: it is thought,
Through power upon you of such evil tongues,
Yourself have not your power upon yourself,
As by your slight still of my proffered love
I would believe you have not; such a friend
Rode with you hither—or unfriend as I doubt—

I like her not—the Lady Reres, your friend ;
I pray God she may serve you, if she be,
To your own honour ; it runs through all men's
mouths

She was Lord Bothwell's harlot, who stands marked
For a lewd liver above all men alive ;
She and her sister both lie side by side
Under the like report of his rank love—
Foul concord and consent unsisterlike
In such communion as beasts shun for shame.
Nay, for you know it, it lives on common lips,
Cries from all tongues, you know it ; but for my part
I will love all that love you, though they were
But for that love's sake shameful in men's eyes.
Why will you wake not with me this one night,
But so soon leave me, and I sleep so ill ?

QUEEN

Nay, though this night I may not watch with you,
I leave you not till you turn back with me ;
But for the lords' sake must it not be known
That if you change not purpose ere that time
When you are whole we shall be one again ;
Lest when they know it, remembering your loud
threat
To make them find, if ever we agreed,
What small account they had made of you, and how
You had counselled me to take not some of them
To grace again without assent of yours,
They fall in fear and jealousy, to see
The scene so broken and the play so changed
Without their knowledge, that contrariwise
Was first set up before them.

DARNLEY

Think you then
They will for that the more esteem of you ?
But I am glad at heart you speak of them,
And do believe now you desire indeed
That we should live together in quietness ;
For were it otherwise, to both of us
Might worse fall than we wot of ; but I now
Will do whatever you will do, and love
All that you love ; and I have trust in you
To draw them in like manner to my love ;
Whom since I know they aim not at my life
I will love all alike, and there shall be
No more dissension of your friends and mine.

QUEEN

It was by fault of you all this fell out
That I must heal. For this time fare you well ;
When I get rest I will return again.
[*Exit with attendants.*

DARNLEY

What say you now ? she is gentler in mine eyes
Than was your word of her.

CRAWFORD

Ay, sweet to sight,
Exceeding gentle. Wherefore, could one tell,
Should she desire to lead you so in hand
Just to Craigmillar ? whence report came late
Of no good counsel toward you or good hope,
Except the hope be good, there to be healed

Of all life's ill for ever, once being bathed
In the cold springs of death : and hence meseems
More like a prisoner than her wedded lord
Are you borne off as in her bonds.

DARNLEY

By heaven,
I think but little less, and fear myself,
Save for the trust indeed I have in her
And in her promise only ; howsoe'er,
I will go with her and put me in her hands,
Though she should cut my throat ; and so may God
Between us both be judge. I have been men's fool
That were but tongues and faces of my friends ;
I see by mine own sight now, and will stand
On no man's feet but mine. Give me to drink ;
I will sleep now ; my heart is healed of fear.

SCENE XIV. *The Queen's Apartment in the same**The QUEEN and PARIS*

QUEEN

Here is the letter for your lord to know
I bring the man on Monday, as is writ,
Hence to Craigmillar. Say too this by mouth,
The Lady Reres can witness, with mine oath,
I would not let him kiss me. Bid our lord,
Mine and your lord, enquire of Maitland first
If our past purpose for Craigmillar hold
Or if the place be shifted, and send word

To me that here await his will by you.
Be of good speed ; I say not of good trust,
Who know you perfect in his trust and mine.
Farewell.

PARIS

I am gone with all good haste I may,
And here come back to serve your majesty.
Hath it no further counsel or command
To be my message ?

QUEEN

Tell him, night and day
And fear and hope are grown one thing to me
Save for his sake : and say mine hours and thoughts
Are as one fire devouring grain by grain
This pile of tares and drift of crumbling brands
That shrivels up in the slow breath of time,
The part of life that keeps me far from him,
The heap of dusty days that sunder us.
I would I could burn all at once away
And our lips meet across the mid red flame
Thence unconsumed, being made of keener fire
Than any burns on earth. Say that mine eyes
Ache with mine heart and thirst with all my veins,
Requiring him they have not. Say my life
Is but as sleep, and my sleep very life,
That dreams upon him. Say I am passing now
To do that office he would have me do,
Which almost is a traitor's ; say, his love
Makes me so far dissemble, that myself
Have horror at it ; bid him keep in mind "
How were it not to obey him I had rather

Be dead before I did it ; let him not
Have ill opinion of me for this cause,
Seeing he is alone the occasion of it himself,
Since for mine own particular revenge
I would not do it to him that I most hate ;
My heart bleeds at it. Say, he will not come
But on condition I shall cleave to him
Hereafter, and on that word given of mine
Will go where I would have him go : alas,
I never have deceived yet any man,
But I remit me to my master's will
In all things wholly ; bid him send me word
What I shall do, and come what may thereof
I shall obey him ; if some new subtler way
By medicine may be thought on when I bring
The man here to Craigmillar, that as yet
May not this long time of himself go forth
Out of the house, let him advise himself
How to put this in hand : for all I find,
This man I here endure to play upon
Lives now in great suspicion ; yet my word
Hath credit with him, but not far enough
For him to show me anything ; but yet
I shall draw forth of him what thing I will
If my lord bid me be more plain with him ;
But I will never take delight to wrong
The trust of any that puts trust in me ;
Yet may my lord command me in all things.
And though by checks and hints of that I feared
This man sometimes even touch me to the quick
With words dropt of mine honour and my power
On mine own self, whereby I surely know
That he suspects him of the thing we wot
And of his life, yet as to that last fear

I need but say some three good words to him
And he rejoices, and is out of doubt.
He was seen never as gay of mood as now
When I make show of grace and gentle heart,
And puts me in remembrance of all things
That may assure my faith he loves me well.
Let not my love suspect me for his sake,
Who take such great joy of his love-making
That I come never where he is but straight
I take the sickness of my sore side here,
I am vexed so with it ; wearied might he be,
This poisonous man that gives me all this pain
When I would speak of things far sweeter ; yet
He is marred not overmuch of form or face
Though he have borne much, and his venom'd breath
Hath almost slain me though I sit far off.
He would have had me watch with him, but I
Put off the night ; he says he sleeps not sound ;
He never spake more humbly nor more well ;
And if I had not proven his heart of wax
And were not mine cut of a diamond
Whereinto no shot ever can make breach
But that which flies forth of mine own love's hand,
I had almost had pity of him ; but say
I bid the captain of my fortified heart
Fear not ; the place shall hold unto the death.
And bid my love in recompense thereof
Let not his own be won by that false kind
That will no less strive with him for the same.
I think the twain were trained up in one school,
For he hath ever tear in eye, and makes
Most piteous moan to arouse men's pity, yea,
Humbly salutes them all, even to the least,
To make their hearts soft toward him ; and desires

That with mine own hands I would give him meat ;
But let my lord, where he is, give no more trust
Than I shall here. Tell him all this ; and say
I am in the doing here of a work I hate
Past measure ; and should make him fain to laugh
To see me lie so well, or at the least
So well dissemble, and tell him truth 'twixt hands.
Say, by the flatteries I perforce must make
And prayers to him to assure himself of me,
And by complaint made of the men designed,
I have drawn out of him all we list to know,
Yet never touched one word of that your lord
Showed me, but only wrought by wiles ; and say
With two false kinds we are coupled, I and he,
My love ; the devil dissever us, and God
Knit us together for the faithfullest pair
That ever he made one ; this is my faith,
I will die in it. Excuse me to my lord
That I writ ill last night, being ill at ease,
And when the rest were sleeping was most glad
To write unto him, who might no more, nor could
Sleep as they did and as I would desire,
Even in my dear love's arms ; whom I pray God
Keep from all evil and send him all repose.
And being so long my letter hindered me
To write what tidings of myself I would,
Who had wrought before for two hours of the day
Upon this bracelet I would send to him
Though it be evil made for fault of time,
I have had so little, and I can get no lock,
Though that mine hands might end it yestereve
I would not see the man ; but this mean time
I think to make one fairer ; let him not
Bring it in sight of any that was here,

For all would know it, seeing it was wrought for haste
In sight of them ; yet might it bring some harm
And may be seen if he should chance be hurt ;
Let him send word if he will have it, and say
If he will have more gold by you, and when
I shall return, and how far I may speak ;
For this man waxes mad to hear of him
Or of my brother ; and when I visit him
His friends come all to be my convoy, say,
And he desires me come the morn betimes
And see him rise. This letter that I send,
Bid my lord burn it, being so dangerous,
With nought in it well said,—for all my mind
Was on this craft I loath to think upon—
And if it find his hand in Edinburgh,
Let him soon send me word, and that I doubt
Be not offended, since to doubts of him
I give not o'er-great credit ; but say this,
That seeing to obey him, who is my dear heart's love,
I spare nor honour, conscience, hazard, state,
Nor greatness whatsoever, I beseech him
But that he take it in good part, and not
As his false brother-in-law interprets, whom
I pray him give not ear to nor believe
Against the faithfulest lover he ever had
Or ever shall have ; nor cast eye on her
Whose feigned tears should not be esteemed so much
Nor prized so as the true and faithful toils
Which I sustain but to deserve her place :
Whereto that I despite all bonds may climb,
Against my nature I betray them here
That may prevent me from it ; God forgive me,
And God give him, my only love, the hap
And welfare which his humble and faithful love

Desires of him ; who hopes to be to him
Ere long a thing new-named for recompense
Of all her irksome travails. Tell him this ;
Say I could never stint of hand or tongue
To send love to him, and that I kiss his hands,
Ending ; and let him think upon his love
And write to her, and that oft ; and read twice
through
Mine evil-written letter, and keep in mind
All several sayings writ of the man therein.
Say for delight I have to send to him
I run twice over all the words I send,
And that each word may fasten in his ear
As in his eye, and you may witness me
That hand and tongue and heart were one to send,
Put all my message in your lips again
That here was written. Say—I know not what ;
I can say nought but with my silent hands,
Speak with the lips of deeds I do for him.

PARIS

Shall I say nothing of Lord Darnley more ?

QUEEN

Say, when I did but speak of Maitland once,
His caitiff flesh quaked in each joint of him,
Each limb and bone shivered ; even to the feet
He shook, and his shrunk eyes were stark with
fright,
That like a live thing shuddered in his hair
And raised it ruffling from the roots for dread.
Let him mark that : though coward the man be, and
fool,

He has wit and heart enough to know the worst
Of his wrong-doing, and to what manner of man,
Being fool, he did it, and discerning him
Think whether his cause of dread be small or no
For less or more of peril. So to horse,
And lose no word sent of my heart to him.

SCENE XV. *Kirk of Field*

Enter BOTHWELL

BOTHWELL

This is the time and here the point of earth
That is to try what fate will make of me.
I hold here in my hand my hand's desire,
The fruit my life has climbed for ; day on day
Have I strid over, stretching toward this prize
With all my thews and spirits. I must be glad,
If I could think ; yet even my cause of joy
Doth somewhat shake me, that my sense and soul
Seem in their springs confused, even as two streams
Violently mingling : what is here to do
Is less now than the least I yet have done,
Being but the putting once of the mere hand
To the thing done already in device,
Wrought many times out in the working soul.
Yet my heart revels not, nor feel I now
The blood again leap in me for delight
That in the thought grew riotous and beat high
With foretaste of possession unpossessed.
Is it that in all alike fruition slacks
The shrunk imagination ? in all deeds

The doing undoes the spirit to do, the joy
Sickens, the lust is swallowed as of sand ?
Why, yet the stream should run of my desire
Unshrunk, and no deserts drink it up,
Being unfulfilled ; no satiate sluggishness
Gape with dry lips at the edge of the dry cup
For the poor lees of longing. I am here
Not royal yet, nor redder in the hand
Than war has dyed me fighting ; the thing done
Is but for me done, since I hold it so,
Not yet for him that in the doing must bleed ;
I that stand up to do it, and in my mind
Behold across it mightier days for deeds,
Should not be way-sick yet nor travel-tired
Before I drink fulfilment as a wine ;
And here must it restore me.

Enter PARIS

Ha ! so soon ?

What news of her ?

PARIS

The queen commends to you
Her best heart in this letter, and would know
How yet your purpose toward Craigmillar bears,
Whether to train him thither by her hand
Or what choice else.

BOTHWELL

Say, the device is changed
By counsel and consent of whom she wots ;

Here must they come ; James Balfour and myself
Have waked all night to see things well begun,
For that bond's sake whereto his hand was set
With mine here at Craigmillar ; all things now
Stand apt and fit in this his brother's house
To entertain the kingship of its guest ;
We have seen to it, Maitland with us.

PARIS

I was sent
From the town hither, finding you set forth,
But why folk wist not.

BOTHWELL

Carry to my queen
This diamond ; say too I would send my heart,
But that she hath already, and no need
To pluck it forth and feel it in her hand.
Bid her be swift as we have been for love,
And the more surety quickens our design :
The rest unsaid shall tarry till she come.

SCENE XVI. *The Queen's Lodging in Glasgow*

*The QUEEN in bed ; LADY RERES and PARIS
attending*

QUEEN

What was his word at parting ? let it kiss
Mine ear again.

PARIS

Being horsed, he bade me say,
Madam, he would be fain for love of you
To train a pike all his life-days.

QUEEN

Please God,
It shall not come to that. Ere this month die
That has not half a week to live, we stand
In Edinburgh together. He will go
Without more word or fear ; and being well hence—
How looked my love?

PARIS

Madam, as one uplift
To the height of heart and hope, though full of
cares,
And keen in resolution.

QUEEN

I grow strong
To hear of him. Hath he not heart enough
To fill with blood a hundred of our hearts,
Put force and daring, for the fear cast out,
In all our veins made manlike? Prithee, Reres,
Was he thus ever? had he so great heart
In those dead days, such lordliness of eye
To see and smite and burn in masterdom,
Such fire and iron of design and deed
To serve his purpose and sustain his will?
Hath he not grown since years that knew me not

In light and might and speed of spirit and stroke
To lay swift hand upon his thought, and turn
Its cloud to flame, its shadow to true shape,
Its emptiness to fulness? If in sooth
He was thus always, he should be by now
Hailed the first head of the earth.

LADY RERES

It cannot be

But in your light he hath waxed, and from your love,
Madam, drawn life and increase ; but indeed
His heart seemed ever high and masterful
As of a king unkingdomed, and his eye
As set against the sunrise ; such a brow
As craves a crown to do it right, and hand
Made to hold empire swordlike, and a foot
To tread the topless and unfooted hill
Whose light is from the morn of majesty.

QUEEN

When mine eye first took judgment of his face
It read him for a king born : and his lips
Touching my hand for homage had as 'twere
Speech without sound in them that bowed my heart
In much more homage to his own. Would God
I could so read now in that heart I serve
What thought of me moves in it, hear what word
Now hangs upon those lips ; if now his eye
Darken or lighten toward mine unseen face,
Or his ear hearken for my speech unheard.
Why art thou now not with him, and again
Here the same hour to tell me? I would have
More messengers than minutes that divide

Mine eyes from their desire, to bring me word
With every breath of every change in him,
If he but rest or rise ; nay, might it be,
Of every thought or heart-beat that makes up
His inner hours of life : yet by mine own,
If he so loved me, should I know them not ?
I will rise now and pass to see how soon
We may set forth to-morrow.

LADY RERES

Can it be
He shall have strength ? but let your highness heed
That pretext be not given for knaves to say
You had no care to wait on his good time,
But vexed and harried him, being sick, with haste
And timeless heat of travel.

QUEEN

Fear not you :
I will make means to bring him in my hand
As a tame hound, and have his thanks and love
For bringing him so wifelike on his way.
It is the last pain I shall take for him,
The last work I shall do for marriage-sake
And wifehood wellnigh done with duty now.
I have not much more time to serve my lord,
And strife shall fall between us twain no more.

SCENE XVII. *Darnley's Chamber in Kirk
of Field*

DARNLEY and NELSON

DARNLEY

Thou hast the keys? This house is strange and
chill,
As chill as earth : I have slept no better here.
Those two days that we halted on the way
There at Linlithgow, I could see the haste
That burnt in her to be in Edinburgh,
And here being come she sets me in this grange,
And till her chamber be made ready sleeps
In Holyrood apart, and here by day ,
Hath still by her that face I warned her from,
That woman's that I spake of, plays and sings
There in the garden with none else—by God,
I like not aught of it. I am sick again,
Sick-hearted, or my will should be a sword
To sunder them. I would I were away.
I have ill dreams, man.

NELSON

Please your highness——

DARNLEY

Ay!

Is majesty gone out of all men's mouths?
Is my state dead before me, even the name
Dead of my place, then?

NELSON

There is come from court
Lord Robert Stuart to see your majesty.

DARNLEY

Let him come in. Robert? he was my friend ;
I think he held me dear till David died :
He supped with them that night. I found him once
A quick-souled fellow that would quaff and kiss
The glow of woman's or of wine-cup's mouth,
And laugh as mine own lips that loved the like
Can now no more this long time. Let him come.

Enter ROBERT STUART

My holy lord of Holyrood-house, good day ;
You find a fit man for a ghostly rede.

ROBERT STUART

I am glad you have a jest yet ; but I come
On graver foot than jesters run, my lord.

DARNLEY

How, graver than your ghostly name? nay, then,
'Tis matter for a grave-side.

ROBERT STUART

Sir, it may :
I would be secret with you.

DARNLEY

What, alone ?
Why should we talk alone ? what secret ? why ?

ROBERT STUART

I will put off my sword and give it your man,
If that will ease you.

DARNLEY

Ease me ? what, by God,
You think I fear you come to kill me ? tush,
I am not the fool—and were that all, being thus,
'Faith, you might end me with your naked hands.
Leave us. *Exit NELSON.*

What is it ? you make me not afraid—
Sir, I fear no man—what, for God's sake speak,
I am not moved—in God's name let me have it.

ROBERT STUART

I came to do you such good service, sir,
As none has done you better nor can do.
There is an old phrase in men's mouths of one
That stands between the devil and the deep sea ;
So now stand you ; the man that toward a reef
Drives naked on a thunder-stricken wreck
And helmless, hath not half your cause of fear ;
The wretch that drops plague-eaten limb from limb
Crumbles to death not half so fast as you ;
The grave expects not the new-shrouded man
More surely than your corpse now coffinless.

DARNLEY

Who put this in your mouth ? what enemy ?
How have you heart, or whosoe'er he be,
Albeit ye hate me as the worm of hell
Who never harmed you in my hapless days,
To use me so ? I am sick——

ROBERT STUART

Ay, sick to death,

If you give ear not to me that am come
In very mercy, seeing I called you friend,
For pity's sake to save you, or at least
To stretch your days out for some brief span more
Of life now death-devoted.

DARNLEY

What, so soon ?

God would not have it done, so young I am,—
What have I done that he should give me up ?
So comfortless,—who hath no help of man,
They say, hath God's ; God help me ! for God knows
There is none living hath less help of man.
Nay, and he must, as I have faith in God,
Hang all my hope upon him,—For God's sake,
Whence got you this ?

ROBERT STUART

No matter.

DARNLEY

At whose hand—

O me, what hand ! who is it shall touch me ?

ROBERT STUART

Hark.

From beneath is heard the QUEEN'S voice, singing

Qui se fie
À la vie
À vau-l'eau va vers la mort ;
Et que l'onde
Rie ou gronde,
Elle entraîne loin du port.

DARNLEY

She sings I know not what—a jesting song,
A French court rhyme no graver than a flower,
Fruitless of sense—this is no threat—a toy——

QUEEN (from beneath, sings)

Sur l'opale
Du flot pâle
Tremble un peu de jour encor ;
Sur la plage
Au naufrage
Le haut vent sonne du cor.

DARNLEY

What is it she sings now? nay, what boots to hear?
I will not hear; speak to me—pray you, speak.

QUEEN (from beneath)

La mort passe
Comme en chasse,
Et la foudre aboie aux cieux ;
L'air frissonne,
La mer tonne,
Le port se dérobe aux yeux.

Plus d'étoile
Que ne voile
L'orage âpre au souffle noir ;
Pas de brise
Qui ne brise
Quelque vaisseau sans espoir.

Noire et nue
Sous la nue,
La nef brisée à moitié
Tourne et vire
Où l'attire
La sombre mer sans pitié.

La nuit passe,
Et la chasse
S'est éteinte au fond des cieux ;
Mais l'aurore
Pleure encore
Sur les morts qu'ont vus ses yeux.

Ce qui tombe
Dans la tombe
Coule et s'en va sans retour ;
Quand sous l'ombre
Plonge et sombre
Ou la vie ou bien l'amour.

ROBERT STUART

Why do you shake and hide your eyes? take heart ;
Let fear not be more swift to slay than hate.

DARNLEY

I said, what hand—you bade me hearken—well,
What say you now she sings not?

ROBERT STUART

I have said.

DARNLEY

I will not be your baiting-stock ; speak plain ;
Whence had you word of any plot on me ?

ROBERT STUART

If you will heed me, well ; if not, for me
I will take heed yet that it be not ill.
Weigh how you will my counsel, I am sure
If my word now lie lightly in your ear
It would not lie the heavier for my oath
Or any proof's assurance. Whence I had
This word you have of me, I am not bound
To put the knowledge into trust of you
Who trust not me in asking.

DARNLEY

What, I knew

There was no plot but yours to scare me, none—
Your plot to get my favour, stay yourself
On me as on a staff—affright me sick
With bloodred masks of words and painted plots,
And so take hold upon me afterward
Having my strength again and state and power—
A worthy friend and timely,—Nay, but, nay,
I meant not so—I am half distraught—I meant
I know you for my friend indeed and true ;
For one thwart word in sickness cast not off
Your friend that puts his trust in you, your friend
That was nigh mad a minute, being sore sick

And weak and full of pain and fear, and hath
No friend to help and bear with him if you
Will help nor bear not—by my faith and life
I do believe you love me, and in love
Came, and in faith to me—if I believe not
God give me death at once and hell to boot.
I pray you pardon.

ROBERT STUART

Sir, your faith and life
Have neither weight enough to poise an oath
As now they hang in balance. If you will,
Take to your heart my words ; if not, be sure
It shall not grieve me though you trust me not,
Who never think to give you counsel more. [*Exit.*

DARNLEY

Nay, but one word—how would you have me fly ?
He goes and mocks me—would my hands had strength
To dig his heart out for my dogs to feed !
He flies and leaves me weaponless alone
In the eye of peril, coward and false heart—
Should not the tongue be false too ? If he came
To affright me only with a fearful face,
Blow but a blast of danger in mine ear,
And make my faith as wax that in his breath
Might melt and be reshapen of his hands—
Nay, I will see the queen, and in her eye
Read if his tongue spake truth, and from her lips
Draw forth his witness ; if she mean me ill
I cannot now but see it. Nelson !—She hath
No trick to keep her from mine instant sight,

Knows not his errand to me ; and at once
I take her unawares and catch her soul
Naked, her mind plain to me, good or ill.

QUEEN (*sings from below*)

Lord Love went Maying
Where Time was playing,
In light hands weighing
 Light hearts with sad ;
Crowned king with peasant,
Pale past with present,
Harsh hours with pleasant,
 Good hopes with bad ;
Nor dreamed how fleeter
Than Time's swift metre,
O'er all things sweeter
 How clothed with power,
The murderess maiden
Mistrust walks laden
 With red fruit ruined and dead white
 flower.

DARNLEY

What sting is in that song to smite my heart
And make the blood and breath come short in me ?
O God, I know it—his last year's song of death—
They struck it on his lips who struck him through.
Nelson ! I will not see her—I will not die——

Enter the QUEEN

QUEEN

I heard your call from under and came in—
What ails you, sir ? why stare you thus askance ?

DARNLEY

I had a pang of sickness that passed by
While you were singing.

QUEEN

Is my brother gone ?

DARNLEY

There was none here—your brother ? what, the earl ?
Doth not his wife lie at St. Andrew's sick,
Where he is gone to visit her ?

QUEEN

For love,
Why will you lie to me in jest ? you know
Here was my brother Robert.

DARNLEY

Ay, but now—
I did not say he was not here but now.

QUEEN

Has he not moved you ?

DARNLEY

Why should I be moved ?
I am not lightly shaken of men's breath ;
What think you that he came to move me for ?

QUEEN

In faith, I guess not.

DARNLEY

Nay, though I be weak,
I am no reed yet for him to blow and make
What music of me shall best please his mouth.

QUEEN

I think you are not, but for all winds blown
Of fears and threats fixed and unshakeable.
What said he to you that has moved you not?

DARNLEY

Nothing.

QUEEN

What, you were moved then of his words?

DARNLEY

I say I was not.

QUEEN

He said nothing then?
You held discourse but of days foul or fair,
Skies wet or dry, seasons and accidents,
All things and nothing?

DARNLEY

Would you not know that?

QUEEN

• Even as you list or list not, so would I.

DARNLEY

What if it please me you should know this not ?

QUEEN

Why, you do wisely, seeing I love you not.

DARNLEY

I did not say so ; I may hold my peace,
Yet not for doubt that irks me of your love.

QUEEN

Surely you may ; good reasons may stand thick
As buds in April in your judgment's sight
To cover both your counsels from mine eye
That has no lust to invade your secrecies.

DARNLEY

And if it please me show it, as now it shall,
You will not dread I doubt your love of me.

QUEEN

I have not heart to dread the doubt I know
You have not heart to harbour of my love.

DARNLEY

Why, he came here to warn me of my life.

QUEEN

Your life ?

DARNLEY

Ay, mine ; and what now say you to him ?

QUEEN

I say he spake as your good friend and mine.

DARNLEY

Ay ?

QUEEN

What more kindness could be shown of man
Than in your ear to warn me of your life
If it so stand in peril ?

DARNLEY

What, you think
He told it me to have me tell it you ?

QUEEN

It was done gently, brother-like, for fear
The word of danger being first heard by me
Should strike too sharp upon my slighter soul
And pierce my woman's sense with such quick pangs
As might dethrone my judgment, shake my wits
To feminine confusion, and by force
Disable my swift thoughts, now maimed with dread,
From their defence and office ; he did well
And my heart thanks him, showing you first his fear,
Who are manlike of your mood and mould of mind

And have but for your own life to take thought,
Not for one dearer ; as, I know you well,
By mine own heart I know, to have heard of me
Endangered would have killed your heart with fear,
That in your personal peril beats at ease
With blood as perfect as I see you now,
With pulse thus changeless and with cheek thus
calm.

Indeed I thank him for it, and twice I thank,
That he would serve you and would scare not me.
Where said he was this danger ?

DARNLEY

Nay, by God,
That would he not say ; that I nothing know ;
Save by some hint of shoulder or writhed lip
That seemed to shoot at you ; and when you sang
He bade me hearken, and would speak no more.

QUEEN

At me ! but if such fire be on his tongue,
It should be forked and set on fire of hell.
At me ! but if he be not mad, to you
He shall approve it, instant face to face,
Eye to confronted eye, word against word,
He shall maintain or mark himself for liar,
With his own fire and iron brand the brow
That burned not to belie me.

DARNLEY

Sweet, not here—
Would I could fight with him ! but being o'erthrown
Of my disease already, to what end

Should he come back now save to insult on me
Who have no hand to strike at him again
In championship of you ?

QUEEN

He shall come back,
And twice shall oversay the word he said
In your own ear, or else unswear it. What,
Shall I be put to shame of mine own blood,
To mine own lord in mine own love maligned,
Stricken with slanderous fangs of speech, and stabbed
In my heart's core of honour, yet lie still
And bleed to death dumb and dishonourable ?
Rather let come the deadliest of my kin,
Mine enemies born, and bind and burn me quick,
Or ever I die thus ; rather let all
The false blood of my father in strange veins
Be set on fire against me, and its heat
Consume my fame with my frail flesh, and make
My scaffold of my kingdom ; rather fall
My naked head beneath the mortal axe,
And with my blood my name be spilt and shed,
Than this charge come upon me.

DARNLEY

You are stirred
Beyond all right of reason ; he not moved :
You see how I believed him.

QUEEN

And to see
Is my soul's comfort ; but this wound that bleeds
Here in my heart's heart cannot well be stanch'd

Till by the tongue that smote me, as men say
That by the anointing of the sword that hurt
The wound it made finds comfort, I be healed.

DARNLEY

Nay, let him come ; I will maintain it to him,
Here, to his face, he warned me of my death
Or present danger in you.

QUEEN

He shall come.
But lie now down and sleep ; I have wearied you.

DARNLEY

I pray you sing me something then ; indeed
I am weary and would forget ; but now you sang—
Doth that French song break where you broke it off?

QUEEN

No, there is more. Sleep, I will sing it you.

[Sings.

Sur la grève
Rien ne rêve
Aux naufragés de la nuit ;
À la trombe,
Gouffre et tombe,
Au flot qui frappe et qui fuit.

Apaisée
Et baisée
Par les brises sans souci,
Brille et vibre
Au jour libre
La belle mer sans merci.

Tant que dure
La nuit dure
Sur la grève où rit la mort,
Sous l'orage
Flotte et nage
Le jour qui lutte et qui sort.

Pas de brume
Que n'allume
L'astre ou l'éclair des amours ;
Pas de flamme
Qui dans l'âme
Brûle ou luit tous les jours.

À l'aurore
Tout se dore,
Tout se fane avant la nuit ;
Et que l'heure
Chante ou pleure,
Dans une heure tout s'enfuit.

Cœur sans crainte,
Œil sans feinte,
Quand l'amour met voile au vent,
Sur la plage
Sans naufrage
Est-il revenu souvent ?

L'ombre emporte
La nef morte,
Et la joie, et le beau jour ;
Trop profonde
Était l'onde,
Et trop faible était l'amour.

[*The scene closes.*

SCENE XVIII. *Behind Kirk of Field*

BOTHWELL, ORMISTON, HEPBURN *of* BOLTON, *and*
HAY *of* TALLA

BOTHWELL

If it be done to-morrow, we shall stand
The surer that the queen slept here to-night.
Cousin, bring you my knaves from Holyrood
At nightfall to that hinder gate wherethrough
We three shall give you passage with your charge
To the strait garden-plot beyond the walls
Whereto the door that opens from beneath
Shall stand unbolted, and you entering spread
Along the blind floor of the nether vault
The train that shall set all these walls on wing.

ORMISTON

How said you, that his groom here had the keys?

BOTHWELL

That under door which lets us down lacks none ;
There is no lock to palter with ; it needs
But leave the bolt undrawn ; and yesterday
By the queen's order was the door removed
At bottom of the stair, to be instead
A cover for his bath-vat ; so there stands
But the main door now.

HEPBURN

That was well devised :
She sleeps beneath his chamber here to-night ?

BOTHWELL

Ay, to the west.

HAY

She has the stouter heart.
I have trod as deep in the red wash o' the wars
As who walks reddest, yet I could not sleep,
I doubt, with next night's dead man overhead.

BOTHWELL

We are past the season of divided wills ;
Where but one thought is, nothing to be done
Has power to hurt the heart that holds it fast
Or leave the purpose weaker by a wound
Given it of doubt or afterthought : we have
One thing to do, one eye to see it, one hand
To pluck it from the occasion ; what he wills
None but a fool would mix his will to achieve
With pain and fear ; the mind once shaped and set
That works and yet looks back and weeps to do
Is but half man's ; and all a man's hath she.

HEPBURN

Yet woman-moulded outward, clothed upon
As 'twere with feminine raiment, touched with
thoughts
Of female-coloured fashion, woman's craft :

She sees and thinks on what could touch not us
Nor graze in passing even our skirts of sense :
Takes order for the hangings of his bed
Whom we must kill to her hand, lest water soil
The sable velvet from his bath, and bids
Pluck down and save them ; such slight things and
strange

As take the thought and hold the eye of girls
Her soul, as full of great things as it is,
As large and fiery, bright and passionate,
Takes no less thought for, and hath heed of these
No less than of high deed and deep desire
Beyond where sight can scale or thought can dive
Of narrower eye and shallower spirit than hers.

BOTHWELL

Most royal is she, but of soul not all
Uncurbable, nor of all shafts that fly
Scatheless, nor of all shots invulnerable ;
She had no part else and no power in us,
No part in all that mingling makes up man,
No power upon our earth who are earthlier made ;
She has the more might on men's ways of soul
Not being almighty, nor from all man's moods
Divided, but as passion-touched and mixed
With all such moods as men are ; nay, not these,
But such as bear the rule of these and lead
Which way they will—women's ; and being so mixed
She is even the more entire, more whole and strong,
Herself and no self other. She nor I
Live now on thoughts and words ; the deed it is,
Our deed alone we live by, till being done
It leave us time for life that deals with these.

I will be with you ere night fall again
Within the town-wall ; thither get you now,
And doubt not of us.

ORMISTON

Doubt not you to find
All ready by the night and need : farewell.
[Exeunt all but BOTHWELL.]

BOTHWELL

The time is breathless ; earth sees heaven as chill
In the after air declining from high day.
I would the winds would muster, or the sun
Show half an eye-blink of his face that hangs
Now downward to the sea, curbed in with cloud,
And with a brief breath fire the rack that flies.
Why should not flame break over Arthur's Sert
This hour, and all the heaven with burning tongues
Cry from the world's height to the under line
That ends it for us gazing? If the sky
Had speech as it hath fire, or night or day
Voice to declare God's pleasure or his wrath
With their dumb lips of light, from moon or sun
Or the mute mouths of stars, would earth that heard
Take thought and counsel of the cause, to stir
Men's hearts up for our deed's sake here? I am
wrought
Out of myself even by this pause and peace
In heaven and earth, that will not know of us
Nor what we compass ; in this face of things,
Here in this eye of everduring life
That changes not in changing, fear and hope,
The life we live, the life we take, alike

Decline and dwindle from the shape they held,
Their import and significance ; all seem
Less good and evil, worth less hate and love,
Than we would have them for our high heart's sake.
How shall this day when all these days are done
Seem to me standing where it sets my feet ?
Nay, whence shall I behold it ? or who knows
What crest or chasm, what pit or pinnacle,
Shall feel my foot or gulf my body down,
Bear up or break me falling ? Fall or stand,
At least I live not as the beasts that serve,
But with a king's life or man's death at last
Make all my travails perfect ; and a queen,
The fairest face I have loved and fieriest heart,
Shines with my star or sets.

Enter PARIS

What sends she now ?

PARIS

I came to know if you stand fixed indeed,
Sir, for to-morrow.

BOTHWELL

For to-morrow, man ;
What ails him at to-morrow ?

PARIS

My dread lord,
Nought ails me but as part of your design ;
But I beseech you by your trust of me,
What says this while my lord of Murray ?

BOTHWELL

He !

He will nor help nor hinder—but all's one.

PARIS

He is wise.

BOTHWELL

But is it to tell me he is wise
That you bestow your own wise tongue on me ?
Came you to advise me or to show my trust
How cracked a casket I have closed it in
Who trusted in so white a heart as yours ?

PARIS

I have a message——

BOTHWELL

Well, the message, then ;
And as you are wise, make me not wroth to-day,
Who am but foolish.

PARIS

Sir, the queen by me
Wills you to know that from her husband's mouth
She is assured there came here yesterday
To him her brother, Abbot of St. Cross,
To warn him of some danger.

BOTHWELL

From his mouth !
Had ever mouth such hunger to eat dust ?
Well, it shall soon be filled and shut ; what else ?

PARIS

She has taxed hereof her brother——

BOTHWELL

What, by word ?

PARIS

No, but by note she let him wist she knew it.
Now he denies again his word aloud——

BOTHWELL

He does the wiselier ; there your tongue struck right ;
She has wise men to brethren.

PARIS

And desires
To prove it on the accuser's body, being
Once whole again to meet him.

BOTHWELL

A fair proof :
Doth either sword seek mine for second ?

PARIS

Nay ;
But the queen bade me tell you he should go

To her lord's chamber for his challenge' sake
And do that thing ye wot of.

BOTHWELL

Tell the queen

I will speak to him. We must not mar our hand ;
Say I will see him before the morrow morn.
Howbeit, it shall be well but for a night
To put our present purpose back, and see
If chance or craft will mend our hand again.
Who strikes most sure strikes deepest ; say I go
To try this brother's edge ; if he be sure,
He shall well serve us as a glove to wear
And strike, and have the whiter hands to show.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE XIX. *Darnley's Chamber*

DARNLEY *and* NELSON

DARNLEY

I never had such evil dreams as now.
Save for the terror of them and after pain,
I durst well swear I had not slept to-night.

NELSON

You have slept seven hours.

DARNLEY

I have been seven years in hell ;
Mine eyes are full yet of the flames, my flesh

Feels creep the fire upon it ; even my heart
Is as a sere leaf shrunk.

NELSON

Being awake,
Let not it move you.

DARNLEY

Nay, it shall not move.
Yet were they dreams to shake with waking fear
A sounder state than mine is.

NELSON

Sir, what dreams?

DARNLEY

No matter what : I'll tell thee yet some part,
That thou may'st know I shrink not for no cause.
I dreamed this bed here was a boat adrift
Wherein one sat with me who played and sang,
Yet of his cittern I could hear no note
Nor in what speech he sang inaudibly,
But watched his working fingers and quick lips
As with a passionate and loathing fear,
And could not speak nor smite him ; and methought
That this was David ; and he knew my heart,
How fain I would have smitten him, and laughed
As 'twere to mock my helpless hands and hate.
So drove we toward a rock whereon one sat
Singing ; that all the highest air of heaven
Was kindled into light therewith, and shone

As with a double dawn ; stars east and west
Lightened with love to hear her, and the sky
Brake in red bloom as leaf-buds break in spring,
But these bore fires for blossoms : then awhile
My heart too kindled and sprang up and sang
And made sweet music in me, to keep time
With that swift singing ; then as fire drops down
Dropped, and was quenched, and in joy's stead I felt
Fear ache in me like hunger ; and I saw
These were not stars nor overhead was heaven,
But a blind vault more thick and gross than earth,
The nether firmament that roofs in hell,
And those hot lights were of lost souls, and this
The sea of tears and fire below the world
That still must wash and cleanse not of one curse
The far foul strands with all its wandering brine :
And as we drove I felt the shallop's sides,
Sapped by the burning water, plank from plank
Severing ; and fain I would have cried on God,
But that the rank air took me by the throat ;
And ever she that sat on the sea-rock
Sang, and about her all the reefs were white
With bones of men whose souls were turned to fire ;
And if she were or were not what I thought
Meseemed we drew not near enough to know ;
For ere we came to split upon that reef
The sundering planks opened, and through their
breach
Swarmed in the dense surf of the dolorous sea
With hands that plucked and tongues thrust out
at us,
And fastened on me flamelike, that my flesh
Was molten as with earthly fire, and dropped
From naked bone and sinew ; but mine eyes

The hot surf seared not, nor put out my sense ;
For I beheld and heard out of the surge
Voices that shrieked and heads that rose, and knew
Whose all they were, and whence their wrath at me ;
For all these cried upon me that mine ears
Rang, and my brain was like as beaten brass,
Vibrating ; and the froth of that foul tide
Was as their spittle shot in my full face
That burnt it ; and with breast and flanks distent
I strained myself to curse them back, and lacked
Breath ; the sore surge throttled my tongueless
speech,

Though its weight buoyed my dipping chin, that
sank

No lower than where my lips were burnt with brine
And my throat clenched fast of the strangling sea,
Till I swam short with sick strokes, as one might
Whose hands were maimed ; then mine ill spirit of
sleep

Shifted, and showed me as a garden walled,
Wherein I stood naked, a shipwrecked man,
Stunned yet and staggered from the sea, and soiled
With all the weed and scurf of the gross wave
Whose breach had cast me broken on that shore :

And one came like a god in woman's flesh
And took mine eyes with hers, and gave me fruit
As red as fire, but full of worms within

That crawled and gendered ; and she gave me wine
But in the cup a toad was ; and she said,

Eat, and I ate, and *Drink*, and I did drink,

And sickened ; then came one with spur on heel
Red from his horse o'erridden, smeared with dust,
And took my hand to lead me as to rest,

Being bruised yet from the sea-breach ; and his hand

Was as of molten iron wherein mine
Was as a brand in fire ; and at his feet
The earth split, and I saw within the gulf
As in clear water mine own writhen face,
Eaten of worms and living ; then I woke.

NELSON

It was a foul and formless dream, my lord,
With no soul in it.

DARNLEY

Nay, I think it had not.
And I did mind me waking how the queen
Sang me a song of shipwreck, and strange seas,
And love adrift by night, and fires burnt out
That shine but for a song's length ; I did think
It was this singing made up half my dream.
For there was talk of storms in it, and stars,
And broken ships, and death that rode in the air :
So was there in my dream. What step comes here ?

Enter ROBERT STUART

ROBERT STUART

I come to change less than a word with you,
And take my leave for all your rest of life.

DARNLEY

I will not speak alone with you again :
Stay by me there.

ROBERT STUART

Have you not armour on ?
You should not sleep with sword ungirt on thigh,
Lest one should fall upon you. For this time
I come indeed to see if you be man
Or ever knew beyond the naked name
What grace and office should belong to man
Or purpose to his sword. Reply not yet ;
I know you are sick, weak, pitiful, half dead,
And with the ingrained infection of your soul
Its bodily house grown rotten ; all you will ;
You cannot swear yourself that piteous thing
That I will not believe you wretcheder ;
No flesh could harbour such a worm alive
As this thing in you taken for a soul,
And 'scape corruption ; but if you shall live
To stand again afoot and strike one stroke
For your own hand and head, you shall fight with
me
Or wear the lie writ red upon your face
With my hand's buffet, that you spake who said
I had given you note of danger from the queen.

DARNLEY

Is it a plot, her plot upon me ? Sir,
By God, I never said so ; what I said
I have heart and sword to uphold against all swords,
And kill you if I might as many times
As you shall iterate on me this for true
Which is most false. When I may stand and go——

ROBERT STUART

Yea, then shall we see fighting. But as now
You can but swear you said not this of me ?

DARNLEY

I am not bound to swear it or unswear
At any bidding ; but so much I will—
That you may see no hot foul words of yours
Have quenched in me the old thought of fellowship—
As swear again I said but what I might
With honour and clear heart : I spake no word
To bring you in suspicion, or to turn
Thwart eyes upon you of men's jealousies
Or cast you out of favour with the queen ;
I said but you did warn me of my life,
As being my fast friend still, I thanked you for it—
I know not what she says I said—but this
I know, I spake no treason of you. See,
This is a foolish wind of wrath that shakes
And wrecks your faith in me, mine own in you
Being firm and flawless ; what you have said, you have
said ;
And what I have spoken of you was no more
Than I had right to speak and rest your friend.

ROBERT STUART

Will you fight with me to maintain so much ?

DARNLEY

If I might rise I would put off my state
To stand against you equal ; you did say it,

That I was even as one the law damns dead
And she was parcel of my peril.

ROBERT STUART

Ay !

You said so to her ?

DARNLEY

She will not say I did.

ROBERT STUART

Plight not your faith to that ; I am assured
You said so, and so lied ; and this last time
I bind you yet to meet me on this cause
Or bear the lie about you as a badge.

DARNLEY

By God, I will grow strong to fight with you.

ROBERT STUART

If I shall see your living face again,
It shall be as mine enemy's ; foot to foot
And hand to mortal hand we twain will meet,
Or ere the day dawn I shall see you dead.

DARNLEY

I am like to die, then ? and your warlike words
Have so much iron in them, and your heart
Such daring to provoke one wellnigh dead ?
I wist your tongue would move more tenderly
If I had now my strength of natural hand

And body to bear arms : but these shall come,
And you change face and lower your look to see.

ROBERT STUART

I will abide my peril ; do you the like,
You shall do wisely ; should I say farewell,
It were to bid you fare not as they do
Who are of your kind or of your fortune ; yet
I bid you, sir, fare better than I think. [*Exit.*

DARNLEY

Ay, you think venomously. What hour to-day
Should the queen come ?

NELSON

To-night your highness knows
Her man Sebastian weds a maid of hers,
And she makes feast for them in Holyrood
With masque and music ; having early supped,
She will be here somewhile with certain lords
To visit you, and so pass back ere night.

DARNLEY

She shall not make so much, when I am revived,
Of outland folk and fiddlers, who should have
Too much of them by this. I would she had come
To see me turn the lie back on his lips.
I did not answer as I might, being whole,
But yet not like a sick man, ha ? like one
Whose wit and heart lie sick too with his flesh ?

NELSON

Nay, with your natural spirit of speech you spoke,
With the same heart and tongue you have in health.

DARNLEY

I think I did ; I would she had come betimes.

SCENE XX. *The Garden behind Kirk of Field*

BOTHWELL, ORMISTON, HAY

BOTHWELL

Did I not bid them spare no speed ? the devil
I think has maimed their feet in my despite,
To keep a knave so piteous out of hell.
By God, it will be moonrise ere they come.

ORMISTON

Tush, man ! the night is close.

BOTHWELL

Ay, close and safe
As is the lock of a girl's maidenhood
When the gold key turns in it. They halt like
jades ;
God plague their laggard limbs with goads of fire !
Must they fall spavined now ?

HAY

Here come they three,
And with charged hands ; be not so outward hot,
But as their charge is ere we give it fire.

BOTHWELL

Teach your own tongue to take your tune, not mine.

Enter HEPBURN with Servants

Have you some devil's cramp in your bones, to crawl
At this worm's race ? Set down your load and go.
[*Exeunt Servants.*

What lamed these knaves' feet or belated you,
To hold us here thus till the moon were up ?

HEPBURN

'Tis not yet risen ; and your own word it was
Withheld us till the west should cast off red.

BOTHWELL

Well, we have time. Ye three are hands enough
To bear this down and strew it within the vault
While I go help the queen here bide her hour
Till you send Paris to me for a sign.
Take heed there be no noise. Let but two stay
To fire the train ; you, cousin, for my love
Shall be one hand thereto. Pass in, and see
Ye go down sure and softly. From this gate
Ye know the passage under ; go, and speed.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE XXI. *Darnley's Chamber*

*The QUEEN, DARNLEY, Earls of CASSILIS, HUNTLEY,
and ARGYLE*

QUEEN

But I must chide you for one thing, my lord,
That you would hold your servant Duram here
Though it be for love you bear him ; he is sick,
And should not sleep nor watch with you to-night ;
You do not well to keep him from the town
Against his health, who should take physick there
And come back whole to serve you.

DARNLEY

Let him go.

I did but bid him leave me not alone ;
I will have one for service at my hand.

QUEEN

Have you no more but just this young man gone
Whom I bade go even where was best for him ?
Let your page lie at hand here.

DARNLEY

Nay, I will.

You sent off Alexander ?

QUEEN

He was sick ;
We should show care of them we take to grace

More friendlie than by cherishing ourselves
With their forced company ; the grace is more
To take thought for them whom we hold in trust
Than still to exact their service, tax their faith,
Whose faith and service we that lean thereon
Should put to no more toil and pain than needs,
Requiting love with labour.

DARNLEY

You say well ;
But what should ail him ? save that yesterday
He found his bed-straw here by chance afire
And flung it out at window ; on which plea
He would not lie to-night here, till I bade him
Sleep with me as aforetime, being of all
The man bound closest to my love and trust ;
Then first he spake of sickness, as you heard
Who sat between us. Nay, but let him go ;
The boy shall serve to sleep here.

QUEEN

Sickness makes

All wills to serve it like necessity ;
Witness my will to keep my brother here
Whom his wife's sickness at St. Andrew's now
Parts from our feasts and counsels, caught up hence
As if a wind had rapt him.

DARNLEY

She is sick too--
The Lady Murray?

QUEEN

Nigh to death, he says ;
I know not : who knows how near death he walks
Who treads as now most upright in the sun ?

ARGYLE

Why have we death and sickness in our mouths
Who come forth of a feast not ended yet
That in good time recalls us ?

QUEEN

Presently.

I would you were in health to dance me down
To-night but for the bride's sake ; for the groom,
He may live easier that you grace him not
Nor gall with favour or with jealousy.

DARNLEY

We twain shall see this night out otherwise.

QUEEN

I am sure you shall see more of rest than I.

DARNLEY

Except I watch for sickness' sake all night.

QUEEN

That shall you not ; I charge you on my love
Sleep sound for my sake.

Enter BOTHWELL

Are not you the bell
That strikes the hour to sunder us, my lord?

BOTHWELL

Madam, I strike not yet.

QUEEN

The better ; sit,
And make no sound of parting till your hour,
No timeless note of severance. My fair lord,
Have you no fair word for your noble guests?

DARNLEY

I pray you, sirs, of your own gentleness,
Lay it not to my discourtesy for shame
That I can but thus sickly entertain
The grace ye do me ; that I meet it so,
Impute not to my will that is myself
But to my weakness that is none of me
Save as our enemy may be part of us,
And so forgive it.

HUNTLEY

Sir, we are fain to see
Even in your gracious words that speak you ill
Some spirit of health already.

CASSILIS

I would pledge
My name and word you shall not long lie sick
Who bear yourself thus lordlike. [*Noise below.*

QUEEN

Ah ! my heart—
It wrings me here in passing ; pardon me.

BOTHWELL

God's lightning burn them ! will they mar me now ?
[*Aside, and exit.*

DARNLEY

Heard you the noise ?

ARGYLE

Where ?

QUEEN

Some one stirred below ;
A chair thrown down or such-like.

DARNLEY

Nay, I caught
A rush and rattle as——

CASSILIS

Of pebble-stones ?

DARNLEY

Where is my lord gone forth ?

QUEEN

Why are you moved ?

DARNLEY

I am not moved ; I am no fearful fool
To shake and whiten as a winter tree
With no more wind than this is.

QUEEN

Do you think

It is your counsellor come back in wrath
To warn again and threaten ?

DARNLEY

Nay, for him

I think he hath learnt a lesson of my rede
To vex his soul and trouble me no more.

Re-enter BOTHWELL

QUEEN

What deadly news now of what danger, sir ?

BOTHWELL

Some fellow bearing faggots for the fire
Slipt at the threshold : I have admonished him
What din his knaveship made even in our ears
As if he had the devil there in his hands.

QUEEN (*aside*)

It was of them ?

BOTHWELL (*aside*)

Ay, hell take hold on them,
It was their din, God thank them for it with fire,
Our careful helpers ; but I have made them safe :
The train is wellnigh laid now : what remains
To strew I have charged them shed without more
 sound
Than where the snow strikes.

DARNLEY

Must you part indeed ?

QUEEN

They look for us ere long.

DARNLEY

Now know I not
What I would give to hold you here a night,
Even half my life I think, and know not why.

QUEEN

That were too much. I slept here yesterday ;
Were you the better for me ?

DARNLEY

Ay, and no ;
I deemed I was the better till I slept,
And then——

QUEEN

Why, did my being here break your sleep?
It shall not break to-night then.

Enter PARIS, and stands at the door

BOTHWELL (*aside to ARGYLE*)

Time is come;
Touch him, and give the sign.

DARNLEY

The air turns sharp;
There came a wind as chill as from the pit.
Why do you fix your eyes so fast on me?

QUEEN

Not out of mind to mar your sleep again.

DARNLEY

I will not sleep alone.

QUEEN

Ay, will you not?
The town looks like a smoke whose flame is out,
Deformed of night, defaced and featureless,
Dull as the dead fume of a fallen fire.
There starts out of the cloud a climbing star,
And there is caught and slain.

DARNLEY

Why gaze you so?

QUEEN

I looked to see if there should rise again
Out of its timeless grave the mounting light
That so was overtaken. We must part ;
Keep with this kiss this ring again for me
Till I shall ask it of you ; and good night.

DARNLEY

A good night it may be to folk that feast ;
I see not how it shall be good to me.

QUEEN

It may be better. I must be some hour
Again among the masquers : you that sleep
Shall hear no noise and see no company.

Enter NELSON

For this one night here comes your chamberlain :
Good rest with you. 'Twas just this time last year
David was slain.

DARNLEY

Why tell you me of that ?

QUEEN

This very time as now. Good night, my lord.

[Exeunt all but DARNLEY and NELSON.]

DARNLEY

What folk remain by me ?

NELSON

Sir, four of us :
Myself and Seymour, Taylor and his boy.

DARNLEY

Let Taylor sleep here in my room to-night,
You three in the south gallery.

NELSON

Well, my lord.

DARNLEY

I am left here very lonely. She was kind,
Most kind she was ; but what should make her speak
Of David's slaying ?

NELSON

A word that shot by chance ;
A shaft of thought that grazed her and flew by.

DARNLEY

Why should she tell me of it ? My heart runs low ;
As if my blood beat out of tune with life,
I feel the veins shuddering shrink in, and all
My body seems a burden to my soul.
Come, I will think not that way.

Re-enter PARIS

PARIS

Sir, the queen,
Having forgot for haste in parting hence

Her outer cloak of fur, hath sent me for it,
Lest this night's weather strike her blood acold.

DARNLEY

Take it and go. (*Exit PARIS.*) I do not like their
eyes,
These foreign folk's that serve her. Is it cold?
I feel cold here.

NELSON

A fair sharp night, my lord ;
And the air less cumbered than it was with cloud.

DARNLEY

I find no night of all nights fair to me ;
I am sick here at my heart all the dark hours.
Give me the book there. Ay, my book of psalms ?
What day is this ?

NELSON

The ninth of February.

DARNLEY

How says it of God's foes, they were afraid
Where no fear was ? That am not I : my fear
Dies without food. I am not as were these.
I prithee tell me, of thine honest heart,
Think'st thou I have no cause to feed my fear,
Or keep the bitter life in it alive ?

NELSON

I know not, sir ; but what you give it of food
Is so much taken from your health of heart
That goes to starve your spirit of likely life.

DARNLEY

Why then I will not feed it with false thoughts.
Call here my chamber-fellow. If the heart

Enter TAYLOR

Be but the servant of chance cold and heat,
And the brain bear not rule upon the blood,
We are beasts who call us men. Thomas, good
 night. [Exit NELSON.
What, shall we watch awhile ?

TAYLOR

So please your grace.

DARNLEY

I have more mind to sleep than power to sleep ;
Some unrest in me fights against my rest.
Come hither, Will. Of all thy fellows here
I think thou lov'st me ; fain am I to think ;
I would not live unloved of all men born ;
I hope I shall not. Dost thou feel to-night
Thy living blood and spirit at ease in thee ?

TAYLOR

Surely, my lord.

DARNLEY

I would thy lord did too.

This is a bitter writing where he saith
How in his prayer he mourns, and hath his heart
Disquieted within him ; and again,
The fear of death is fallen upon him, see,
And fearfulness and trembling, as is writ,
Are come upon him, and an horrible dread
Hath him o'erwhelmed : O that I had, saith he,
Wings like a dove ! then would I flee away,
And be at rest ; would get me then far off
And bide within the wilderness, it saith,
I would make haste to escape. Lo, here am I,
That bide as in a wilderness indeed
And have not wings to bear me forth of fear.
Nor is it an open enemy, he saith,
Hath done me this dishonour : (what hath put
This deadly scripture in mine eye to-night ?)
For then I could have borne it ; but it was
Even thou, mine own familiar friend, with whom
I took sweet counsel ; in the house of God
We walked as friends. Ay, in God's house it was
That we joined hands, even she, my wife and I,
Who took but now sweet counsel mouth to mouth
And kissed as friends together. Wouldst thou think,
She set this ring at parting on my hand
And to my lips her lips ? and then she spake
Words of that last year's slaughter. O God, God,
I know not if it be not of thy will
My heart begins to pass into her heart,
Mine eye to read within her eye, and find
Therein a deadlier scripture. Must it be
That I so late should waken, and so young

Die? for I wake as out of sleep to death.
Is there no hand or heart on earth to help?
Mother! my mother! hast thou heart nor hand
To save thy son, to take me hence away,
Far off, and hide me? But I was thy son,
That lay between thy breasts and drank of thee,
And I thy son it is they seek to slay.
My God, my God, how shall they murder me?

TAYLOR

I pray you, comfort your own heart, my lord;
Your passion drives your manhood out of you.

DARNLEY

I know it doth; I am hare-hearted, for
The hunters are upon me. There—and there—
I hear them questing. I shall die, man—die,
And never see the sun more; ay, this hour
Will they come in and slay me. O great God,
Sweet Jesus, will you have me die this death,
Such death as never man before has died?
See how they will not let me pray to you
To take my soul out of their fangs and hell—
Will you not make the sun rise for my sake
That I may see you in the dawn and live
And know the grace that God hath ere I die?

TAYLOR

Sir, for God's love——

DARNLEY

I say I hear their feet—
Thou hast no ears—God hath no ears for me

Nor eyes to look upon me—hands he hath,
Their bloody hands to smite with, and her heart
Is his toward me to slay me. Let them come ;
How do men die ? but I so trapped alive—
O, I shall die a dog's death and no man's.
Mary, by Christ whose mother's was your name,
Slay me not ! God, turn off from me that heart—
Out of her hands, God, God, deliver me !



