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THE KING'S FOOL;

OR,

THE OLD MAN'S CURSE.

AN HISTORIC PLAY,

IN THREE ACTS.

BY

J. G. MILLINGEN, M.D.

AUTHOR OF

“THE BEE HIVE,” “LADIES AT HOME,” “SPRING AND AUTUMN.”
“THE ILLUSTRIOUS STRANGER,” “LOVE LAUGHS AT BAILIFFS.”

THE MUSIC

BY MM. NATHAN AND WADE.

LONDON:

JOHN MILLER, HENRIETTA STREET,
COVENT GARDEN.

(Agent to the Dramatic Authors' Society.)

1833.

LONDON:
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P R E F A C E.

THE following piece is founded on the same traditional subject as *Le Roi s'amuse* of Victor Hugo. The chief incidents have been retained, but the plot and characters differ materially. Urged by that anti-regal mania which distinguishes the republic of letters of our ingenious neighbours, the French author represented Francis I. as a base and profligate prince. I have endeavoured to delineate him in the colouring transmitted by his chroniclers;—a lively, amiable monarch, launched, it is true, on the giddy vortex of a depraved court, yet still high-minded and chivalric in his disposition, and according to the acceptation of the word *honour*, then, and unfortunately now in high life, honourable in illicit pursuits when condescending to enoble plebeian blood. In the Parisian piece, with heartless levity, he ruins the child of his miserable jester, while she is represented an infatuated being, glorying in her royal degradation, and ready to lay down her life to save that of her despoiler, even when endangered in a house of ill-fame, and faithless in the arms of a prostitute, exclaiming—

“ Puisqu'il ne m'aime plus, je n'ai plus qu'à mourir,
Eh bien ! mourons pour lui.”

Still the animal strength of the pangs of death assail her, and she says, after hearing the assassin whetting his knife on a scythe,—

“ Ciel ! il va me faire bien du mal ! ! ”

Hugo's Blanche in short, is a deluded silly girl, creating neither pity nor esteem, while the public has appeared to take a warm interest in the miseries of my virtuous but ill-fated heroine.

Availing myself of the licence of romance, I have ventured to make somewhat free with history, and to produce a better dramatic

situation, I have made St. Valièr Diana's husband instead of her father. The death of the Dauphin, supposed at the time to have been poisoned, was an event posterior to the conspiracy in which St. Valièr was involved, but I have had recourse to this anachronism to heighten the effect of the catastrophe. For although the old man's denunciations were sadly realised by the miserable circumstance that attended Francis's death, as related by historians, it occurred to me that his malediction, falling doubly on the principal and the accessory in his wife's disgrace, was a desirable evidence of retributive justice.

It would be no easy task to express my thanks to the performers; the applause of the public must have been to them more grateful than any tribute I can pay them. Mr. Warde's acting has been justly considered by the press a masterpiece of the histrionic art: I was much indebted to him for various suggestions during the rehearsal. Mr. Abbott acted the merry, light-hearted Monarch to the life. To Miss Jarman, who undertook a part far beneath her abilities, I feel personally obliged: her simplicity and single-heartedness in the humble yet proud Blanch, elicited tears even from the gallery. When asked by Francis if her father was not deformed, the manner of her filial reply—

“The world, my liege, might say he is,”

produced an electric effect; fully proving that our humble classes are still alive to nature's simple language.

I can only request all the performers to accept my best thanks and good wishes for their future prosperity. I should be wanting in justice, were I not publicly to acknowledge the liberality and activity of the management in producing the play in the splendid manner in which it was brought out.

J. G. MILLINGEN.

London, August 1st, 1833.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| <i>Francis the First</i> , King of France | MR. ABBOTT. |
| <i>Count de St. Vallier</i> , an aged Nobleman | MR. EGERTON. |
| <i>Chabannes</i> , Lord in Attendance | MR. WOOD. |
| <i>Triboulet</i> , the King's Fool | MR. WARDE. |
| <i>Pardaillan</i> } <i>De Bercy</i> } | Officers of the Court .. |
| <i>Cherubin</i> , a favourite Page | MISS P. HORTON. |
| <i>Melchior</i> , a Bohemian Bandit | |
| <i>Rodolph</i> } <i>Zeppo</i> } | Two Bohemians |

WOMEN.

| | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| <i>Diana of Poitiers</i> | MISS SIDNEY. |
| <i>Blanch</i> | MISS JARMAN. |
| <i>Zerlina</i> | MISS HORTON. |
| <i>Dame Perrette</i> | MRS. GARRICK. |
| <i>Gertrude</i> | MISS SOMERVILLE. |

Lords and Ladies of the Court, Guards, Pages, &c.

. . SCENE—*Paris.*

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THE KING'S FOOL;

OR,

THE OLD MAN'S CURSE.

ACT I.—SCENE I.

A Landscape—Pleasure Grounds—To the right Count de Saint Vallier's Castle, with practicable drawbridge—day-breaking.

(FRANCIS I. and TRIBOULET, enveloped in ample cloaks, are discovered under the windows of Diana de Poitiers, with a band of Minstrels.)

SERENADE. (WADE.)

Lady, hear the song of morn
Floating on the passing gale,
Dew-drops glisten on the thorn,
Sunbeams gild the waving vale.
Let Dark dreams then flit away,
Wake and greet the blushing day.

Music sounds o'er dell and brake
Feather'd songsters through the grove.
All around you sings—awake!
'Wake to happiness and love.

(Exeunt Minstrels.)

FRAN. Well, good Triboulet, dost think the beautiful Diana of Poitiers will consent to be mine?

TRIB. By my bauble, if rivers flow towards the sea, and the mind of woman ever flows against wind, tide and current, e'er yon rising sun set o'er the Louvre turrets, she will be book'd by your most gracious majesty in the journal of your conquests—her present captivity will make her pant for freedom; for instead of immuring her in that castle, had her silly old husband the Count, known woman's mind, if he had wished her to be a domestic wife, he should have thrown doors and drawbridge open, and told her—"Madam, go wherever it suits your fancy."

FRAN. Instead of which, no doubt, he amuses her with weeping love, and jealous sighs—

TRIB. That would drown, or puff out even a farthing rushlight of love.

FRAN. And I cannot but admire the sagacity of the old gentleman, who, to bring her away from the busy allurements of the capital—that scarcely give a fair lady time to think—leads her to this romantic abode, where every grove breathes tender passion, and fans the glow of youth; where each bower beckons to soft repose in its mystic shades; and the very moon with her chorist the nightingale, pander to bland seduction and a melting mood.

TRIB. The reason, no doubt, why prudent dames bring their fair daughters to town during the expansive days of spring; knowing, perhaps, from experience the danger that encompasses sylvan simplicity and rural in—no—cense.

FRAN. Poor Diana! Even did I not admire those charms, that rank her first on beauty's list—the odious thralldom under which she mourns, would induce me to rescue her from oppression.

TRIB. This day my liege her husband goes to your majesty's court; and the coast once clear, I bet my fool's cap against his coronet—that there being a woman in the case—folly will bear the bell.

FRAN. And what shall be thy reward good gossip?

TRIB. The pleasure of seeing others as miserable as myself.

FRAN. I am not so ambitious; and the pleasure of pleasing is the only lot I covet. (*Exit.*)

TRIB. Now to commence my campaign; stratagem shall open these gates, while vanity unbolts the citadel of its fair inmates's heart. (*laughing bitterly*) Ha! ha! ha!—Count De St. Vallier! You have often spurned me—trampled me under your noble feet—and why?—I was a base plebeian, a low-born wretch—the child of nobody—deformed—misshapen—butt of the rabble—jest of the nobility—the king's fool! Ha! ha! ha! I am paid to make him laugh; but I feel not my degradation when I can make others weep—with this bauble I rule the greatest monarch in the world; his very ministers are swayed by folly—I draw my royal master in my mesh like the wily spider—my bait—the decoy duck of destruction—woman! who, like the flowing goblet, will e'er attract its votaries, though poison lurketh in the bowl—woman! I hate you!—as much as your vain pride scorns the poor Triboulet (*paces up and down contemplating his deformity*) why was I thus created?—decrepid—a blot upon the beauteous face of nature—a helpless wretch? but no; I am not helpless; I can do mischief—aye and bitterly—I feel that I am sent on earth upon an infernal mission—the genius of evil—mankind that spurns me, is my natural foe; I wage against the fallen race, a war implacable—one only being in this detested world, still binds me to it; she and she alone I fondly love; if Heaven ere had ought to

do with me—may Heaven protect and bless her. (*Bugle in the castle.*) They come—now, hate and vengeance inspire me and give to my willing tongue the fascination of the serpent, with an asp's sting. (*Exit cautiously. The drawbridge is let down and enter—two servants, COUNT DE St. VALLIER, DIANA, HUBERT, two servants, and two men with crossbows, who remain on drawbridge.*)

COUNT. I must to court, my love ; prithe in my short absence let all my injunctions be attended to.

DIANA. My bounden duty, my lord, is, no doubt, obedience ; indeed, resistance would be vain ; but yet my lord, tho' yonder ponderous gates may check my footsteps' freedom, a woman's spirit, let me tell you, is of an aerial nature that power can ne'er confine ; nought, sir, was ever known to shackle us but affection ; indignant, we will boldly take our flight upon an eagle's wing to look defiance in the very sun ; or, in gentleness seek with the timid dove a refuge in the shade.

COUNT. Believe me, Diana, prudence renders retirement expedient.

DIANA. Then sir, retirement must be our choice ; if not, a splendid notoriety may chance to mark revenge.

COUNT. You know not dearest, the corruption of the times.

DIANA. Yet I am told, my lord, they ever truly were, what now they are, and probably will be ; I should much like forsooth to learn in all your musty books, the purity of the golden age ; when princes fed on acorns and goat's milk ; and sovereign's daughters churned butter, and scoured in the royal laundry : it was, no doubt, my lord in those virtuous and sainted times, when swallows (as nurses tell their all believing brats) built nests in old men's beards, ha ! ha ! ha !

COUNT. Thou little knowest the profligacy of Francis and his corrupted minions; nothing is held sacred by their unruly passions; and to disturb domestic peace, is both their pride and glory.

DIANA. Did I desire, sir, to be brought from my fair Poitou to this gay capital; to be immured a prisoner within the very precincts of a far-famed court? Lone and moping in my prison, the sound of minstrelsy, the shouts of carousal and merry festivals must ever and anon reach my all listening ear; I am frank my lord, I long to see the court to which my birth and rank now call me, if danger lurketh there, then let me proudly boast of having dared it.

COUNT. Our holidame forbid it; the look of Francis possesses the fascinating power of the serpent.

DIANA. Heigho! then he must be a very terrible man; but hark ye my lord, I have often heard old and experienced warriors tell bragadocio captains of peaceful times, a fort cannot be deemed impregnable until it has withstood a bold attack; and I must confess, sir, that were I one of your lords of the creation, instead of a poor simple creature, I should place little confidence in the security of woman's heart, unless it had been assailed.

COUNT. Assailed!

DIANA. Aye, sir, assailed—sword in hand, by ladder and by breach—by gay and gallant cavaliers.

COUNT. You talk Diana like a silly and forward child.

DIANA. I also have heard the same veterans say, the perils of the field teach the young soldiers prudence and discretion; but that the giddy recruit is apt to fall in wily and well-laid ambuscades; you my lord, are both a soldier and a statesman. (*Bantering.*) I therefore, with all humility, submit these suggestions to your better judgement—in the mean time,

order your trusty warder Hubert to lower the portcullis—arm every loop-hole—load every gun to the very muzzle—prepare fire-pots—rockets—blue lights and catamarans—grind every sword, and sharpen every lance. While the flood gates of security inundate your castle's ditches, to defend poor little I against assault and battery, blockade, investment, or bombardment, ha! ha! ha! (*Exit over draw-bridge.*)

COUNT. Alas! this flippant language savours too much of the licentious court, I fear my apprehensions are but too well founded—Hubert.

HUBERT. My lord.

COUNT. Thou hast heard this silly woman; in my absence I hold thee responsible that no one enters the castle gate.

HUBERT. You shall be obeyed my lord; yet recollect in spite of all vigilance, the sceptre of a monarch is a magic wand that openeth every door.

COUNT. The world at any rate shall not condemn me for delivering up the keys; however, such caution Hubert will not long be wanted; learn that this very night shall seal the tyrant's doom; a host of my noble friends, neglected and degraded by this profligate monarch, have sworn by the love they bear their country and their peaceful hearths—hourly endangered by his wild excesses—to hurl him from the throne he thus ignobly fills.

HUBERT. It ill becomes a man of my humble degree to offer unask'd advice; yet in the name of all you hold dear, my lord, beware how you enter upon this fearful project; whatever may be the faults of Francis—and they no doubt are many—yet still he is beloved.

COUNT. By none but the corrupt.

HUBERT. Alas! my lord! his enemies then, must be but few.

COUNT. Then shall we perish, sooner than with craven dread submit to his accursed power—dost know the chaste, the pure Diana has not escaped his all-devouring eye, did'st thou not hear but awhile ago, a troop of his licentious minstrels, pour forth under her very casement, their blasting notes of love?

HUBERT. Perhaps my lord some wandering troubadours.

COUNT. No Hubert, I recognized among them the king himself, with Triboulet his jester; the base agent of his infamous designs, (*Officer without, This way.*) and as I live my guards have seized the caitiff. (*Enter officer, bringing in TRIBOULET and two guards.*)

OFFICER. My lord we have seized this knave in the very act of scaling the postern palisades.

COUNT. (*Aside to HUBERT.*) Art thou now convinced? (*To TRIBOULET.*) And thou demon! imp of hell! what brought thee here? answer as thou valu'st thy vile existence.

TRIB. (*Bantering.*) To pay my obeisance to your lordship, and the beautiful Diana of Poitiers, to congratulate you both on the birth of a son and heir to your estate and beauty; offer my humble services, drink a cup of caudle, and rattle my bauble to amuse the pretty babe.

COUNT. Full well thou knowest Vampire, my union with the fair Diana has not been blessed with a wished-for heir. The monster banters me; no equivocation—this instant tell me what were thy orders, and thy base plans in thus stealing into my dwelling.

TRIB. Stealing?—my lord, I never stole anything, save a march upon my neighbours; but, since your lordship must know all, I humbly come to crave your lordship's permission to get married. I wish to imitate my betters;

and though I am only fifty-five, come next Lammas-Day, I am about wedding a pretty maiden of fourteen next Michaelmas. Ha! ha! ha!

COUNT. The scoundrel's insolence is intolerable!

TRIB. And my gracious sovereign, who admires all his fair subjects, patronizes my wedding. He wishes every one to be joyful; and his usual toast is—"May the married be single, and the single be happy!" Oh! I beg your lordship's pardon—but I put the cart before the horse!

COUNT. I can no longer brook his insulting gibes. Seize the reptile, and scourge him into silence!

(Guards seize TRIB.)

TRIB. Flog away! Flog away, my lord! Perhaps you'll get me whipped into a seemly shape! But one word to your lordship. *(with bitterness.)* You are fond of playing at cards, Sir Count—I'll be your partner—your trumps are now clubs—mine shall be hearts—aye, and bleeding ones, sir. Now, my merry men, flog away!

(Guards exeunt with him over the bridge.)

COUNT. Can daring insolence be pursued beyond that wretch's? The base views of Francis are now obvious: I haste to court, to meet my secret friends: let not a living being approach Diana, save the holy Friar who directs her; and let not even him come near, unless he shows the signet that I gave him.

SCENE II.

A festive Hall in the Louvre.—FRANCIS and his Court discovered at a splendid Banquet.—To the following Chorus the Lords at Table drink the Ladies' Health.

CHORUS.

Pass the drink divine—
Pledge your ladies' eyes ;
See the sparkling wine
With their blushes vies !
Then, Love, all hail ! And banish fear—
Lethean draughts we 'll sip ;
While kisses check the trembling tear,
And chide the pouting lip.

FRAN. And now Cherubin, my gentle mignon, sing me that song of thine, which often nerved my arm in battle, as the breeze, struggling with oppressive smoke, wafted my scarf to fan my burning brow, and reminded me of the delicious hands that wove the proud distinction.

CHER. Which of your scarfs, my liege? for in every battle I have seen you change them, although the damsels, who wore out their fingers to work these *proud distinctions*, fancied, poor silly thimble-drivers, they had secured your majesty with what they thought a true-lover's knot. Alas! it was a Gordian tie that you too well could sever!

FRAN. Well said, my merry page; and could I venture on a pun, like my good gossip, poet Marot, I should say, did thy attraction, pretty page, grow with thy growth (I can only regret thou hast no sister like thee), I should strongly recommend every prudent maid, wife, or widow, to pluck thee from her album.

CHER. Therefore, like you, my liege, I wish not to be bound.

SONG. (NATHAN.)

The spur of the soldier is beauty—
 To glory her image will guide ;
 He feels a delight in his duty
 When he thinks on the maid of his pride !

With ardour he rushes to battle,
 And draws the bright steel from his side ;
 It beams, 'midst the smoke and the rattle,
 The star of his hope and his pride !

No, never that sword can be broken ;
 On its strength will the warrior confide ;
 And the foe learnt that it was a token—
 The last gift of the maid of his pride.

(After the song, the king comes down the stage, in confidential discourse with CHABANNES.)

CHAB. What, verily and truly in love, my liege?—a sleepless, hopeless passion ?

FRAN. It is but too true.

CHAB. I hear your majesty has deigned to cast a favourable eye on the beauteous Diana.

FRAN. That will be a mere courtly aristocratic amour. I am ashamed to confess it, but I do now experience a sentiment of admiration—pure and unmingled with vanity's attraction, for a damsel of humble rank and mean degree, the most beauteous creature in my dominions. I first beheld her in one of my incognito visits at our Lady's shrine, and have since traced her to a wretched hovel hard by the palace.

CHAB. To which, no doubt, you shortly will transfer her.

FRAN. Not so; the contrast of her timid looks with countenances breathing conquest, that I daily see, led me to wish success might be the triumph of love, and not of power. In the garb of a humble student have I followed

her; but she is constantly attended by an old haridan, whom I should like to burn for the welfare of her soul. Not a single word have I been able to exchange; yet her downcast looks, and suppressed sighs, lead me to hope for a fond return.

CHAB. Have you set the knave Triboulet at her?

FRAN. For the first time in his life, I believe, the fellow has missed scent. Nay, when I spoke of her, he appeared uneasy and perplexed; therefore, Chabannes, to thy discretion and ability do I entrust this adventure. All that I have hitherto discovered is, that at nightfall a man, wrapped in a large mantle, steals cautiously into the house, after having ascertained the coast is clear.

CHAB. No doubt some troublesome father, brother, or protector. We'll strangle him in his cloak, with which we'll hoodwink the damsel, and bear her to your majesty.

FRAN. No, no—no violence: track her out, and leave the rest to bounteous nature—our silver tongue, and our good patron St. Francis (*takes off his cap*), who ever protects me in my need.

CHAB. Then your majesty is sure of success. Mercury never took wing to serve the master of the gods more promptly than shall your faithful servant in obeying your commands.

FRAN. Jupiter, I fancy, had no body-guards; but a company of mine await thee, if success crown thy endeavours. But I do not see our trusty and well-beloved Count De St. Vallier at court.

CHAB. Probably he is consulting with a blacksmith, for locks and bars to secure his young wife.

DE BER. Or some professor of the black art, to know under what sign he was born.

CHER. Of all the zodiac, Capricorn seems his greatest dread.

CHAB. The old gentleman is superstitious ; for I hear he apprehends your majesty can cast an evil eye.

CHER. Or rather, like Cæsar, your majesty has nothing to do but look and conquer.

FRAN. But here he comes—seemingly in a gloomy mood.

CHAB. And he will no doubt, as usual, preach us a sermon on pretty behaviour.

Enter COUNT and suite.

FRAN. Though late, yet welcome, Count : but still alone ? Why does not the fair Diana grace our circle ?

COUNT. Reared in rural solitude, she is but badly calculated, my liege, to move in a court, where nought but present pleasure is attended to, and futurity unheeded and defied.

FRAN. The business of each day and night, Sir Count, is sufficient occupation for a reasonable man ; yet methinks, sir, no noble dame has met with aught but high respect when in our presence.

COUNT. What can wives expect, when your majesty's tried and faithful servants, high both in birth and rank, are subject to hourly insult ?

FRAN. I understand you not.

COUNT. But just now, my liege, your favourite jester has presumed so far to forget his insignificance as to merit at my hands a well-earned castigation.

FRAN. (*Angrily.*) What, Sir Count, have you dared to punish my Triboulet ?

COUNT. I merely did justice in your royal name, sire.

Enter TRIBOULET.

FRAN. (*Aside.*) By St. Francis, he shall rue the deed ! Come hither, honest Triboulet. (*TRIBOULET comes down.*) I learn Count De St. Vallier has dared to lay hands on our livery.

TRIB. He has done worse, my liege ; he has laid them on our hump.

FRAN. Then thou shalt have, my good gossip, whatever satisfaction thou demandest for thy injury.

COUNT. Satisfaction, King Francis, to that miserable wretch ! My services to the state, are few, sire ; but I did not think they were thus far forgotten ! And to this court you would wish me to bring my innocent Diana, 'midst parasites and hireling sycophants ! (*General murmur.*)

FRAN. We are always ready to hear your homilies, Sir Count.

COUNT. I remember, sire, the day when your ancestor's throne was supported by the noble and the brave ; when honoured chivalry was the boasted lustre of the court ; and the bright armour of your tried and faithful followers shone in prouder array than the gorgeous trappings of courtezans and motley jesters.

FRAN. I must confess, good Count, that in these blessed days of peace, I'd rather be surrounded by damsels' distaffs than soldiers' spears.

TRIB. Henceforth, my liege, I would propose that your noble court should go to bed in cuirasses ; hand ladies to dance with an iron gauntlet ; dine in helmets ; and make love with their visors down !

COUNT. (*Not heeding TRIBOULET.*) Women and their distaffs, my liege, may have attraction ; but seek them not among the wives and daughters of your faithful servants.

TRIB. I fully coincide in opinion with the noble lord ; and, for the furtherance of the security of the noble ladies, I shall move, as an amendment, that it be enacted, no young lady shall marry an impertinent suitor under the age of sixty ; (*All laugh.*) that grey hairs, or a bald head, be in-

dispensable qualifications for a marriage-license ; that no dame, or damsel be permitted to dance with any partner but her husband, her brother, or her grandfather (*laugh,*) and that no doctor be allowed to attend them unveiled, unless he be three score, and blind—at least of one eye (*laugh.*)

CHAB. I move that married ladies shall be obliged to walk out in blinkers.

DE BER. And I, that all ladies' male attendants be selected among the invalids of your Majesty's armies.

CHERUBIN. That all your Majesty's pages and officers wear green spectacles, or a patch on the eye.

TRIB. And moreover that the honourable Count de St. Vallier be appointed lord of every bed chamber and keeper of the ladies back stairs (*all laugh.*)

COUNT. 'Tis well my liege ; this banishment from your Majesty's presence I gratefully accept ; nay hail my disgrace as a harbinger of better days ; may your jesters prop your throne in the hour of need. (*Exit, followed by his servants.*)

CHAB. Ha ! ha ! ha ! old Nostradamus is furious.

TRIB. Your Majesty—(*King comes down—courtiers group at back.*) Your Majesty promised me satisfaction.

FRAN. Methinks your gibes have amply obtain'd it.

TRIB. Not quite my liege ; my lacerated back is not yet healed : may it please your Majesty—who is more ambitious than a king ?

FRAN. His ministers.

TRIB. You are out:—aga

FRAN. His confessor.

TRIB. You are in—the priory of St. Vallery is vacated by the death of the incumbent, who breathed his last by the visitation of a truffled turkey.

FRAN. Well.

TRIB. I want it my liege.

FRAN. What! Triboulet turn friar?

TRIB. Not yet; I have other fish to fry—the priory of St. Vallery please your Majesty.

FRAN. Once more—for whom?

TRIB. (*Bitterly.*) For Diana of Poitiers.

FRAN. Ha! Say you so?—the priory is thine.

TRIB. My power to demand it.

FRAN. This signature (*Giving tablets in, which he had written.*)

TRIB. This royal token and endowment will procure me her confessor's signet and an entrance to the castle; and then—Diana's yours—and Triboulet's revenged.

(FRANCIS and Court retire up the stage—a Ballet is performed on which the scene closes.)

— — —

SCENE III.

(*A Chamber in the Count's Castle.*)

Enter DIANA *with Bird in a cage.*

DIANA. Come, my poor fellow prisoner—often do I wish to restore thee to thy liberty; but my good lord tells me, the wild birds would destroy thee as voraciously as the king and his courtiers would devour me, were I let loose; Heigho! how I long for my native groves.

SONG, (NATHAN.)

A pretty bird was moping in its golden cage,
While wanton linnets warbled in the green boughs round,
Their merry chirrup's could not his sad grief assuage,
In vain he tried to join in every cheerful sound.

Pretty linnet teach me, Those notes so sweet
 Teach me I beseech thee I daily greet,
 But ne'er can imitate.
 Sad fate!
 But ne'er can imitate.

A friendly linnet perched upon its splendid dome,
 And said, dear bird, I wish you roved the grove with me,
 Then you and I in verdant fields would fondly roam;
 No bird can sing in raptures till it's song be free.
 Would that I could teach thee, Those notes thus free,
 Reach thee sweet to teach thee. So full of glee.
 That slaves can't imitate,
 Sad fate!
 That slaves can't imitate.

Enter GERTRUDE.

GER. My lady, a holy Franciscan friar wishes to see your ladyship; he was at first refused admittance by the warden, but on his presenting the Count's signet, the bridge was lowered; oh, by the blessed and most patient eleven thousand virgins! He is the ugliest man my two eyes ever beheld; and sure I am I should never be a sinner if sin was half so frightful.

DIANA. (*Aside.*) Some fresh precaution, no doubt, of my amiable husband; at any rate, shew him in—any thing for a little variety.

GER. That's exactly what I said, dear lady, when the blessed Saint Zenobia, who was fried on a griddle for her virtue, promised me in a dream two husbands; and I hope she'll keep her promise when I'm awake. (*Exit.*)

DIANA. I am certain this new monk, whoever he may be, cannot be more odious than my spiritual director, father Gregory, who so often couples love with sin, and marriage with obedience, that the one seems as enticing as the other is forbidding; but here is the new comer; well, the Count

must have ransacked all the monasteries in the kingdom to find such a fright.

Enter TRIBOULET as a Franciscan friar.

TRIB. Peace be with you my sister.

DIANA. A vastly pretty brother truly ; peace, good friar ! I am *too* peaceful in this gloomy castle ; give me a siege—a storm—any thing is better than telling beads, and counting hours ; but prithee, holy man, what brings *you* here instead of father Gregory ?

TRIB. It has pleased our gracious sovereign to create my worthy brother prior of Saint Vallery ; yes lady, to that distinguished station he has been translated for his virtues.

DIANA. I wish he had been translated to me for my sins, for I never could understand one word he said, when ringing the changes in my ear, about connubial duties and nuptial ties, and matrimonial obligations and abnegations—and the lord knows what, that deafened me like the great bell of Notre Dame.

TRIB. I trust, madam, that in me you will find a less severe director ; for if obliged at times to enjoin spiritual penance I shall not lose sight of some more worldly compensations.

DIANA. (*Aside.*) Oh dear ! he is just the man I wanted—I declare he is not half so ugly as I thought him ; and pray good friar what is your name ?

TRIB. Barnaby, at your ladyship's commands ; an unwor-Franciscan, and confessor to his most Christian majesty, Francis the First.

DIANA. Confessor to the king ! then indeed father Barnaby you have no sinecure I should think ; or you must be a very indulgent comforter ; and pray what penances do you enjoin to his Majesty ?

TRIB. Madam I confess according to what I call the new

lights; that is to say, I make darkness more visible; too much severity hardens the heart; no man or woman can be perfect; and when I listen to the avowal of transgression I split the difference, between sin and punishment.

DIANA. Explain.

TRIB. Suppose, for instance your ladyship, or his majesty had sinned six times during the week, I should lay a solemn injunction on you not to sin above three times the next one; nay, I might even be a little more indulgent, and supposing you had sinned seven times, as I cannot halve the number without the fraction of half a sin, I strike a balance in your favour, and allow you four.

DIANA. Ha! ha! ha! well, this is the most convenient director I ever heard of; but tell me good Barnaby—I should think the king is more likely to sin forty times than four.

TRIB. Royalty has prerogatives fair lady; but my noble master is most sadly calumniated by the wicked world; true, he may be a little fickle in his admirations; faithless in his vows of everlasting love; but this arises from his having only seen the false and the perfidious that crowd the court. Oh, St. Francis! had he but known your ladyship—your real—your sterling merits would soon have recalled him from the paths of folly in which it grieves me to see him stray; he never hears of your beauty without emotion; or of your virtues without admiration—could you suspect a frank and open countenance like his to harbour deceit,

DIANA. I never beheld him.

TRIB. What! never saw your sovereign, of whose court you should have been the brightest ornament?

DIANA. It was never permitted me.

TRIB. Then allow me to shew you his portrait. (*Gives the portrait.*)

DIANA. Dear me! what handsome features! and is this like him!

TRIB. No, madam; art cannot do justice to his noble looks.

DIANA. How I should like to see him.

TRIB. You have my permission; I am sent hither to direct your steps in the proper path; behold this signet given me by your husband himself! holy father Barnaby, said he—for he well knows my sainted reputation—holy father Barnaby said he, I have been unjust and barbarous to the beauteous Diana! now I have discovered the absurdity of my fears; I leave her entirely to your directions; then fairest lady let me commence my instructions by putting your virtues to the test, and bringing you into the presence of the king.

DIANA. Oh! I dare not.

TRIB. That is a bad sign of your fortitude; well then, I shall lead you to the royal chapel, whence you will behold him from the curtained gallery; this very evening—now—at vespers.

DIANA. Ah! perhaps in the chapel, it will not be a sin.

TRIB. A sin! it is your duty madam; recollect you will be instrumental in reclaiming your sovereign—when, for the first time in his life, he will admire beauty and virtue united.

(Bell.)

DIANA. What is that bell?

TRIB. To summons you to vespers, madam.

DIANA. Then, must I go?

TRIB. It is your duty.

DIANA. Father I follow—lead on—

TRIB. (*Aside.*) Count! the death knell of thy happiness has rung; sister I am yours. (*Exeunt.*) *The bell tolls at intervals till the drop falls.*

ACT II.

Hall in the Louvre. Throne and canopy. Two sentries walking to and fro. CHABANNES, CHERUBIN, DE BERCY, PARDILLIAN, discovered.

DE BER. So, the threads of this base conspiracy have been discovered and the madman, St. Vallier, condemned to death.

CHAB. Yes; but on the scaffold, for the sake of the beautiful Diana, his majesty granted him a pardon.

DE BER. Not only was the king's life threatened, but the traitors aimed a deadly blow at the young Dauphin.

CHER. Francis would not have survived the death of this noble boy: (*trumpets and kettle-drums. Enter two pages announcing.*—"The king—the king.")

CHAB. His majesty approaches; mirth and good humour still sit upon his brow; no danger can ruffle his cheerful mind. (*Enter FRANCIS—Guards &c.*)

FRAN. Well gentlemen, I have granted a free pardon to our preacher; the least boon I could bestow in exchange for the fair Diana's smiles, Chabannes, a tourney and festival to-morrow, and since these madmen have not shed our blood, let wine flow instead, and broach as many puncheons as may charm the thoughts of my good citizens of Paris, till they're too blind to cry, "Long live the king." (*Enter TRIBOULET.*)

TRIB. My liege! a most unwelcome visitor follows me, the Count de St. Vallier himself; he swears he does not thank your majesty for your pardon; and would much rather have come to court like St. Denis with his head under his arm.

FRAN. I cannot see him; let him not pass.

CHAB. It is too late my liege; here he is (*Enter with two guards—The Count in chains.*)

FRAN. (*Seated.*) Strike off the old man's chains (*One of the guards takes off the chains.*) So, Sir Count, you have thought fit to join the standard of rebellion; what could induce you to commit so insane an act?

COUNT. Francis of Valois! I owe you no allegiance; you have bereaved me of all that attached me to my country and my birthright; rendered me an alien in the land of my forefathers; thus, no longer a Frenchman I disclaimed the sovereignty of the king of France.

FRAN. By my holy patron! this is lofty language; Hark ye sir, we allow no prisoners in our dominions, save those the laws and our pleasure deem it meet to consider such; your lady was of high degree, and of a lineage more gentle than your own; she claimed our royal protection from your tyranny; I stretched out my sceptre to shield her from oppression, and so far only have I wronged you; your life is forfeit by your foul offence; yet for her sake do I grant it; and, but for her intercession your head should have fallen beneath the axe of justice.

COUNT. The gift of life sir is an outrage at your hands; nobler would it be for me to lie now stretched a headless corse, than bear through the world a brow stamped with disgrace! She seek your protection! alas! the lamb should sooner seek shelter with the ruthless wolf, the dove a refuge

with the vulture, than woman flee for an asylum to this polluted court.

FRAN. You forget the respect due to our person.

COUNT. You sir, have forgotten the respect due to my hoary locks.

FRAN. And what respect did you yourself, sir, pay to those gray hairs when you sought the hand, and love of youthful beauty? Go to! poor, man!

COUNT. This is indeed a refinement of cruelty sir, thus to add insult to injury; but mark me! thoughtless monarch, thy days are numbered like mine; the grave yawneeth for us both; thy regal purple will not protect thee from the festive worm, that gluts alike upon the prince and peasant; but ere you descend into the gorgeous sepulchre of your ancestors—thus do I prophecy—sorrow shall wring that heart that now beats high in illicit enjoyments; disease shall rack those pliant and luxurious limbs, thy present boast and pride, till death in all it's horrors shall hug thee in his fleshless arms, as closely as my Diana was pressed to thy unhallowed bosom.

FRAN. (*Agitated.*) Hold! thy ravings! I can no longer bear thy screech-owl bodings.

TRIB. Please your majesty the bishop of Autun is a prisoner; methinks old Nostradamus here might as well succeed him; a mitre would grace his dignified forehead better than a morion; if, indeed, he could contrive to put on either.

COUNT. (*To TRIBOULET.*) As for thee, foul fiend! thou very insult to the name and form of man! if it were possible that thou had'st any connexion with mortal being, my curse alight on thee and all that may be thine! may thy loathsome life be as miserable as thy death shall be appalling; once more—may thou and thine be accursed by earth and heaven.

(*Vesper Bell.*) Hark! Hark the bell of Notre Dame; the same that sounded the signal of my dishonour! thou shalt never hear it's iron tongue vibrate in thine ear without remembering an old man's malediction; now king Francis—send me to the block—or to my dungeon.

FRAN. Bear him away; let the mad driveller moulder in the Bastille until his idle denunciations recoil upon his own head (*rises.*) (*Exit Count and guards.*)

TRIB. (*Agitated.*) “May thee and thine be accursed by earth and heaven.”—Ha! an unknown thrill creeps through every fibre of my quivering frame; an awful malediction!—an old man's curse, now hovers o'er my illfated being—Ha! dark forebodings madden me! I must away (*staggers out.*)

FRAN. (*Advancing.*) This dotard's predictions have struck deep; his prophetic energy seemed to have burst from the trammels of age to assume the power of youth; there was something more than mortal in the old man's voice.

CHAB. My liege, heed not the maniacs jealous wandering—he knew not what he said—let him go and crown his wrinkled brow with cypress, while love and pleasure weave for you a wreath of myrtle, and of roses.

FRAN. (*Starting.*) A cup of wine—I say a cup of wine. (*All the pages exit severally, and return with wine in goblets on gold salvers, FRANCIS drinks.*)

PARD. Please your majesty, the council entreat your august presence; you have just escaped from a detested conspiracy—an earnest of a long and happy reign.

CHAB. (*Aside to the king.*) And I have to impart some intelligence of the fair damsel.

FRAN. (*Recovering.*) Chabannes—well!

CHAB. You shall hear all my liege; but now permit your

faithful servants to pledge a cup, to your majesty's long life and prosperity ; my lords and gentlemen—here's death to all traitors, and long live the king—the flower of chivalry ! the protector of arts, and the night-mare of jealous husbands.

ALL. Long live the king. (*All drink.*)

FRAN. *Grand Merci* my lords ; our court must indeed be the envy of the world, when we are thus surrounded by brave knights, whose prowess in the field of honour can only be equalled by their success in the sweet *savoir* of love ; where woman's sparkling eye is the mirror of daring chivalry, and her heart the guerdon of their noble deeds (*courtiers retire.*) And now Chabannes that I have brushed away the flitting cloud, what tidings of my fair recluse ?

CHAB. Despite of all exertions I have not been able to discover who she is : but I have found out that your love is requited ; the old dragon who watches over the treasure is ours, and the conquest of the little cit may be considered certain.

FRAN. Verily thou deservest at least a principality, but we must take heed lest this vulgar amour reach the ears of the fair Diana ; she might perhaps doubt the necessity that a king should be acquainted with every class of his subjects ; I'll now don my student's garb ; and while I am preferring my lowly suit, remain thou near the house, with a few trusty archers, for although treason is abroad, by my faith I cannot remain at home when beauty and adventure shout " on Valois." (*Exit, followed by CHABANNES, &c.*)

SCENE II.

*Street.—Dark.**Enter TRIBOULET.*

TRIB. It must be quickly done ; Chabannes, that base sycophant of the royal profligate has been seen lurking about my dwelling ! Blanch—my own, my dearest child ! must be forthwith removed from danger ; I know not why, but the old man's curse seemeth a fatal omen and shatters all my resolves : I sorely wronged him it is true, but what wrongs has not his *order* heaped upon me ! why then should this heart—rendered obdurate by ill-treatment—feel one single pang for the misery I inflict—am not I a vile outcast ? scarcely considered a human being, spurned by mankind from my very cradle—when I begged for alms to support my tottering frame, I was whipped as a vagrant—when I asked for work, I was spurned and laughed at as an useless being ! thus, if a germ of kindness ever lurked in this distorted bosom, it was nipped and blasted by the damning chill of prejudice and pride—I was pointed at, and hooted by what I hate and execrate—that which the world calls beauty ! beauty ! faugh ! a pretty man—a nice man—would eye me thro' his glass, and exclaim—the monster !!! but, when I played the fool—the despicable buffoon—lo ! 'twas otherwise, I was courted and pampered ; I made man laugh, and perhaps for a moment it forgot its wretched self ; my jests, my gibes procured me the sustenance refused to honest industry ; the bee was trampled on—the wasp was courted ; and when I stung some crawling, yet proud creature, hundreds of his fellow insects enjoyed in roars of delight the

pangs he endured! Still this hideous form concealed a heart made to love—aye, and fondly too! oh my Blanch! my child! thou alone art all the world to me—and thy wretched father has brought a curse upon thy head. (*Exit.*)

SCENE III.

To the left, a narrow obscure street: to the right TRIBOULET's garden and house, separated from the street by a section wall in which is practiced a small door.)

Enter TRIBOULET, rushing into the street.

TRIB. I am followed—tracked by bloodhound panders, no, they have turned into another street; why do I thus dread the pavement echo of my own footsteps, why does my heart quail within my knarled ribs, and its tremulous current chill within my veins! alas! I have too long dared the voice of tardy and retributive conscience, I feel that I have been a burthen upon this beautiful creation; my very child was formed to taunt my misery—still she shall be saved—my poor Blanch—they cannot—they *shall* not tear thee from me; thy virgin prayers *must* arrest the winged thunderbolt of St. Vallier's malediction, (*opens door in wall and goes into the garden.*) Blanch! my child—my beloved Blanch (*Enter BLANCH from house, and rushes into his arms.*) Bless thee! my own—my pride! my universe.

BLANCH. Dearest father! what aileth thee; that sad look grieves my soul.

TRIB. Art thou happy sweet child in this dull retreat?

BLANCH. Can I be otherwise when blessed with your affection.

TRIB. Oh yes, my child, I love thee dearly—dearly—sit thee down (*she sits, he kneels at her feet*) 'twine that beauteous arm around my neck, oh how I delight to gaze upon those heavenly eyes—Blanch—my own Blanch—dost thou know that even when mine are closed, I still behold the sweetness of thy enchanting looks! nay, oft have I wished that I were blind, that I might have no other sun but thee; thy heart beats quick my daughter—feel mine—it throbs for thee alone—thou art to me—child—country—friends—family—the world—my idol upon earth!

BLANCH. Dearest father! it breaks my heart to see you weep thus.

TRIB. (*With concentrated anguish mingled with rage.*) To see me weep—its strings would burst my child, if thou wert doomed to see me *laugh*—say, can't thou look upon this odious shape, and not despise me?

BLANCH. Despise you—oh, my father! kindness and love like yours need not the aid of outward forms. But prithee relieve my constant uneasiness by clearing the dark mystery that hangs about you; enable your poor child to answer one ever recurring question—what are you?

TRIB. Nothing. (*With bitterness.*)

BLANCH. You lately brought me from my native mountains where I was happy, and now immure me in this dismal solitude.

TRIB. What! is it already irksome to thee?

BLANCH. No, my father, since such is your will; but merely tell me what I am.

TRIB. My daughter. Child of the only being that ever felt a sentiment of kind compassion towards me; oh, how I did love her!! She alone discovered that I possessed a heart, denied me by all around. She knew that the fairest forms

oft disguise the blackest soul ; that deadly nightshade and dire aconite bore flowrets sweet to look upon, while many an unheeded and unsightly weed treasured a panaceum for the troubled mind—and hers was early such—when I—yes I—the wretched thing that stands before thee, did save her mother's life ; passing a plank thrown over a stream, bearing in her arms your mother, then an infant, both fell in ; the torrent swept them down its rapid course—when I plunged in to rescue. I swam—yes Blanch, I swam ! I was not born a human being it seems ; since swimming was instinctive, a gift that nature solely grants to brutes !

BLANCH. Oh, my father ! your bitterness curdles my blood.

TRIB. Then did your mother grow in strength and beauty near me ; she learned to lisp my name and love deformity ; I was not, in her eyes, an opaque mass of useless flesh and blood ; she read my soul. The scoffs of the rabble excited her compassion and her friendship ; she cheered me in my degradation, endeavouring to conceal her tears ; and if, in spite of all her efforts, she at times shed some bitter drops upon my wrongs, the choaked ones she restrained to bathe her heart. Oh, Blanch ! she was beauteous—thou art her living image upon earth.

BLANCH. Continue, dearest father. What became of her ?

TRIB. She was accidentally seen by a young nobleman ; he admired her. For me—aye, for me ! she rejected the fond entreaties of one of the most fascinating courtiers ; a base priest was the pander of the miscreant ; thy virtuous mother scorned him and his employer ; power prevailed, and she was condemned to the stake as a vile heretic, for her religion was her love !

BLANCH. Horrible!

TRIB. Yet such my Blanch may be thy fate, if in this pestilential city thy charms be discovered; those gay and gallant cavaliers that women doat on, are gaudy serpents created to fascinate and destroy. Tell me Blanch, come tell me truly—tell thy poor father, hast thou, since in this Paris, seen any of these handsome popinjays?

BLANCH. I understand you not.

TRIB. Hast thou been often abroad?

BLANCH. Only to church—to our blessed lady's shrine.

TRIB. Ha! of course with thy face veiled—a mantle thrown around thee.

BLANCH. Sometimes

TRIB. What! only sometimes!! And Dame Perrette ever with thee?

BLANCH. Ever.

TRIB. 'Tis well Blanch; to-morrow at day-break, we must depart.

BLANCH. (*Anxiously.*) To-morrow, sir!

TRIB. To-morrow, sir! Yes—to-morrow—just now thou didn't complain of this solitude (*earnestly,*) has Paris then some secret charm for thee?

BLANCHE. (*With hesitation.*) No, sir; but—but this sudden intimation.

TRIB. I see (*Aside bitterly.*) The curse begins to work—Dame Perrette.

DAME. (*Inside house.*) Coming, sweet master—coming.

TRIB. Confound thy flattering tongue. (*Enter DAME PERRETTE from house.*) Come hither, Dame Perrette; closer—closer still—thou tremblest like a spaniel crouching for a merited castigation; guilt sits upon thy wizened brow, beldame.

DAME. May the blessed saints protect me!—guilty—of

what?—true, I ate pork and lentils last Friday, for which Saint Genevieve forgive me.

TRIB. Is that the whole of thy offence?

DAME. Pardon me; I omitted confessing to father Luke that I had skipped over a few penitential aves and coveted gossip Magdeline's tabby cat.

TRIB. Hark'ye, crocodile! chameleon! that couldst't take any form save that of beauty to serve thy purposes—did I not confide to thee this precious treasure?

DAME. And have I not been true to my trust?

TRIB. Aye, in leading her to vespers and to matins, for ought I know harridan.

DAME. Matins—blessings on me! the sweet young lady, she sleeps twelve hours a day; and all the matin bells in Christendom could not awaken her.

TRIB. And hast thou not allowed her to go out without hood, veil or mantle, to be gazed at by every pampered and perfumed coxcomb.

DAME. We have not so much as seen any thing in the shape of something we could swear was a man.

BLANCH. Indeed, dear father! you wrong Dame Perrette; she never loses sight of me for a moment.

TRIB. Well, well, my child, let every thing thou hast be packed up in haste; two horses shall be in readiness to bear you to a safe asylum; where gallant cavaliers never set their cloven feet; look to it Perrette—fidelity—and—activity or, mark me! this steel shall seek acquaintance with thy withered heart—Blanch, my beloved! farewell! (*Embraces her tenderly.*) farewell, my child! (*TRIBOULET crosses—DAME PERRETTE opens door.*)

TRIB. (*Aside going off.*) Oh, I feel as though it were my last adieu. (*Exit, cautiously looking round when in the street.*)

DAME. Here's pretty usage for a respectable woman! Marry, come up! his dagger shall get acquainted with my too tender heart (*aside.*) I fear it not, old Scaramouch! for I shall sheath its point in gold. (*clinking a purse.*) I verily believe, my dear young lady, your good father's upper story is as badly furnished as our poor lodgings.

BLANCHE. I know not what ails him of late; but his suspicions I fear render him miserable.

DAME. Suspicions! of what! that you—young and handsome fit to be at least a princess, or a duchess—should learn that you possessed a susceptible heart, that you did not wish to pine and moan in a dungeon, and that because no lady could possibly look kindly on the cross old gentleman, his fair daughter is not to bestow a smile on a good-looking fellow.

BLANCH. If he did but know that this young and handsome student who follows me to church,—constantly lurks about the house—

DAME. And where's the harm pray? Has he not the same right as we to kneel at our blessed lady's shrine?

BLANCH. True; but while he tells his beads, hidden behind a pillar, his eyes are ever fixed on me.

DAME. To be sure, thy pretty smile would make a saint of the most roistering sinner.

BLANCH. My good Perrette, don't flatter.

DAME. Flatter! the king himself would doff his crown for one single rosy smile of thine.

BLANCH. And tell me truly, Goody, dost positively think the youth loves me?

DAME. Think it! swear it by the bones of every saint in the calendar. (*Aside.*) This must be the hour—ah, sweet child! I once loved and was dearly loved in turn—old as I now am—I'll tell thee all about it in this bower. (*They enter*

a bower and are seen in earnest conversation. Enter into the street, FRANCIS I. dressed as a student—CHABANNES wrapped in a mantle and archers also cloaked.)

CHAB. This is the house my liege; the mysterious visitor has just passed us without recognizing your majesty.

FRAN. 'Tis well good Chabannes, fix the ladder and remain within my call, for these are fearful times when even lovers must be cautious. (*aside.*) I know not why, but for the first time in all my adventurous life do I experience reluctance in pursuit and dread of its results; that old man's prophecy!—come, come Valois, banish apprehension and be thyself again.

CHAB. The ladder is fixed my liege and success attend you.

FRAN. Remember—within call—(*He goes over the wall, DAME PERRETTE sees him and leads BLANCH to the front.*)

CHAB. And you, my good archers, pace around every purlieu, and in the King's name, stop the progress of all curious intruders. (*Exit with archers. DAME PERRETTE and BLANCH come to the front, while FRANCIS glides in behind them, after having made a sign to PERRETTE.*)

DAME. And so you often think of this young gallant?

BLANCH. Ever good Perrette! Even in my slumbers, busy fancy portrays him, as when I first beheld him at our Lady's church, enveloped in his mantle, and half concealed behind a massive pillar, fixing his ardent eyes on me.

DAME. Yes, dear young lady; they *are* ardent, but yet soft and sweet, just like those of my poor departed Jeanty, (peace be with him,) whose eyes were ever sparkling with love or liquor—do you know I am certain that this unknown student of yours is some nobleman in disguise.

BLANCH. Prithee, say not so—oh, no, no! A youth of

high degree could not thus follow and admire a poor thing like me, without base motives; tell me Perrette, on the contrary, that he is of my own station in life—what he appears to be, a poor and humble student.

DAME. (*Who has looked back to the king, who throws her a purse.*) Well, so be it—so be it. Yet his features betray a distinguished rank; nay, be not uneasy about it, silly child; love knows not birth, and many an humble damsel, much less beauteous than you—verily dairy maids and shepherdesses, have oft exchanged their chaplet of wild flowers for a royal crown or a ducal coronet; at any rate, if your timid suitor be not a noble—every look and *action* shew the gentleman—(*she looks at the purse*)—but it's no use thinking of him; at day-break your father takes you away—Heaven and our Lady of Bologne knows where. (BLANCH *sighs heavily.*) Heigho!

FRAN. Take her away at daybreak? By my crown this shall not be. (*Aside.*)

DAME. What can induce your father, sweet lady, thus to bear you away at a moment's notice? There is something strangely mysterious in all this; do you know all the neighbours are talking about him; some say he is the wandering Jew: others, the old man of the mountains; Master Froth, the barber, swears he's a dabbler in the black art; and gossip Ferret insists that he's in compact with the old gentleman—thanks to my blessed saints, I have not a spark of curiosity about me; yet have I listened at doors and peeped through key-holes, and followed and watched him: and once I even got under a bed—a situation most uncomfortable in my mind—yet have I never been able to discover who or what he is. Why is it then that because he is—

BLANCH. (*Severely.*) My father, Dame Perrette.

DAME. I was only going to say—because he is not what a body might call handsome by no means—he should wish to deprive a beautiful young lady like you of a great blessing, or, a very necessary evil—a husband.

BLANCH. His will, Perrette, must be my law.

DAME. Surely ! But it's a sad pity that his will has not a better way ; when I was young, alack-a-day, I took care that both should suit my fancy ; now, suppose this handsome student declared to you his love ; swore he lived only for you ; would throw himself off a house top if you frown'd on him ; and fight the great Mogul for a smile—what would you do ?

BLANCH. Obey my father. Without any reason apparent to me he is miserable enough—what would be his sad fate were I to give him cause of sorrow ! He tells me the world scorns him—his child's embrace is then his only refuge ; he says he abhors mankind ; then is it my duty to convince him by my affection, that there does exist a being who wishes to reconcile him to his dark destinies.

DAME. You are right, lady—quite right—yet I cannot but pity the poor youth ; to love you so fondly, and lose you for ever.

BLANCH. For ever !—nay, good Perrette.

DAME. Well, since you cannot love him ; it is better that you should part to meet no more.

BLANCH. (*Affected.*) I do not love him ! alas, Perrette ! I fear he is any thing but indifferent to my sad heart.—
(FRANCIS *rushes forward to throw himself at BLANCH'S feet—she shrieks.*)

FRAN. Hush ! gentle lady, be not alarmed in beholding at your feet the happiest of men.

BLANCH. Rise, sir, I beseech you ; in mercy's name, what brought you here ?

FRAN. The most fervent love that ever fired a mortal bosom ; it was but just now that unexpected bliss succeeded dark despair, when I heard those lips pronounce that my fond suit was welcome.

BLANCH. Whoever you are, sir, do not abuse this weakness of a silly girl ; you are, I hope, a man of honour, and not one of those gay and deceitful courtiers my father abhors, who pride in our sorrow and glory in our tears ; I am a stranger to the world, sir, yet methinks your language is not that of the poor student whose garb you wear.

FRAN. Yet a poor and humble scholar am I—I long and vainly sought for wisdom in musty books and in dark studies, but now a heavenly beam has illumined my soul, and I seek for real bliss in the sweet lore of love.

BLANCH. (*With timidity.*) And—what may be your name ?

FRAN. Francis.

BLANCH. Your family's ?

FRAN. Beauregard.

BLANCH. Then Francis Beauregard—thus do I reply to your fond expressions, which, since you have unwarrantably listened to my idle talk, I should fain hope would prove sincere—I permit you to address my father on the subject.

FRAN. Who is the happy man, thrice blessed with such a child ?

BLANCH. A mystery dark and unaccountable hangs around us, be it your business to draw aside the veil and ascertain who and what I am, and if then, sir, your sentiments remain unchanged, and my poor father grant his consent, what can I add?—alas ! I yield to fate that caused us to meet, in the hope that there may be faith in man ; until then, sir, permit me to preserve the privacy enjoind me. (*Exit into the house.*)

FRAN. Amiable, excellent girl ! and it is thus that in

these obscure and humble abodes I meet more pure and endearing virtue than in my Louvre halls.

DAME. (*Who had withdrawn up the stage, comes down.*) Well, good sir, I told you how 'twould be, you have won the day

FRAN. Aye, and feel it a prouder victory than any I have ever gained.

DAME. Gained a victory! mercy on me! my mind mis-gives me. Sir, who and what are you?

FRAN. You hold my portrait in your hand.

DAME. (*looks at a coin.*) Oh! I thought as much; I knew there was nobility in your looks, oh, my most gracious and magnificent sovereign! I hope my freedom—only to think it, I've been talking to a king! Oh, my lord! please your illustrious majesty, the girl adores you; is ready to fall into fits for your omnipotent royalty, hysterics and quandaries. Oh, by the gridiron that roasted St. Laurence! I should never, never—oh, bless your glorious majesty!

FRAN. Tush old woman!

DAME. (*Aside.*) Old woman! now that's unkind even from royalty.

FRAN. Who is that girl's father?

DAME. An anonymous madman, please your transcendent majesty. Moreover as ugly a sinner as your eyes ever beheld in a week's walk; and I must also inform your majesty he's as obstinate as any buck or bear in your majesty's demesnes. Lord love your royal head, he'd kick a donkey to make him bray *mea culpa*, that's what he would; and at cock-crow to-morrow morning, great potentate, he intends to carry off this little innocent of his—that is, when I say of his, it's a way of speaking; for as I said just now, your immortal majesty never beheld such a fright; and though he passes for her father, I have ever fancied (saving your

majesty's presence) that he must have found her, as they say, under a gooseberry bush, for she has always been a thorn in his side, poor man!

FRAN. Well, well, I shall endeavour to save her from perdition.

DAME. Bless your royal head—your majesty's just the one to do it.

FRAN. What's your name?

DAME. Perrette, at your imperial order and command.

FRAN. This night I bear thy charge to the palace, and shall endeavour to secure her a happier fate—open that door (*points to the door in wall, which PERETTE opens*).

DAME. Oh! what would become of poor silly girls without protection!

FRAN. (*Whistles.*)

Enter CHABANNES and ARCHERS.

CHAB. This damsel's father, who, it seems, is little better than a madman, purposes bearing her away by dawn of day; perhaps beyond our dominions. This abduction (although parental, we must prevent); let her therefore be carried to the Louvre. Dame Perette, go thou and prepare her for an interview with her sovereign; but speak not to her of Francis Beauregard. Let her not think him capable of an uncourteous act to an unprotected damsel—let her still fancy me the poor student she first saw and loved; happier in the intricacies of crabbed lore than in the labyrinth of royal councils. When her father returns and misses her, tell him—

DAME. What?

FRAN. Tell him, his daughter's at the Louvre. (*Exit through door in wall.*)

DAME. That would be a nicer composing draught to the

poor silly man than ever your majesty's apothecary could compound—but woe betide me when he comes home! I must follow or I'm undone. (*To CHABANNES.*) Perhaps, my lord, since his majesty takes the mistress under his sacred protection, your worship would be bountiful enough to compassionate the poor maid who has a mighty wish to see the Louvre too. (*Exit into the house with CHABANNES.*)

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.—SCENE I.

A small Chamber in the Louvre—through the centre Door two Sentries are seen pacing in the Vestibule.

BLANCH *discovered at a Table in deep thought.*

BLANCH. What can this mean? summoned before the king, who has not yet appeared, and confined to this room a close prisoner. Oh! my poor father! if he knew that I was in the power of the King how wretched would he be. Oft has he told me with bitterness depicted on his brow — “ Ah, Blanch! if Francis beheld thee for an instant, thou art lost for ever!” Yet why should I fear him? he is, they say, a noble and generous prince, and surely could not sue for a heart that never, never can be his.—But some one approaches; as I live 'tis Francis Beauregard. What can bring him here?

(Enter FRANCIS, wrapped up in a mantle.)

Oh, master Beauregard, if you are aught in this place, come to my relief: well I knew your humble garb concealed some higher person than a simple student. Alas! you have deceived me.

FRAN. No, gentle Blanch, I sincerely feel the sentiments I expressed; if I appeared what I am not, it was to discover whether my love really met with a fond return.

BLANCH. Then in pity tell me who you are.

FRAN. Ever your faithful Francis: but not Beauregard. Francis of Valois,—your sovereign, yet your slave. (*Throws off his cloak,*)

BLANCH. Heavens! what do I hear! Oh, then in mercy, let me supplicate your majesty to restore me to my wretched father. The whole night have I thought on nought but his anguish, when on his return he found his daughter fled, his hearth deserted!

FRAN. Your father, dear maid, will soon forgive you, when he learns my ardent love.

BLANCH. Never, sire; you little know the firmness of his stern resolves.

FRAN. But when I raise you to the highest dignity in the kingdom—?

BLANCH. The more elevated my station, my liege, the more conspicuous will he deem my disgrace.

FRAN. Blanch, if the sincerest love, my vows of everlasting faith can make you happy——

BLANCH. They were already pledged, my lord, to your royal consort.

FRAN. That was a union of state policy and cold speculation; whilst ours shall be the ties of mutual attachment, since I have discovered that I am not indifferent to your heart.

BLANCH. Francis Beauregard, my liege, I might have loved with honour; the addresses of Francis, King of France, could only be received with disgrace. Once more, my lord, in pity let me return to my disconsolate father.

FRAN. What! to be borne by his capricious will beyond my dominions;—torn from me for ever? Nay, Blanch, frown not thus on one on whom so very lately you kindly smiled, and for no other reason than my being born a

prince. Stay in this court;—become its pride—its ornament—and let me lavish on you and your's, those favours that my power confers at will.

BLANCH. My liege, you have a son ——

FRAN. I have.

BLANCH. You love him, sire?

FRAN. Beyond expression! What then?

BLANCH. (*With calmness, yet determination.*) And I, sire, have a father.

FRAN. (*Aside.*) That powerful reply has frozen the hot tide of my mantling blood.

BLANCH. Your majesty would rather see that son, the generous Dauphin, brought home a corpse upon an unstained shield, than returning to your court with a tarnished escutcheon.

FRAN. Generous girl!

BLANCH. Suffice it—you have known the simple Blanch will ever bear in fond remembrance the student Francis Beauregard; but let her also respect the virtues of Francis I.; if you wish to bestow your royal bounty on me, permit me to enter some holy nunnery, where, in its solemn cloisters, I shall never think on one I fondly believed my equal without preferring a fervent prayer for the prosperity and glory of my king.

FRAN. Noble damsel! Thy will shall ever be my law: thou art free to depart, in virtue as in peace; but first inform me who is your father, who thus graces his humble station by such lofty ideas of honour?

BLANCH. I can only repeat what I have already stated to your majesty: I know not his condition; I was reared in the mountains of Jura from my infancy; and there, most probably, should I have still remained, had not our Suzerran

lord, when hunting near my cottage, seen me and resolved to bear to me to his castle. A worthy priest informed me of his base designs, and I fled to a neighbouring convent for protection; thence I was brought to the obscure dwelling near this palace, which your majesty honoured with your presence. More I know not, save that, from some secret motive, my father seems at war with all mankind, and thinks the whole universe as hostile to him as he feels deep aversion to all that bears a human form.

FRAN. Ha! What a thought! (*Aside.*) Tell me, Blanch, is he not deformed?

BLANCH. The world, my liege, might say he is. (*With hesitation.*)

FRAN. What is his usual dress?

BLANCH. When he comes near me, he ever carefully conceals it.

FRAN. But have you not observed some difference in his apparel from other men?

BLANCH. Yes, sire, I have remarked that his hose and doublet are of a party-colour; and once I found him concealing a cap and bells, such as, I have heard, mummers and jesters wear.

FRAN. (*Aside.*) It must be my poor Triboulet! And I, for whose pleasure he has mortgaged his very soul, was going to rob him of all that Providence had left him!—Blanch, thy father I well know: no longer shall he fill the irksome station, near our person, that he now holds: henceforth he shall be free and independent. Accept, dear maid, this purse—a slender earnest of my future intentions; and also take this chain—suspend it round thy father's neck, and bid him attend upon me early on the morrow. Farewell—farewell, sweet girl! I proudly feel that all my triumphs

in unhallowed loves, never gladdened this heart with the pure pleasure it now enjoys. In waiting there—

(*Enter CHABANNES and OFFICERS.*)

Let this gentle lady be conducted to her home hard by the palace; let every token of respect be shewn her; nay, I would my very sentinels presented their pertuisans at her approach, for virtue such as her's is now so rare in courts, that guards should turn out and salute when she appears. (*BLANCH kisses hands; the King embraces her affectionately, and she departs with a lingering look behind her, followed by OFFICERS.*)

FRAN. What think'st thou Chabannes, of that young person?

CHAB. I'm amazed, my liege, to see her thus depart.

FRAN. What! amazed to see thy sovereign virtuous, and able to control unruly passions?

CHAB. Not so, my lord; but methinks many a less beautiful fair has found favour in your majesty's eyes.

FRAN. But wouldst thou believe that angelic creature calls Triboulet her father.

CHAB. Triboulet!!!

FRAN. Even so; the poor rogue deserved this mercy at my hands; for see—(*shews a paper*)—how actively the fellow ministers to our pleasure; he has obtained for me this very night an interview with the far-famed La Ferronière, at the inn hard by the Tower of Nesles.

CHAB. What, my lord! the inn of the ferry?

FRAN. The same; there do I meet her in the disguise of a trainband captain, when the clock strikes ten.

CHAB. Then go not unattended my liege; the place is a noted resort of bandits and base Bohemians; nay, it is said that dark deeds of blood have been perpetrated in its infamous purlieus.

FRAN. I fear neither bandits nor dark gipseys ; my steel corslet and this trusty sword, shall set them at defiance. Moreover, Chabannes, I shall feel greater delight in having respected the simple damsel thou hast seen depart, when I behold a lady of our court, of high degree, meeting me in the cut-throat place you dread.

CHAB. At any rate, sire, permit me to be in its vicinity, with a trusty guard.

FRAN. That I allow ; but stir not on thy life, until thou hearest our given signal. (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE II.

An humble room in TRIBOULET'S lodging.—A large mantle, and TRIBOULET'S hat on table.—Table, two chairs, and lamp on table, lighted.

TRIBOULET *discovered in deep thought.*

TRIB. Old man, thy curse is thriving ! Thou hast not struck the seed of malediction in an unyielding soil ; the young shoot is blasted—the parent tree scathed and leafless ! I am now a withered trunk, standing alone in the desert.—Oh, my poor Blanch ! why did I not strangle thee when the old toothless, grinning crone came to announce to me, I had a lovely daughter ! Why wert thou not born as hideous as the wretch to whom thou owest thy miserable existence ? Thy purity had singled thee in my eyes from the base herd of mankind ; thy celestial form seemed not created for earthly pollution ; but now, alas ! how fallen ! thou art now a woman ! False as the hell whence thy seducer sprung ! base as the sycophants who crouch around his throne !—Alas ! base as myself ! Yet there are some who will think the poor

fool honoured—forsooth, his daughter will be a duchess!—the father provided for!—aye, provided for—(*with a desperate laugh.*)—Ha! ha! ha!—provided for!! A kingly and kind expression, that meaneth in court language—fed upon infamy!—glutted on the carrion remains of his dishonoured child! Thank heaven! no noble and ambitious blood flows in these distorted limbs; I am a poor, vulgar caitiff; yet the spurned cur would rather perish in the gnawing pangs of hunger, than have his heirs boast proudly of their barred armorials, and insolently sport the badge of regal infamy! Not all the guards that watch thy Louvre's halls, shall save thee, Francis, from thy fool's revenge! My heart is now bursting! bursting!—but the volcano of its explosion shall pour a burning lava on the tyrant's soul. My plans are laid—well laid: he has cast his fascinating eyes upon the lovely La Feronnière—ah, as *beauteous* as was once my daughter! I have promised him an interview with his intended victim; but instead of a luxurious couch, he shall find his grave!—instead of beauty's chiselled arms, the fangs of death shall fold him in their grasp! If discovered, joy shall rock my soul, when, as a base regicide, four active horses shall tear my limbs asunder;—my expiring voice shall urge their speed, until at last its faltering sounds shall proudly lisp, “I die content! I've killed the king!” (*Noise at the door.*) Who comes there?

Enter BLANCH, she attempts to rush into her father's arms, but he repels her with horror.

TRIB. Approach me not, lest this steel carve out the ruffian's image from thy heart.

BLANCH. (*Supplicating.*) Oh, my father!

TRIB. Let me not hear thy voice.

BLANCH. In pity hear me!

TRIB. What canst thou have to say? [Gaze on yon mirror; there contemplate thy brow; once thy hands were wont (like those of thy poor mother's), to put aside those auburn locks to show thy innocence;—but now, cover it! veil it for ever! for infamy is written in fiery characters on that once pure tablet of thy spotless virtue.

BLANCH. Heaven knows sir, I am innocent?

TRIB. Innocent!—and an inmate of a palace for one entire night?

BLANCH. Father, you wrong me, as much as you are unjust to our gracious sovereign.

TRIB. Gracious!! Ha! ha! ha! ha! yes, I see—that golden chain around thy neck is no doubt a token of his *gracious* condescension!

BLANCH. It was for you my father he gave it me.

TRIB. For me! for me! a golden chain! Fiends of hell—Hark'ye, girl! dost thou dare add mockery to thy depravity?

BLANCH. In mercy's name, sir, hear me; hear me calmly, ere the torrent of your wrath hurls us all headlong into a gulph of misery.

TRIB. Girl! can I be more miserable than I am?

BLANCH. Sir! I swear by my mother's memory—

TRIB. Thy mother! name her not; call not on her sacred shades, lest they rise embodied and scourge thee with scorpion whips into dark regions, where thou never canst behold her sainted spirit.

BLANCH. Kill me, sir, if such be your will, but in my dying moments I will declare, in the presence of heaven, the king is as guiltless as your unhappy child!

TRIB. Guiltless! guiltless! have I not eyes? did I not see the ruffian, Chabannes, leading thee to the Louvre?

Alas, I rushed after thee as quickly as these rebellious limbs could bear me—but I came too late—the palace gates were closed—in vain I raved and uttered frantic cries for my child, that would have raised the dead—the sentinels drove me away like an unwelcome cur, whose barks and yells disturbed their masters rest and pleasures. Francis, guiltless! No, if all the royal skeletons of his ancestors rose from their proud sepulchres to affirm it! I'd drive back their mouldering bones to the hell that pour'd them forth, and tell them they basely lied (*perceiving the purse hanging at her girdle*)—Ha! and that purse at thy girdle, studded with the royal arms. Ha! ha, ha, ha! that is doubtless another badge of *thy* purity and his innocence. (*Furiously snatching it from her.*)—Give it me this instant! Ha! gold—gold! It was all that I wanted (*with composure looking at and counting the money.*)—Blanch, all is well—all will be well! See! I breathe freely—I am no longer agitated; a mountain has been removed from my bosom, Blanch.

BLANCH. Dearest father!

TRIB. Blanch—this night—aye—in an hour—we must depart.

BLANCH. I am ready to follow you to the world's end.

TRIB. We must depart—quit the country; two horses shall be in readiness; haste, put thee on the man's attire in which I brought thee here—dos't thou hear me? put it on—to-night—to-night—we must depart! (*A gentle tap at the door.*)—Ha! 'tis he—haste into thy room: haste, I say; on with thy disguise; I say once more away, girl—away!

BLANCH. (*Entering her room.*) May heaven protect me!

Enter MELCHIOR.

(*During the following scene BLANCH is discovered at the door listening with horror.*)

TRIB. Thou art late, good Melchior, very late.

MEL. Aye, it needed caution to steal to thy nest ; those hell hounds of the Provost were tracking me ; it is time to tramp, or I shall dangle like an acorn.

TRIB. Good Melchior ! kind Melchior ! in a few moments he will be at thy house.

MEL. Who ?

TRIB. The train-band captain of whom I told thee ; the miscreant who debauched my child ; an outlawed ruffian—not satisfied with one victim, he shortly expects another triumph at the ferry inn, kept by thy sister : there does he purpose to spend the night in revelry ; there, Melchior, let him sleep for ever !

MEL. Hark'ye, Master Triboulet, I have no objection to the job ; it is my trade, and every industrious man must eke out a living ; but I like not dealing with these men-at-arms.

TRIB. I knew it, and have provided for all ; here, take this phial, a few drops in his goblet, and were he a Goliath, in a few seconds he becomes an easy prey. Blunt not thy dagger on the corslet that he wears ; 'tis proof against thy steel ; but strike there (*pointing to his throat*)—just *there*, kind Melchior, let out the vital puddle of the knave.

MIL. Dost thou want to teach me my craft, gossip Triboulet ? And prithee, dos't think that for thy poor paltry hundred crowns, I'll add to my chances of the tree ?

TRIB. (*Shewing the purse and chain.*) See here—see here—and here ! This bursting purse of gold, just fresh from the royal mint, it shall be thine, so shall this massive chain ; all these, and this passport, a sure safeguard, to bear thee out of the kingdom, with which thou cans't pass unheeded through all his majesty's armies ; all shall be thine when thou deliverest me the caitiff's carcass. Here is a mantle, let it become his winding sheet ; I shall watch at thy door,

bring me my prey, good Melchior, and all this treasure's thine: when the blow is struck, just whistle; thus, then will I receive my victim, and bless thy avenging hand for ever!

MEL. Well, a bargain; my sister expects me. I told her I had a job on hand this night, but her silly scruples——

TRIB. May be silenced by a few drops of that precious liquor; but haste thee to the ferry, he is, perhaps, there already; borne on the wings of profligacy, the fellow cleaves the very air, haste thee to the ferry; and mark me, spare him not, he did not spare me! and let thy dagger pierce his throat as keenly as he has smitten this tortured heart. (*Exeunt.*)

BLANCH (*comes forward.*) Horror has curdled every drop of my blood. Just heaven! what a project. Oh, Francis! (for it can be no other victim,) Francis Beauregard! my king! my friend, thus to be basely slaughtered! No, no, it shall not be; in the man's attire my father ordered me to put on, will I fly to the ferry, seek admittance, and warn him of his danger. May heaven grant me strength.— (*Exit.*)

SCENE III.

*The Inn at the Ferry.—Table with lamp, jugs, flagons, chairs.
—A staircase leading to a subterranean passage.—Thunder-storm.*

ZERLINA. (*discovered.*) This storm in the dark heavens portends no good on earth; but what need we poor persecuted Bohemians care for the turmoils that perplex the world, since we are condemned never to taste its sweets, except by cunning industry. (*Thunder.*) Mercy o' me! what a night for a

lover to stir abroad ! but more fit for the bloody work which I fear will be perpetrated here ere long. My outlawed brother tells me he has a sad task to perform this night, which will enable him to escape from the fangs of justice ; he then quits the country, and I shall follow, for I'm sick at heart with all I witness here. (*Knock at the door.*) Some one knocks—no doubt it is the ill-fated lover drawn into the toils. Who comes there ?

FRAN. (*without.*) A friend.

ZER. The word ?

FRAN. Bohemia.

ZER. 'Tis well ; enter good traveller.—(*Enter FRANCIS, wrapped in a cloak, under which a steel corslet, and the dress of a roving Captain.*)

ZER. Dear me ! what a pity ! such a handsome man. The weather is wet and bleak, good sir ; throw off your cloak and draw near the fire.

FRAN. (*clasping her waist.*) The fire, my pretty wench ; dost think a bold freebooter like me can ever feel the nipping of a cold wind when near so blooming and fair a maid ? Were I stretched upon alpine snows, one kiss from those ambrosial lips would thaw my frozen blood like sun-beams of Araby. (*Kisses her.*) And by the mass ! its perfumes hang upon thy breath.

ZER. Come Captain, that's what all you gay cozeners tell every simple damsel and truant dame ; so prithee reserve your kisses for the lady you expect.

FRAN. So then you know my secret. What is your name, lovely ?

ZER. Zerlina, sir, at your service.

FRAN. Then I'll tell thee Zerlina, the lady I expect is noble born ; and her condescension in thus loving a needy soldier

of fortune, flatters my vanity, while it fills my purse ; but on my hilt, sweet gipsey, if thou would'st accept her gold, and give me in return a few kind looks from those dark gazelle eyes, I should feel prouder than in a noble adventure.

ZER. (*Aside.*) And this man doomed to die—nay—nay—it never shall be.

FRAN. There, take this gold cross as an earnest of my truth ; and when we part to-morrow, thou shalt find the wood-ranger worth a fond return.

ZER. You are modest.

FRAN. Come, lovely Bohemian, thou hast no doubt good skill in palmistry, like all thy boon, but vagrant companions—thus let me cross thy hand to learn my fate, but I see a lute—art thou also a sweet songstress Zerlina ?

ZER. Sometimes, sir, I venture on a foreign strain.

FRAN. Then let me hear thee (*as she fetches the lute.*) By my patron! she is charming—oh princes! how much we loose by not being oftener with our subjects, come little syren, (*sits.*)

ZER. (*Aside, and tuning the instrument.*) Oh may I succeed in warning him of his danger ; I shall sing you a little ballad, sir, on a true story.

FRAN. Of course—how once upon a time—go on—

SONG, ZERLINA.—(*Wade.*)

Good traveller do not pass my gate
Said a warder to a knight,
The rain falls fast ; the hour is late
So from thy horse alight.

Gra' mercy ! sir, the traveller said,
I'd fain accept thy cheer ;
But I've been warned by gipsy maid,
That death and danger's near.

'Thefore gra'mercy ! friend, once more
I must my road pursue ;
For lightning flash and thunder roar,
Are safer far than you.

And well I ween 'twas for the knight,
He met that gipsey maid ;
Else had his corpse—a dismal sig'nt
In gory grave been laid.

FRAN. *Who had listened with increased curiosity and agitation. (aside.)* Ha ! theré is some mystery in this gipsey's song—could there be treachery abroad—come Francis ! Francis ! shame upon thee—that is an interesting ditty Zerlina—here's my palm—what see'st thou in my destinies ?

ZER. In this hand I behold treachery and danger.

FRAN. And how to avoid it ?

ZER. Relying implicitly on a dark woman who watches over you.

FRAN. (*uneasily.*) What—no other means of setting peril at defiance.

ZER. None, (*noise without,*) hush ! in the name of mercy !

FRAN. Confusion ! I'm betrayed—I'll call my guard.

Enter MELCHIOR, ZEPPPO, and RODOLPH.

FRAN. It is too late, we must prepare for the worst, (*sits down near the fire.*)

MEL. So, thou hast gallant company good sister.

ZER. Yes, Melchior—a benighted captain has asked a night's asylum : but in truth to await the arrival of the damsel of his heart.

MEL. 'Tis well ; I suppose by your morion and corslet good soldier, thou art leader of one of those wary bands called the flayers ; welcome to this humble abode—it seemeth poor, but it is safe, here you need not apprehend surprise—aye—the king's guards themselves could not discover the secret recesses of this haunt unless initiated in the mysteries

of Bohemy ; Hollo ! Zerlina—a flagon and glasses—a fresh tap for our brave guest and my jolly companions—sit down my boys—come captain, a bumper—here's confusion to the law. (*They drink, repeating the toast,*) and now Zeppo a song—a song.

SONG, ZEPP0. (*Nathan.*)

Drink, drink, and a fig for all sorrow,
We'll frighten blue devils away ;
Who cares if we all hang to-morrow,
Provided we're joyous to-day.

Chorus.

Then push round the cup and be merry,
Brave boys only, once we can die ;
And 'tis time when we step in death's ferry
To bid our bright flagons good bye.

MEL. Now noble captain ! here's a health to the knight's of the sword.

ZEP. (*Examining the hilt of FRANCIS' sword.*) A trusty and true Toledo, no doubt.

FRAN. Aye : and has cleared its way at Marignan.

(*While FRANCIS is thus engaged, MELCHIOR pours the contents of the phial into his cup.*)

(*A watch outside.*) Who comes there.

(*A voice without.*) France and Valois.

(*The watch.*) Pass France and Valois—all's well. (MEL. ZEPP0, &c. start up to the door, ZERLINA whispers FRANCIS.)

ZER. Away with that beverage ; pretend to drink it, and then to sleep.

ZEP. 'Tis nothing but the grand Provost's round.

MEL. High dangling to him in his own orchard (*turns and sees FRANCIS pretending to be emptying his cup.*) So my thirsty soul thou hast thrown off thy drink already—thou art fit to be one of us ; now honest, skip the ladder my boy, give us the second chaunt of the stave.

The king by his archers surrounded,
 Can't keep the grim foe from his hall ;
 When once his shrill trumpet has sounded
 The boldest must answer the call .

(*The king gradually appears to sleep—MELCHIOR, &c. rise cautiously, anxiety of ZERLINA.*)

MEL. He's snug my boys.

ZEPPPO. Prudence ! prudence, gentlemen ! Trust not to appearances ; I like not that long spit of his.

MEL. Coward ! Now for it.

ZER. (*Holding him.*) Brother, in mercy's name, spare the ill-fated man !

MEL. Yes—and to-morrow the provost will set us all dancing a jig to the tune of our clinking chains ; 500 gold crowns, my lads for this job ; so to the vault. (*He touches a spring and the king's chair, sinks through a trap.*)

ZER. Have you not one spark of compassion ?

ZEPPPO. Yes : for ourselves, Miss Charity.

ZER. And you, good Zeppo,—you who often said you loved me—grant me but this request.

ZEPPPO. Sweet miss Zerlina, I'm in the minority. (*Descends stairs R. trap.*)

ZER. Then there is no mercy in mankind.

MEL. No more than in your sex ; if we plunge our daggers in a heart for lucre, you break it for your amusement—so away, silly wench—no more ! On my lads—

ZER. Ruffian ! I will rouse him, and in a good cause he'll brave your cowardly daggers.

MEL. Thy words are wind ; thunder could not awaken him. (*Casts her off and descends trap.*)

ZER. Mercy ! mercy ! (*Descends Trap after them.—Scene closes.*)

SCENE IV.

The Ferry.—Ferry Inn, Tower of Nesles.

Thunder, lightning.—A boat with FERRYMAN, and BLANCH in man's attire, pushes to the bank.—they get out.

FER. A good night to you, young master, and our Lady guard you ; keep a sharp look out, for many a curious chap has paid dearly for a peep in this quarter ; the youngster must be either mad or in love. (*Re-enters his boat after receiving his passage-money, and pushes off.*)

BLANCH. Yes ; this must be the house : may heaven grant me fortitude to perform the task it has imposed upon me ; it is in the cause of truth and honour, and in saving the life of my sovereign, do I not also rescue my ill-fated father from an ignominious death ? On Blanch, and fear not ! (*Knocks at door.*) All is silent. (*Listening at the door.*) No : I hear voices—they are in loud debate ; a female is amongst them ; oh ! if she possesses the heart of a woman, if she be mother—daughter—sister—she must assist me. (*Knocks again loudly.*)

ZER. (*Within.*) Who's there ?

BLANCH. A benighted traveller, too late for the ferry, who entreats a night's shelter from the storm. (*The door opens.*) Our Lady and my good saints protect me ! (*Exit into house.*)

Enter CHABANNES and PARDILLIAN.

CHAB. Methinks I saw a slender form glide by.

PARD. You are right, my lord ; a female voice demanded admission at that cut-throat pot-house, and was immediately let in.

CHAB. 'Tis well : it must be the beauteous La Ferronniere—true to her rendezvous. Well, if this weather cannot cool man's ardour and woman's vanity, drowning never would !

PARD. Only think ! the gentle, delicate, lady Ferronniere, whose footsteps would not crumple a rose-leaf, stepping out like a trooper, through such a night, on a love adventure !

CHAB. Still I am uneasy about the king—the illfame of that house —

PARD. His majesty is armed to the very teeth ; and with his trusty blade, he'd dare a host of devils who should interpose between him and a dainty damsel.

CHAB. Still this fearful neighbourhood is well calculated to excite apprehension.

PARD. Some one draws nigh. Who comes there ?

Enter TRIBOULET.

TRIB. A friend.

PARD. The word ?

TRIB. France and Valois.

CHAB. As I live, it is the knave Triboulet ! What brings thee here, my merry gossip, this dark and cut-throat night ?

TRIB. To study the planets, practise astrology, watch the conjunction of Mars and Venus, and see who bears the ascendant in the firmament.

CHAB. I fancy the lady moon has more influence on thy poor brain than yon twinkling stars, that scarce can peep through the inky clouds. (*Thunder-storm.*)

PARD. My lord, the storm increases ; and since we are not lovers, methinks we had better seek shelter in yon tower, where we shall yet be within his majesty's call.

TRIB. So gentlemen—handsome gentlemen—his majesty has also crossed the water to read the heavens. They are a black-letter book, believe me ; I wonder if he cunningly cast his own nativity ere he came out ?

CHAB. Come, good fool ; a blazing hearth will ease thy crooked bones from the sharp keenness of the north-east wind ; forsooth gentlemen, we'll keep our watch under cover since the king is safely housed. Come Triboulet.

TRIB. Thank you, my lord, the earth shall be my pillow, the sky my canopy. I've had a burning fever all the day, and want a refreshing night.

CHAB. Well, I thought thee both knave and fool, but now thou art truly mad ; good night.—(*Exit with PARD. into Tower.*)

TRIB. They are gone ; rest my trusty gentlemen, and refresh yourselves to pay your morning's obeisance to your master. I ween you can swim, good sirs, for you must dive deep to find him.—(*Listens at the Inn-door.*)—All is still. (*Thunder.*)—Interrupt me not ye harbingers of revenge, and let me hear my victim's groan.—(*Listen.*)—All is quiet, quiet, quiet. Can I be betrayed ? No, no, no ! for I still hold my money. Stop ! methought I heard a heavy fall. No, tis but the wind. What if I was deceived ? Gold ! gold ! hast thou lost thy power ? No, no, it cannot be ; the late discovered mines of Mexico are avenues of hell, to lead men to destruction. Some one approaches ; the steps are slow and cautious ! Oh how my heart beats in pleasurable expectation. Good Melchior ! kind Bohemian ! let thy blows strike home ; give me the wished for signal—let thy shrill whistle silence the very winds, and prove a joy-bell to my soul.—(*Melchior whistles.*)—'Tis done ! 'tis done ! ha ! ha ! ha !

SENTINEL. (*Without.*) Who comes there ?

TRIB. France and Valois.

SENTINEL. All's well.

TRIB. Yes, it is Valois. (*Aside.*) (*Enter Melchior, carrying a corpse, wrapped in a mantle, from house.*) Ha! Melchior, my friend! my kinsman! where is my prey?

MEL. Hush! here, here! but the provost is abroad—help me to cast it into the river.

TRIB. (*Ferociously.*) Do'st think, sirrah, I'd leave to thee the funereal pomp? No, give me my prey!

MEL. Tush man! I tell thee—assist me with it; thou hast not strength alone to bear the weight.

TRIB. Not strength to carry such a precious burthen? Nature has arched these bandied limbs to give a giant's power to my revenge!— (*Takes the mantle from Melchior and lays it on the ground.*)

MEL. Well, good fool—follow thy fancy—my money—I have no time to lose.

TRIB. (*Giving the purse and chain.*) Here and here, would I had a diadem to reward thee.

MEL. And now my safeguard.

TRIB. There is thy pass—signed by the Chancellor himself—flee—while it is time!

MEL. Farewell, good Triboulet! but, believe me, get rid of thy burthen as soon as thou canst, or, to-morrow the gallows put up for me will creak under thy jingling bones. (*Exit into house, and returns instantly with ZEPPO and RODOLPH,—they Exeunt, looking triumphantly on the mantle.*) Hail! all hail! Francis the First—my most gracious sovereign! king of France!—Duke of Milan! Conqueror of Merignan—nations trembled at thy nod, the country groaned to defray the splendour of thy court and sighed for the glory of thy smiles; now bid thy banner fly; thy trumpets sound!—now tell thy

base minions to bring to thee thy abject subject's wives and sisters and daughters—aye! even thy poor fool's only child!—all he had left on earth—all he adored—without whom day was as dark as night, and night a constant vigil of misery. Kings wage wars—so can their fools—now Valois is defeated, and Triboulet his jester is crowned with laurels! and, if perchance this heap of regal corruption is dragged up from the river's bed by some weary fisherman—instead of thy dreaded sceptre—the bauble of thy jester shall grace thy monumental statute. (*ZERLINA and FRANCIS enter from the house.*)

FRAN. Adieu, good gipsey—this kind office shall not go unrewarded. (*ZERLINA Exits.*)

TRIB. (*Struck with horror.*) Ha! that voice, (*with a loud yell*) who comes there?

FRAN. France and Valois. (*Lightning.*)

TRIB. The king's alive! I'm robbed! murdered!—I'm—unrevenged!—who—what are you?—speak—kill me with a word—a touch—or, save me from dissolving into air, if thou art an apparition!

FRAN. Why, honest Triboulet, what brings you here at this lone hour?

TRIB. To send thee to the infernal regions and avenge my wrongs.

FRAN. The man's mad—prithee, what hast thou there?

TRIB. I gloried in the thought it was thy corpse; but now must find by whom I have been thus basely—cruelly deceived. (*kneels and opens mantle.*) Ha! methinks it is a woman—this long and flowing hair. (*thunder.*) Light—light—in mercy's name! will not the angry heavens grant me one single flash of fire to illumine this horrid mystery (*Lightning.*) It is a woman! a beauteous woman! male-

diction! it cannot—it must not be my Blanch—my own—my life.

FRAN. Horror! Hollo, my guards—light!

Enter CHABANNES, PARDILLIAN, and archers, with torches.

TRIB. (*Discovers his daughter's features.*) It is—it is my own—my child—now Francis glut thy savage eyes upon thy victim! my poor—my sweetest daughter!—oh! she's still warm! thy life still lingers on this wretched earth 'ere thou art cold for ever! King art thou satisfied?

FRAN. Desperate madman! thy ill-fated daughter was as innocent (so help me guardian saints!) as any cherub she has flown to meet.

TRIB. Innocent! and one night in thy palace!

FRAN. But whence comes this murdered angel? (*TRIBOULET points to the inn.*) Haste and bring forth the gypsy maid that dwells there (*PERDILLIAN goes off and returns with ZERLINA.*) that we may trace this horrid, horrid crime! Come forth good Bohemian—nay tremble not—thou hast saved the life of thy sovereign.

ZER. (*Kneeling.*) My sovereign!

FRAN. Yes, excellent girl! Tell me Zerlina, (for thou could'st not beguile the truth,) how came this fair victim to be thus basely slaughtered?

ZER. Alas, my liege! it is a horrid tale; that very mantle was to have shrouded your gracious majesty; fearing you were not fast asleep, the assassins dared not approach you, and then decided, that to earn the recompence of their work, if chance brought in some wretched traveller, he should be sacrificed for the reward; this young man came—you know the rest.

FRAN. Poor, poor victim! what could have brought her to thy dwelling?

THE KING'S FOOL.

ZER. I know not, sire ; but as she fell, I heard her exclaim, " Thank Heaven I have saved my benefactor !"

Enter DE BERCY hastily.

DE BER. Where—where is the king ?

FRAN. Here : what brings you thus close upon our footsteps.

DE BER. Sad tidings from your majesty's camp at Valentia ; the Dauphin—

FRAN. What of my boy, my dearest son ?

DE BER. Alas ! he is no more ! basely poisoned by Sebastian Montecuculi.

FRAN. My son ! my hope ! my all—

TRIB. (*Who has been absorbed in thought, and gazing on his child.*) Has joined my daughter. (*Bell.*) Hark ! (*Bell.*) Hark ! the bell of Notre Dame !—the old man's curse ! King ! both are smitten ! (*With exultation.*) Francis the First and Triboulet are childless.

(*He casts himself on his daughter's corpse—the king sinks in the arms of CHABANNES and attendants.*)

THE END.

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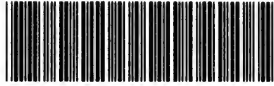
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