

THE FAMILY LEGEND:

A TRAGEDY, IN FIVE ACTS.

TO

WALTER SCOTT, ESQ.,

WHOSE FRIENDLY ZEAL

ENCOURAGED ME TO OFFER IT TO THE NOTICE OF

MY INDULGENT COUNTRYMEN,

I INSCRIBE THIS PLAY.

TO THE READER.

THE following play is not offered to the public as it is acted in the Edinburgh Theatre, but is printed from the original copy which I gave to that theatre. It may suffer, perhaps, from my not having adopted some of the stage abridgments or alterations; but, as, at this distance, it was difficult for me to judge what part of these I could avail myself of with real advantage, my friends have thought it better that I should print it in its primitive state.

The story, from which I have taken the plot, was put into my hands in the year 1805, by the Hon. Mrs. Damer, as a legend long preserved in the family of her maternal ancestors, which appeared to her well fitted to produce strong effect on the stage. Upon reading it, I thought so too: it was, besides, a story of my native land, and being at the time in quest of some subject for the drama, I seized upon it eagerly, and was glad to be permitted to make use of it. As my reader may probably wish to know how far in the following scenes I have strictly adhered to my authority, I shall, with his leave, relate the substance of the story, a copy of which I have now upon my table.—In the 15th century, a feud had long subsisted between the Lord of Argyll and the Chieftain of Maclean; the latter was totally subdued by the Campbells, and Maclean* sued for peace, demanding, at the same time, in marriage, the young and beautiful daughter of Argyll. His request was granted, and the lady carried home to the island of Mull. There she had a son; but the Macleans were hostile to this alliance with the Campbells.—They swore to desert their chief if they were not suffered to put his wife to death, with her infant son, who was then at nurse, that the blood of the Campbells might not succeed to the inheritance of Maclean.

* Called in the representation Duart.

† The boat was commanded by her foster-father, who knew

Maclean resisted these threats, fearing the power and vengeance of Argyll; but, at length, fear for his own life, should he refuse the demands of his clan, made him yield to their fury, and he only drew from them a promise that they would not shed her blood. One dark winter night she was forced into a boat, and, notwithstanding her cries and lamentations, left upon a barren rock, midway between the coasts of Mull and Argyll, which, at high-water, is covered with the sea. As she was about to perish, she saw a boat steering its course at some distance; she waved her hand, and uttered a feeble cry. She was now upon the top of the rock, and the water as high as her breast, so that the boatmen mistook her for a large bird. They took her, however, from the rock, and, knowing her to be the daughter of Argyll, carried her to the castle of her father.†

The earl rewarded her deliverers, and desired them to keep the circumstance secret for a time, during which he concealed her till he should hear tidings from Mull.—Maclean solemnly announced her death to Argyll, and soon came himself with his friends, all in mourning, to condole with the earl at his castle. Argyll received him, clad also in black. Maclean was full of lamentations; the earl appeared very sorrowful; a feast was served with great pomp in the hall; every one took his place, while a seat was left empty on the right hand of Argyll; the door opened, and they beheld the Lady of Maclean enter, superbly dressed, to take her place at the table. Maclean stood for a moment aghast, when, the servants and retainers making a lane for him to pass through the hall to the gate of the castle, the earl's son, the Lord of Lorne, followed him, and slew him as he fled. His friends were detained as hostages for the child, who had been preserved by the affection of his nurse.—“So far,” says my copy of the legend, “the story is authentic, as delivered from age to age in ancient Gaelic songs; and it is likewise a tradition from generation to generation in the family of Argyll. The same authorities also add, that this deserving daughter of Argyll was rewarded for her sufferings by wedding, with her father's consent, an amiable young nobleman who adored her, and was mutually beloved. To this man her father had formerly refused her hand, disposing of her, as a bond of union, to unite the warring clans of Argyll and Maclean.”

the cry of his *Dalt*, i. e. foster-daughter, and insisted they should pull in to the rock.

Such is the substance of my story, with no circumstance of the smallest consequence omitted; and my reader will perceive I have deviated from it very slightly. In regard to the characters that people it, I was left, except in two instances, entirely to invention; viz. that of Argyll, who, in keeping secret the return of his daughter, &c., gives one the idea of a cautious and crafty man; and, in that of Maclean, who, being said not to have consented at first to give up his wife for fear of the vengeance of his father-in-law, and afterwards to have done so for fear of losing his life, though with a promise drawn from the clan that they should not shed her blood, gives one the idea of a man cowardly and mean, but not savage, a personage as little fitted for the drama as one could well imagine. To make the Chief of Mull, therefore, somewhat interesting and presentable, and yet fit for the purposes of the story, has been the greatest difficulty I have had to contend with: a difficulty, I readily admit, which it required a more skilful hand to overcome. To have made him sacrifice his wife from jealousy, was a common beaten path, which I felt no inclination to enter; and, though it might have been consistent with his conduct in the first part of the story, would not, as I conceive, have been at all so with his conduct in the conclusion of it, when he comes to the castle of Argyll. To have made him rude, unfeeling and cruel, and excited against her by supposing she was actually plotting his ruin at the instigation of her father, would only have presented us with a hard, bare, unshaded character, which takes no hold of our interest or attention. I have, therefore, imagined him a man of personal courage, brave in the field, but weak and timid in council, irresolute and unsteady in action; superstitious, and easily swayed by others, yet anxious to preserve his power as chieftain; attached to his clan, attached to his lady, and of an affectionate and gentle disposition. I have never put him in the course of the play at all in fear of his life. The fear of being deserted by his clan, and losing his dignity as their chief, with the superstitious dread of bringing some terrible calamity upon the Macleans, are represented as the motives for his crime. These qualities, I supposed, might have formed a character, imperfect and reprehensible indeed to a deplorable degree, but neither uninteresting nor detestable. As to his telling a direct lie when the earl questions him so closely about his wife's death, his whole conduct at the castle of Argyll, coming there in mourning as from a funeral, is an enacted lie; and it would have been very inconsistent with such conduct to have made him, when so hardly beset, hold out against this last act of degradation and unworthiness, which exhibits a lesson to every ingenuous mind more powerful than his death.

This character, however, the design of which I am doing what I can to defend, has not, I fear,

been very skilfully executed; for, I understand, it has been pretty generally condemned; and when this is the case, particularly by an audience eminently disposed to be favourable, there must be a fault somewhere, either in design or execution. I must confess, I should wish this fault to be found in the last particular rather than the first: not for the sake of the play itself, which suffers equally in either case, but because there is a taste, that too generally prevails, for having all tragic characters drawn very good or very bad, and having the qualities of the superior personages allotted to them according to established heroic rules, by which all manner of cruelty, arrogance, and tyranny are freely allowed, while the slightest mixture of timidity, or any other of the tamer vices, are by no means to be tolerated. It is a taste, indeed, that arises from a nobleness in our nature; but the general prevalence of which would be the bane of all useful and natural delineation of character. For this reason then, I would fain justify, if I could, the general design of Maclean's character, leaving the execution of it to the mercy of all who may do me the honour to bestow upon it any attention.

Had I not trusted to what Maclean and others, in the course of the play, assert of his personal courage, but brought out some circumstance in the cavern scene, before his spirits were cowed with superstitious dread, that would really have shown it, his character, perhaps, would have appeared less liable to objection. It was my intention in that scene that he should have been supposed to leave the stage with his mind greatly subdued and bewildered, but not yet prevailed upon to give up his wife; leaving the further effects produced upon him by the seer of the isle, which prevailed on him to take the oath demanded by his vassals, to be imagined by the audience; thinking it unsafe to venture such an exhibition upon the stage, lest it should have a ludicrous effect. But this my intention I must have badly fulfilled, since it has been, I believe, almost entirely overlooked. In the cavern scene, I doubt, I have foolishly bestowed more pains on the vassals than the laird. Some time or other, perhaps, if I am encouraged to do it, I will alter these matters; but then the talents of the first actor must be bestowed on Maclean, not on John of Lorne.

I beg pardon for having detained my reader so long with this character; and, to make amends for it, will not allow myself to say any more, either upon the conduct of the piece, or the other characters that belong to it.

A pleasanter part of my task remains behind; to express the deep and grateful sense I have of the very favourable—I must be permitted to say, affectionate reception this piece, which I have a pleasure in calling my Highland Play, has met with in my native land. It has been received there

by an audience, who willingly and cordially felt that I belonged to them; and, I am well assured, had it been marred with more defects than it has, and I readily allow it has many, the favour so warmly bestowed upon it would have been but insensibly diminished. What belongs to me, therefore, is not triumph, but something far better. And could any one at this moment convince me that the work, by its own merit alone, had it come from the hand of a stranger, would have met with the same reception, I should give him little thanks for his pains. He might brighten, indeed, the tints of my imaginary wreath, but he would rob it of all its sweetness. I have truly felt, upon this occasion, the kindness of kin to kin, and I would exchange it for no other feeling. Let my country believe, that, whatever may hereafter happen to shade or enliven my dramatic path, I have already received from her what will enable me to hold on my way with a cheerful heart, and the recollection of it will ever be dear to me.

I cannot take leave of my reader without begging leave to offer my warmest acknowledgments to my friend Mr. Scott, at whose desire, cherished with much friendly encouragement, I offered the Family Legend to the Edinburgh Theatre, and who has done more for its service than I could have done had I been upon the spot myself. They are also due to Mr. Mackenzie for the very kind support he has given it; and Mr. W. Erskine must permit me to mention my obligations to him for the interest he has taken in its success.

I must likewise beg that Mr. Siddons and Mrs. H. Siddons will accept my best thanks, for the great and successful exertions they have made in the two chief characters in the play. To Mr. Siddons I am doubly indebted, both as an able actor, and a diligent and friendly manager, who has taken great pains in adapting and preparing it for the stage.

To Mr. Terry, and the other actors, I offer many thanks.

Hamstead,
March 19. 1810.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN.

MACLEAN, *chief of the clan of that name.*

EARL OF ARGYLL.

JOHN OF LORNE, *son to ARGYLL.*

SIR HUBERT DE GREY, *friend to LORNE.*

BENLORA,

LOCHTARISH, } *the kinsmen and chief vassals of*

GLENFADDEN, } MACLEAN.

MORTON.

DUGALD.

Piper, fishermen, vassals, &c.

PROLOGUE.

WRITTEN BY WALTER SCOTT, ESQ.

SPOKEN BY MR. TERRY.

'Tis sweet to hear expiring summer's sigh,
Through forests tinged with russet, wail and die;
'Tis sweet and sad the latest notes to hear
Of distant music, dying on the ear;
But far more sadly sweet, on foreign strand,
We list the legends of our native land,
Link'd as they come with every tender tie,
Memorials dear of youth and infancy.

Chief, thy wild tales, romantic Caledon,
Wake keen remembrance in each hardy son;
Whether on India's burning coasts he toil,
Or till Acadia's* winter-fetter'd soil,
He hears with throbbing heart and moisten'd eyes,
And as he hears, what dear illusions rise!
It opens on his soul his native dell,
The woods wild-waving, and the water's swell;
Tradition's theme, the tower that threatens the plain,
The mossy cairn that hides the hero slain;
The cot, beneath whose simple porch was told
By grey-hair'd patriarch, the tales of old,
The infant group that hush'd their sports the while,
And the dear maid who listen'd with a smile,
The wanderer, while the vision warms his brain,
Is denizen of Scotland once again.

Are such keen feelings to the crowd confined,
And sleep they in the poet's gifted mind?
Oh no! for she, within whose mighty page
Each tyrant passion shows his woe and rage,
Has felt the wizard influence they inspire,
And to your own traditions tuned her lyre.
Yourselves shall judge — whoe'er has raised the sail
By Mull's dark coast, has heard this evening's tale.
The plaided boatman, resting on his oar,
Points to the fatal rock amid the roar
Of whitening waves, and tells whate'er to-night
Our humble stage shall offer to your sight;
Proudly prefer'd, that first our efforts give
Scenes glowing from her pen to breathe and live;
More proudly yet, should Caledon approve
The filial token of a daughter's love.

* Acadia, or Nova Scotia.

WOMEN.

HELEN, *daughter of ARGYLL, and wife of MACLEAN.*

ROSA.

Fisherman's wife.

Scene in the Island of Mull, and the opposite coast, &c., and afterwards in ARGYLL's castle.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Before the gate of MACLEAN's castle, in the Isle of Mull: several Highlanders discovered crossing the stage, carrying loads of fuel; whilst BENLORA is seen on one side, in the background, pacing to and fro, and frequently stopping and muttering to himself.

1st high. This heavy load, I hope, will be the last :

My back is almost broken.

2d high. Sure am I,

Were all the beeves in Mull slain for the feast,
Fuel enough already has been stow'd

To roast them all : and must we still with burdens
Our weary shoulders gall ?

Enter MORTON.

Mor. Ye lazy lubbards !

Grumble ye thus ? — Ye would prefer, I trow,
To sun your easy sides, like household curs,
Each on his dung-hill stretch'd, in drowsy sloth.
Fy on't ! to grumble on a day like this,
When to the clan a rousing feast is giv'n,
In honour of an heir born to the chief —
A brave Maclean, still to maintain the honours
Of this your ancient race !

1st high. A brave Maclean indeed ! — vile mongrel hound !

Come from the south, where all strange mixtures be
Of base and feeble ! sprung of varlet's blood !
What is our race to thee ?

2d high. (to MORTON). Thou'lt chew, I doubt not,

Thy morsel in the hall with right good relish,
Whether Maclean or Campbell be our lord.

Morton. Ungracious surly lubbards ! in, I say,
And bring your burdens quicker. And, besides,
Where are the heath and hare-bells, from the glen,
To deck my lady's chamber ?

2d high. To deck my lady's chamber !

Morton. Heartless hounds !

Is she not kind and gentle ? spares she aught
Her gen'rous stores afford, when you or yours
Are sick, or lack relief ? Hoards she in chests,
When shipwreck'd strangers shiver on our coast,
Or robe or costly mantle ? — All comes forth !
And when the piercing shriek of drowning mariners
Breaks through the night, up-starting from her couch,

To snatch, with eager haste, the flaming torch,
And from the tower give notice of relief,
Who comes so swiftly as her noble self ?
And yet ye grumble.

1st high. Ay, we needs must own,

That, were she not a Campbell, fit she were
To be a queen, or e'en the thing she is —

Our very chieftain's dame. But, in these towers,
The daughter of Argyll to be our lady !

Morton. Out ! mountain savages ! is this your spite ?
Go to !

2d high. Speakst thou to us ? thou Lowland loon !

Thou wand'ring pedlar's son, or base mechanic !
Com'st thou to lord it here o'er brave Macleans ?
We'll earry loads at leisure, or forbear,
As suits our fancy best, nor wait thy bidding.

[*Exeunt highlanders grumbling, and followed by MORTON.*

[*Manet BENLORA, who now comes forward, and after remaining some time on the front of the stage, wrapt in thought, not observing LOCUTARISH, who enters behind him.*

Heigh ho ! heigh ho, the day !

Loch. How so ? What makes Benlora sigh so deeply ?

Ben. (turning round). And does Lochtarish ask ?
Full well thou knowst,

The battles of our clan I've boldly fought,
And well maintain'd its honour.

Loch. Yes, we know it.

Ben. Who dared, unpunish'd, a Maclean to injure ?
Yea ; he who dared but with a scornful lip
Our name insult, I thought it feeble vengeance
If steed or beast within his walls were left,
Or of his holds one tower unruin'd stood.

Loch. Ay ; who dared then to brave us ?

Ben. Thus dealt Benlora e'en with common foes ;
But in the warfare of our deadly feud,
When rang the earth beneath our bloody strife,
And brave Macleans brave Campbells boldly fronted,
(Fiends as they are, I still must call them brave,) —
What sword more deeply drank the hated blood
Than this which now I grasp — but idly grasp !

Loch. There's ne'er a man of us that knows it not,

That swears not by thy valour.

Ben. Until that fatal day, by ambush ta'en,
And in a dungeon kept, where, two long years,
Nor light of day, nor human voice e'er cheer'd
My loneliness, when did I ever yield,
To e'en the bravest of that hateful name,
One step of ground upon the embattled field —
One step of honour in the banner'd hall ?

Loch. Indeed thou hast our noble champion been ;
Deserving well the trust our chief deceased,
This chieftain's father, did to thee consign.
But when thou wast a captive, none to head us,
But he, our youthful lord, yet green in arms,
We fought not like Macleans ; or else our foe,
By fiends assisted, fought with fiend-like power,
Far — far beyond the Campbells' wonted pitch.
E'en so it did befall — we lost the day : —
That fatal day ! — Then came this shameful peace.

Ben. Ay, and this wedding ; when, in form of honour

Confer'd upon us, Helen of Argyll
Our sov'reign dame was made,—a bosom worm,
Nursed in that viper's nest, to infuse its venom
Through all our after race.

 This is my welcome !
From dungeons freed, to find my once-loved home
With such vile change disgraced ; to me more
 hateful

Than thralldom's murkiest den. But to be loosen'd
From captive's chains to find my hands thus bound !

Loch. It is, indeed, a vile and irksome peace.

Ben. Peace, say they ! who will bonds of friend-
 ship sign

Between the teeming ocean's finny broods,
And say, "Sport these upon the hither waves,
And leave to those that farther billowy reach ?"
A Campbell here to queen it o'er our heads,
The potent dame o'er quell'd and beaten men,
Rousing or soothing us, as proud Argyll
Shall send her secret counsel !—hold, my heart !
This, base degen'rate men !—this, call ye peace ?
Forgive my weakness : with dry eyes I laid
My mother in her grave, but now my cheeks
Are, like a child's, with scalding drops disgraced.

Loch. What I shall look upon, ere in the dust
My weary head be laid to rest, heav'n knows,
Since I have lived to see Benlora weep.

Ben. One thing, at least, thou ne'er shalt live to
 see—

Benlora crouching, where he has commanded.
Go ye, who will, and crowd the chieftain's hall,
And deal the feast, and nod your grizzled heads
To martial pibrochs, play'd, in better days,
To those who conquer'd, not who woo'd their focs ;
My soul abhors it. On the sea-beaten rock,
Remov'd from ev'ry form and sound of man ;
In proud communion with the fitful winds
Which speak, with many tongues, the fancied words
Of those who long in silent dust have slept ;
While eagles scream, and sullen surges roar—
The boding sounds of il ;—I'll hold my feast,—
My moody revelry.

Loch. Nay, why so fierce ?
Thinkst thou we are a tame and mongrel pack ?
Dogs of true breed we are, though for a time
Our master-hound forsakes us. Rouse him forth
The noble chace to lead : his deep-toned yell
Full well we know ; and for the opening sport
Pant keenly.

Ben. Ha ! is there amongst you still
Spirit enough for this ?

Loch. Yes, when good opportunity shall favour.
Of this, my friend, I'll speak to thee more fully
When time shall better serve.

 Maclean, thou knowst,
Is of a soft, unsteady, yielding nature ;
And this, too well, the crafty Campbell knew,
When to our isle he sent this wily witch
To mould, and govern, and besot his wits,

As suits his crafty ends. I know the youth :
This dame or we must hold his will in thralldom :
Which of the two,—But softly : steps approach.
Of this again.

Ben. As early as thou wilt.

Loch. Then be it so : some staunch determined
 spirits

This night in Irka's rocky cavern meet ;
There must thou join us. Wear thou here the
 while

A brow less cloudy, suited to the times.

Enter GLENFADDEN.

See, here comes one who wears a merry face ;
Yet, ne'ertheless, a clan's-man staunch he is,
Who hates a Campbell, worse than Ilcom's monks
The horned fiend.

Ben. Ha ! does he so ?

[Turning graciously to GLENFADDEN.
 Glenfadden !

How goes it with thee ?—Joyous days are these—
These days of peace.

Glen. These days of foul disgrace !
Com'st thou to cheer the piper in our hall,
And goblets quaff to the young chieftain's health,
From proud Argyll descended ?

Ben. *(smiling grimly).* Yes, Glenfadden,
If ye will have it so ; not else.

Glen. Thy hand—
Thy noble hand !—thou art Benlora still.

*[Shaking BENLORA warmly by the hand, and
 then turning to LOCHTARISH.*

Know ye that banish'd Allen is return'd—
Allen of Dura ?

Loch. No ; I knew it not.
But in good time he comes. *△* daring knave !
He will be useful. *[After considering.*

 Of Maclean we'll crave
His banishment to cancel ; marking well
How he receives it. This will serve to show
The present bent and bearing of his mind.

[After considering again.
Were it not also well, that to our council
He were invited, at a later hour,
When of our purpose we shall be assured ?

Glen. Methinks it were.

Loch. In, then ; now is our time.

Ben. I'll follow thee when I awhile have paced
Yon lonely path, and thought upon thy counsel.

*[Exeunt LOCHTARISH and GLENFADDEN into
 the castle, and BENLORA by the opposite side.*

SCENE II.

An apartment in the castle.

Enter MORTON and ROSA, speaking as they enter.

Rosa. Speak with my lady privately ?

Mor. Ay, please you :

Something I have to say, regards her nearly.
And though I doubt not, madam, your attachment—

Rosa. Good Morton, no apology: thy caution
Is prudent; trust me not till thou hast proved me.
But oh! watch o'er thy lady with an eye
Of keen and guarded zeal! she is surrounded—

[*Looking round the room.*]

Does not one hear us?—O those baleful looks
That, from beneath dark surly brows, by stealth,
Are darted on her by those stern Macleans!
Ay; and the gestures of those fearful men,
As on the shore in savage groups they meet,
Sending their loosen'd tartans to the wind,
And tossing high their brawny arms where oft
In vehement discourse, I have, of late,
At distance mark'd them. Yes; thou shakest thy
head:

Thou hast observed them too.

Mor. I have observed them oft. That calm
Lochtarish,

Calm as he is, the growing rancour fosters:
For, fail the offspring of their chief, his sons
Next in succession are. He hath his ends,
For which he stirs their ancient hatred up;
And all too well his devilish pains succeed.

Rosa. Too well indeed! The very bed-rid crones
To whom my lady sends, with kindly care,
Her cheering cordials,—couldst thou have believed
it?

Do mutter spells to fence from things unholy,
And grumble, in a hollow smother'd voice,
The name of Campbell, as unwillingly
They stretch their wither'd hands to take her
bounty.

The wizards are in pay to rouse their fears
With dismal tales of future ills foreseen,
From Campbell and Maclean together join'd,
In hateful union.—E'en the very children,
Sporting the heath among, when they discover
A loathsome toad or adder on their path,
Crush it with stones, and, grinding wickedly
Their teeth, in puny spite, call it a Campbell.
Benlora, too, that savage galloway man—

Morton. Ay, evil is the day that brings him back,
Unjustly by a Campbell hath he been,
The peaceful treaty of the clans unheeded,
In thralldom kept; from which but now escaped,
He like a furious tiger is enchain'd,
And thinks Argyll was privy to the wrong
His vassal put upon him. Well I know
His bloody vengeful nature: and Maclean,
Weak and unsteady, moved by ev'ry counsel,
Brave in the field, but still in purpose timid,
Ofttimes the instrument in wicked hands
Of wrongs he would abhor,—alas, I fear,
Will ill defend the lovely spouse he swore
To love and cherish.

Rosa.

Heavy steps approach:

Hush! see who comes upon us!—sly Lochtarish,
And his dark colleagues.—Wherefore come they
hither?

[*Morton retires to the bottom of the stage, and
enter LOCHTARISH, BENLORA, and GLEN-
FADDEN.*]

Loch. We thought, fair maid, to find the chief-
tain here.

Rosa. He is in these apartments.

Loch. Would it greatly
Annoy your gentleness to tell his honour,
We wait to speak with him upon affairs
Of much concernment?

Rosa. My service is not wanted; to your wish,
See, there he comes unwarn'd, and with him too
His noble lady. [*Retiring to the bottom of the stage.*]

Loch. Ha! there they come! see how he hangs
upon her
With boyish fondness!

Glen. Ah, the goodly creature!
How fair she is! how winning!—See that form;
Those limbs beneath their foldy vestments moving,
As though in mountain clouds they rob'd were,
And music of the air their motion measured.

Loch. Ay, shrewd and crafty earl! 'tis not for
nought

Thou hither sent'st this jewel of thy race.
A host of Campbells, each a chosen man,
Could not enthral us, as, too soon I fear,
This single Campbell will. Shrewd crafty foe!

Ben. Hell lend me aid, if heaven deny its grace,
But I will thwart him, crafty though he be!

Loch. But now for your petition: see we now
How he receives your suit.

Enter MACLEAN and HELEN.

Ben. (*eyeing her attentively as she enters*). A po-
tent foe it is: ay, by my faith,
A fair and goodly creature!

Mac. Again, good morrow to you, gallant kins-
men:

Come ye to say I can with any favour
The right good liking prove, and high regard
I bear to you, who are my chiefest strength,—
The pillars of my clan?

Ben. Yes, we are come, Maclean, a boon to beg.

Loch. A boon that, granted, will yourself enrich.

Mac. Myself enrich?

Loch. Yes; thereby wilt thou be
One gallant man the richer. Hear us out.
Allen of Dura, from his banishment—

Mac. False reiver! name him not.—Is he re-
turn'd?

Dares he again set foot upon this isle?

Ben. Yes, chief; upon this isle set foot he hath:
And on nor isle nor mainland doth there step
A braver man than he.—Lady, forgive me:
The boldest Campbell never saw his back.

Hel. Nay, good Benlora, ask not my forgiveness:

I love to hear thee praise, with honest warmth,
The valiant of thy name, which now is mine.

Ben. (aside). Ha! good Benlora!—this is queenly pride.

(Aloud.) Madam, you honour us.

Helen. If so, small thanks be to my courtesy,
Sharing myself with pride the honest fame
Of every brave Maclean.—I'll henceforth keep
A proud account of all my gallant friends:
And every valiant Campbell therein noted,
On the opposing leaf, in letters fair,
Shall with a brave Maclean be proudly match'd.

[BENLORA and GLENFADDEN bow in silence.]

Loch. Madam, our grateful duty waits upon you.
(Aside to BENLORA.) What thinkst thou of her,
friend?

Ben. (aside to LOCHTARISH). What think I of
her?

Incomparable hypocrite!

Loch. (aloud). But to our suit: for words of
It must not be forgotten.—Chief, vouchsafe:
Benlora here, who from his loathly prison,
Which for your sake two years he hath endured,
Begs earnestly this grace for him we mention'd,
Allen of Dura.

[Aside to BENLORA.]

Kneel, man; be more pressing.

Ben. (aside to LOCHTARISH). Nay, by my fay!
if crouching pleases thee,

Do it thyself. *[Going up proudly to MACLEAN.]*

Maclean; thy father put into these hands
The government and guidance of thy nonage.
How I the trust fulfill'd, this castle strengthen'd
With walls and added towers, and stored, besides,
With arms and trophies in rough warfare won
From even the bravest of our western clans,
Will testify. What I in recompense
Have for my service earn'd, these galled wrists

[Pushing up the sleeve from his arm.]
Do also testify.—Such as I am,

For an old friend I plainly beg this grace:

Say if my boon be granted or denied.

Mac. The man for whom thou pleadst is most
unworthy;

Yet let him safely from my shores depart:

I harm him not.

Ben. (turning from him indignantly). My suit is
then denied.

[To LOCHTARISH and GLENFADDEN.]

Go ye to Dura's Allen; near the shore

He harbours in his aged mother's cot;

Bid him upon the ocean drift again

His shatter'd boat, and be a wanderer still.

Helen (coming forward eagerly). His aged mother!

(To MACLEAN.) Oh! and shall he go?

No, no, he shall not! On this day of joy,

Wilt thou to me refuse it?

*[Hanging upon him with looks of entreaty, till,
seeing him relent, she then turns joyfully to
BENLORA.]*

Bid your wanderer

Safe with his aged mother still remain,—

A banish'd man no more.

Mac. This is not well: but be it as thou wilt;

Thou hast prevail'd, my Helen.

Loch. and Glen. (bowing low). We thank thee,
lady.

[BENLORA bows slightly, in sullen silence.]

Mac. (to BENLORA). Then let thy friend re-
main; he has my pardon.

[BENLORA bows again in silence.]

Clear up thy brow, Benlora; he is pardon'd.

[Pauses, but BENLORA is still silent.]

We trust to meet you shortly in the hall;

And there, my friends, shall think our happy feast
More happy for your presence.

*[Going up again, with anxious courtesy, to
BENLORA.]*

Thy past services,

Which great and many are, my brave Benlora,
Shall be remember'd well. Thou hast my honour,
And high regard.

Helen. And mine to boot, good kinsman, if the
value

You put upon them makes them worth the having.

*Ben. (bows sullenly and retires; then muttering
aside to himself as he goes out).* Good kins-
man! good Benlora! gracious words

From this most high and potent dame, vouchsafed
To one so poor and humble as myself. *[Exit.]*

Loch. (aside to GLENFADDEN). But thou for-
gettest—

Glen. (aside to LOCHTARISH). No; I'll stay be-
hind,

And move Maclean to join our nightly meeting.

Midnight the hour when you desire his presence?

Loch. Yes, even so; then will we be prepared.

[Exit.]

Glen. (returning to MACLEAN). Chieftain, I would
some words of privacy

Speak with you, should your leisure now permit.

Mac. Come to my closet, then, I'll hear thee
gladly.

[Exeunt MACLEAN and GLENFADDEN.]

Helen (to ROSA, who now comes forward). Where
hast thou been, my Rosa, with my boy,

Have they with wild flowers deck'd his eradle
round?

And peeps he through them like a little nestling—

A little heath-cock broken from its shell,

That through the bloom puts forth its tender beak,

As steals some rustling footstep on its nest?

Come, let me go and look upon him. Soon,

Ere two months more go by, he'll look again

In answer to my looks, as though he knew

The wistful face that looks so oft upon him,

And smiles so dearly, is his mother's.

Thinkst thou

He'll soon give heed and notice to my love?

Rosa. I doubt it not : he is a lively infant,
And moves his little limbs with vigour, spreading
His fingers forth, as if in time they would
A good claymore clench bravely.

Helen. A good claymore clench bravely!—O!
to see him

A man!—a valiant youth!—a noble chieftain!
And laying on his plaided shoulder, thus,
A mother's hand, say proudly, "This is mine!"
I shall not then a lonely stranger be
'Mid those who bless me not: I shall not then—
But silent be my tongue. [Weeps.

Rosa. Dear madam, still in hope look forward
cheerly.

[*Morton comes from the bottom of the stage.*

And here is Morton, with some tidings for you :
God grant they comfort you!—I must withdraw :
His wary faithfulness mistrusts my love,
But I am not offended. [Offering to retire.

Helen. Nay, remain. [Beckoning her back.

Say what thou hast to say, my worthy Morton,
For Rosa is as faithful as thyself.

Mor. This morning, lady, 'mongst the farther
cliffs,

Dress'd like a fisher peasant, did I see
The Lord of Lorne, your brother.

Helen. Ha! sayst thou,
The Lord of Lorne, my brother?—Thou'rt de-
ceived.

Morton. No, no : in vain his sordid garb concealed
him!

His noble form and stately step I knew
Before he spoke.

Helen. He spoke to thee ?

Morton. He did.

Helen. Was he alone ?

Morton. He was ; but, near at hand,

Another stranger, noble as himself,
And in like garb disguised, amongst the rocks
I mark'd, though he advanced not.

Helen. Alas, alas, my brother ! why is this ?

He spoke to thee, thou sayst—I mean my brother :
What did he say ?

Morton. He earnestly entreats

To see you privately ; and bids you say
When this may be. Meantime he lies conceal'd
Where I may call him forth at your command.

Helen. O, why disguised ?—Thinkst thou he is
not safe ?

Morton. Safe in his hiding-place he is : but yet
The sooner he shall leave this coast, the better.

Helen. To see him thus ! O, how I am beset !

Tell him at twilight, in my nurse's chamber,
I will receive him. But be sure thou add,
Himself alone will I receive—alone—

With no companion must he come. Forget not
To say, that I entreat it earnestly.

Morton. I will remember this.

Helen. Go to him quickly then : and, till the hour,

Still do thou hover near him. Watch his haunt,
Lest some rude fisherman or surly hind
Surprise him. Go thou quickly. O, be prudent !
And be not for a moment off the watch.

Morton. Madam, I will obey you : trust me well.
[Exit.

Helen (*much disturbed*). My brother on the coast ;
and with him too,
As well I guess, the man I must not see !

Rosa. Mean you the brave Sir Hubert ?

Helen. Yes, my Rosa.
My noble brother in his powerful self

So strong in virtue stands, he thinks full surely
The daughter of his sire no weakness hath ;
And wists not how a simple heart must struggle
To be what it would be—what it must be—
Ay, and so aid me, heaven ! what it shall be.

Rosa. And heaven will aid you, madam, doubt
it not.

Though on this subject still you have repress'd
All communing, yet, ne'ertheless, I well
Have mark'd your noble striving, and revered
Your silent inward warfare, bravely held ;
In this more pressing combat firm and valiant,
As is your noble brother in the field.

Helen. I thank thee, gentle Rosa ; thou art kind—
I should be franker with thee ; but I know not—
Something restrains me here.

[Laying her hand on her heart.

I love and trust thee ;

And on thy breast I'll weep when I am sad ;

But ask not why I weep. [Exeunt.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

*An apartment in twilight, almost dark ; the door of an
inner chamber, standing a little ajar, at the bottom
of the stage.*

*Enter JOHN OF LORNE and SIR HUBERT DE GREY,
disguised as peasants.*

De Grey. Nay, stop, I pray ; advance we not
too far ?

Lorne. Morton hath bid us in this place to wait.
The nurse's chamber is adjoining to it ;
And, till her light within give notice, here
Thou mayst remain ; when I am call'd, thou't leave
me.

De Grey. Till thou art call'd ! and may I stay
to hear

The sweetness of her voice—her footstep's sound ;
Perhaps snatch in the torch's hasty light
One momentary vision of that form—
The form that hath to me of earthly make
No fellow ? May it be without transgression ?

Lorne. Why shouldst thou not ? De Grey, thou
art too fearful ;

Here art thou come with no dishonest will ;
And well she knows thine honour. Her commands,
Though we must yield to them, capricious seem ;
Seeing thou art with me, too nicely scrupulous ;
And therefore need no farther be obey'd
Than needs must be. She puts thee not on honour.
Were I so used——

De Grey. 'Spite of thy pride, wouldest thou
Revere her still the more.—O, no, brave Lorne,
I blame her not. When she, a willing victim,
To spare the blood of two contending clans,
Against my faithful love her suffrage gave,
I bless'd her ; and the deep, but chasten'd sorrow
With which she bade me—Oh ! that word ! fare-
well,

Is treasured in my bosom as its share
Of all that earthly love hath power to give.
It came from Helen, and, from her received,
Shall not be worn with thankless dull repining.

Lorne. A noble heart thou hast : such manly
meekness

Becomes thy gen'rous nature. But for me,
More fierce and wilful, sorely was I chafed
To see thy faithful heart rob'b'd of its hope,
All for the propping up a hollow peace
Between two warlike clans, who will, as long
As bagpipes sound, and blades flash to the sun,
Delighting in the noble sport of war,
Some fierce opponents find. What deth it boot,
If men in fields must fight, and blood be shed,
What clans are in the ceaseless strife opposed ?

De Grey. Ah, John of Lorne ! too keenly is thy
soul

To war inclined—to wasteful, ruthless war.

Lorne. The warlike minstrel's rousing lay thou
lov'st :

Shall bards i' the hall sing of our fathers' deeds
To lull their sons to sleep ? Vain simple wish !
I love to hear the sound of holy bell,
And peaceful men their praises lift to heaven :
I love to see around their blazing fire
The peasant and his cheerful family set,
Eating their fearless meal. But, when the roar
Of battle rises, and the closing clans,
Dark'ning the sun-gleam'd heath, in dread affray
Are mingled ; blade with blade, and limb with limb,
Nerve-strain'd, in terrible strength ; yea, soul with
soul

Nobly contending ; who would raise aloft
The interdicting hand, and say, " Be still'd ? "
If this in me be sin, may heaven forgive me !
That being am not I.

De Grey. In very deed
This is thy sin ; and of thy manly nature
The only blemish worthy of that name.
More peaceful be, and thou wilt be more noble.

Lorne. Well, here we will not wrangle for the
point.

None in th'embattled field who have beheld

Hubert de Grey in mailed hauberk fight,
Will guess how much that knight in peace delights.
Still burns my heart that such a man as thou
Was for this weak, unsteady, poor Maclean——

De Grey. Nay, with contempt, I pray thee, name
him not.

Her husband, and despised ! O, no, no, no !
All that pertains to her, e'en from that hour,
Honour'd and sacred is. [myself !

Lorne. Thou gen'rous heart ! more noble than
I will not grieve thee.—I'll to Helen go,
With every look and word that might betray
Indignant thoughts, or wound her gentle spirit,
Strictly suppress'd : and to her ear will give
Thy gen'rous greetings, and thy manly words
Of cheering comfort ;—all most faithfully
Shall be remember'd.

De Grey. Ay, and my request.

Lorne. To see the child ?

De Grey. E'en so : to look upon it ;—
Upon the thing that is of her ; this bud—
This seedling of a flower so exquisite.

[*Light is seen in the inner chamber.*
Ha ! light is in the chamber ! moves the door ?
Some one approaches. O ! but for a moment
Let me behind thy friendly tartans be,
And snatch one glance of what that light will give.

[*Conceals himself behind LORNE, who steps
some paces back, setting his hand to his side,
and tilting his plaid over his arms to favour
him ; while the door of the inner chamber
opens, and HELEN appears, bearing a lamp,
which she afterwards sets upon a stone slab as
she advances.*

Her form—her motion—yea, that mantled arm,
Press'd closely to her breast, as she was wont
When chilly winds assail'd.—The face—O, woe is
me !

It was not then so pale.

Lorne (to him, in a low voice). Begone : begone.

De Grey. Blest vision, I have seen thee ! Fare
thee well ! [Exit in haste.

Helen (coming forward, alarmed). What sound is
that of steps that hasten from us ?

Is Morton on the watch.

Lorne. Fear nothing ; faithful Morton is at
hand :

The steps thou heardest were friendly.

Helen (embracing LORNE). My brother ! meet we
thus,—disguised, by stealth ?

Is this like peace ? How is my noble father ?

Hath any ill befallen ?

Lorne. Argyll is well ;

And nothing ill, my sister, hath befallen,
If thou art well and happy.

Helen. Speakst thou truly ?

Why art thou come ? Why thus upon our coast ?
O take it not unkindly that I say,

" Why art thou come ? "

Lorne. Near to the opposite shore,
With no design, but on a lengthen'd chase,
A lusty deer pursuing from the hills
Of Morven, where Sir Hubert and myself
Guests of the social lord two days had been,
We found us ; when a sudden strong desire
To look upon the castle of Maclean,
Seen from the coast, our eager fancy seized,
And that indulged, forthwith we did agree
The frith to cross, and to its chief and dame
A hasty visit make. But as our boat
Lay waiting to receive us, warn'd by one
Whom well I knew (the vassal of a friend
Whose word I could not doubt), that jealous ran-
cour,

Stirr'd up amongst the vassals of Maclean,
Who, in their savage fury, had been heard
To utter threats against thy innocent self,
Made it unsafe in open guise to venture,
Here in this garb we are to learn in secret
The state in which thou art.—How is it then ?
Morton's report has added to my fears :
All is not well with thee.

Helen. No, all is well.

Lorne. A cold constrained voice that answer
gave :

All is not well.—Maclean—dares he neglect thee ?

Helen. Nay, wrong him not ; kind and affection-
ate

He still remains.

Lorne. But it is said, his vassals with vile names
Have dared to name thee, even in open clan :
And have remain'd unpunish'd. Is it so ?

[*Pauses for an answer, but she is silent.*]

All is not well.

Helen. Have I not said it is ?

Lorne. Ah ! dost thou thus return a brother's
love

With cold reserve ?—O speak to me, my Helen !
Speak as a sister should.—Have they insulted
thee ?

Has any wrong—my heart within me burns
If I but think upon it.—Answer truly.

Helen. What, am I question'd then ? Thinkst
thou to find me

Like the spoil'd heiress of some Lowland lord,
Peevish and dainty ; who, with scorn regarding
The ruder home she is by marriage placed in,
Still holds herself an alien from its interest,
With poor repining, losing every sense
Of what she is, in what she has been ? No.—
I love thee, Lorne ; I love my father's house :
The meanest ear that round his threshold barks
Is in my memory as some kindred thing :
Yet take it not unkindly when I say,
The lady of Maclean no grievance hath
To tell the Lord of Lorne.

Lorne.

And has the vow,
Constrain'd, unblest, and joyless as it was,

Which gave thee to a lord unworthy of thee,
Placed thee beyond the reach of kindred ties—
The warmth of blood to blood—the sure affection
That nature gives to all—a brother's love ?
No, by all sacred things ! here is thy hold :
Here is thy true, unshaken, native stay :
One that shall fail thee never, though the while,
A faithless, wavering, intervening band
Seems to divide thee from it.

[*Grasping her hand vehemently, as if he would
lead her away.*]

Helen. What dost thou mean ? What violent
grasp is this ?

Com'st thou to lead me from my husband's house,
Beneath the shade of night, with culprit stealth ?

Lorne. No, daughter of Argyll ; when John of
Lorne

Shall come to lead thee from these hated walls
Back to thy native home,—with culprit stealth,
Beneath the shades of night, it shall not be.
With half our western warriors at his back,
He'll proudly come. Thy listening timid chief
Shall hear our martial steps upon his heath,
With heavy measured fall, send, beat by beat,
From the far-smitten earth, a sullen sound,
Like deep-dell'd forests groaning to the strokes
Of lusty woodmen. On the watch-tower's height,
His straining eye shall mark our sheathless swords
From rank to rank their lengthen'd blaze emit,
Like streams of shiv'ring light, in hasty change,
Upon the northern firmament.—By stealth !
No ! not by stealth !—believe me, not by stealth
Shalt thou these portals pass.

Helen.

Then have I enter'd,
The pledge of peace : and here my place I'll hold
As dame and mistress of the warlike clan
Who yield obedience to their chief, my lord ;
And whatso'er their will to me may bear,
Of good or ill, so will I hold me ever.
Yea, did the Lord of Lorne, dear as he is,
With all the warlike Campbells at his back
Here hostile entrance threaten ; on these walls,
Failing the strength that might defend them better,
I would myself, while by my side in arms
One valiant clan's-man stood, against his powers,
To the last push, with desperate opposition,
This castle hold.

Lorne. And wouldst thou so ? so firm and
valiant art thou ?

Forgive me, noble creature !—Oh ! the fate—
The wayward fate that binds thy generous soul
To poor unsteady weakness !

Helen.

Speakest thou thus ?
Thus pressing still upon the galled spot ?
Thou dealst unkindly with me. Yes, my brother,
Unkindly and unwisely. Wherefore hast thou
Brought to this coast the man thou knowest well
I ought not in mysterious guise to see ?
And he himself—seeks he again to move

The hapless weakness I have striv'n to conquer ?
I thought him generous.

Lorne. So think him still.
His wishes tend not to disturb thy peace :
Far other are his thoughts. — He bids me tell thee
To cheer thy gentle heart, nor think of him,
As one who will in vain and stubborn grief
His ruin'd bliss lament, — he bids me say
That he will even strive, if it be possible,
Amongst the maidens of his land to seek
Some faint resemblance of the good he lost,
That thou mayst hear of him with less regret,
As one by holy bands link'd to his kind.
He bids me say, should ever child of his
And child of thine — but here his quivering lip
And starting tears spoke what he could not speak.

Helen. O noble, gen'rous heart; and does he offer
Such cheering manly comfort ? Heaven protect,
And guide, and bless him ! On his noble head
Such prosp'rous bliss be pour'd, that hearing of it
Shall, through the gloom of my untoward state,
Like gleams of sunshine break, that from afar
Look o'er the dull dun heath.

Lorne. But one request —
Helen. Ha ! makes he one ?

Lorne. It is to see thy child. [it ?
Helen. To see my child ! Will he indeed regard
Shall it be bless'd by him ?

Enter MORTON in haste.

Morton. Conceal yourself, my lord, or by this
passage [Pointing off the stage.

The nearest postern gain : I hear the sound
Of heavy steps at hand, and voices stern. [thee.

Helen. O fly, my brother ! Morton will conduct
(To MORTON.) Where is Sir Hubert ?

Morton. Safe he is without.
He'en. Heaven keep him so !

(To LORNE.) O leave me ! I, the while,
Will in, and, with mine infant in mine arms,
Meet thee again, ere thou depart. — Fly ! fly !

[Exit; HELEN into the inner chamber, putting
out the lamp as she goes, and LORNE and
MORTON by a side passage.

SCENE II.

A cave, lighted by flaming brands fixed aloft on its
rugged sides, and shedding a fierce glaring light
down upon the objects below. LOCHTARISH, BEN-
LORA, GLENFADDEN, with several of the chief
vassals of MACLEAN, are discovered in a recess,
formed by projecting rocks, at the bottom of the
stage, engaged in earnest discourse, from which they
move forward slowly, speaking as they advance.

Loch. And thus ye see, by strong necessity,
We are compell'd to this.

1st vas. Perhaps thou'rt right.

Loch. Sayst thou perhaps ? Dost thou not
plainly see

That ne'er a man amongst us can securely
His lands possess, or say, " My house is mine,"
While, under tutorage of proud Argyll,
This beauteous sorceress our besotted chief
By soft enchantment holds ?

[Laying his hand on the 1st vassal.

My brave Glenore,
What are thy good deserts, that may uphold thee
In favour with a Campbell ? — Duncan's blood,
Slain in his boat, with all its dashing oars
Skirting our shore, while that his vaunting piper
The Campbell's triumph play'd ? Will this speak
for thee ? [Turning to 2d vassal.

And, Thona, what good merit pleadst thou ?
The coal-black steed of Clone, thy moonlight
plunder,

Ta'en from the spiteful laird, will he, good sooth !
Neigh favour on thee ? [To 3d vassal.

And my valiant Fallen,
Bethink thee well if fair-hair'd Flora's cries
Whom from her native bower by force thou tookst,
Will plead for thee. — And say ye still perhaps —
Perhaps there is necessity ? [the act

1st vas. Strong should it be, Lochtarish ; for
Is fell and cruel thou wouldst push us to.

Glen. (to 1st vas.) Ha, man of mercy ! are thy
lily hands [those

From bloody taint unstain'd ? What sights were
Thou look'dst upon in Brunock's burning tower,
When infants through the flames their wailings
sent,

And yet unaided perish'd ?

Loch. (soothingly). Tush, Glenfadden !
Too hasty art thou.

(To the vassals.) Ye will say, belike,
" Our safety — our existence did demand
Utter extinction of that hold of foes."
And well ye may. — A like necessity
Compels us now, and yet ye hesitate.

Glen. Our sighted seers the fun'ral lights have
seen,

Not moving onward in the wonted path
On which by friends the peaceful dead are borne,
But hov'ring o'er the heath like countless stars,
Spent and extinguish'd on the very spot
Where first they twinkled. This too well foreshows
Internment of the slain, whose bloody graves
Of the same mould are made on which they fell.
2d vas. Ha ! so indeed ! some awful tempest
gathers.

1st vas. What sighted man hath seen it ?

Glen. He whose eye
Can see on northern waves the found'ring bark,
With all her shrieking crew, sink to the deep,
While yet, with gentle winds, on dimpling surge
She sails from port in all her gallant trim :
John of the Isle hath seen it.

Omnes (starting back). Then hangs some evil
over us.

Glen. Know ye not
The mermaid hath been heard upon our rocks ?

Omnes (still more alarmed). Ha ! when ?

Glen. Last night, upon the rugged crag
That lifts its dark head through the cloudy smoke
Of dashing billows, near the western cliff.
Sweetly, but sadly, o'er the stilly deep
The passing sound was borne. I need not say
How fatal to our clan that boding sound
Hath ever been.

3d vas. In faith thou makest me quake.

2d vas. Some fearful thing hangs o'er us.

1st vas. If 'tis fated

Our clan before our ancient foe shall fall,
Can we heav'n's will prevent ? Why should we
then

The Campbells' wrath provoke ?

Ben. (stepping up fiercely to 1st vassal). Heav'n's
will prevent — the Campbells' ire provoke !
Is such base tameness utter'd by the son
Of one, who would into the fiery pit
Of damned fiends have leapt, so that his grasp
Might pull a Campbell with him ?

Bastard blood !

Thy father spoke not thus.

Loch. (soothingly). Nay, brave Benlora,
He means not as thou thinkst.

Ben. If heaven decree
Slaughter and ruin for us, come it then !
But let our enemies, close grappled to us,
In deadly strife, their ruin join with ours.
Let corse to corse, upon the bloody heath,
Macleans and Campbell, stiff'ning side by side,
With all the gnashing ecstacy of hate
Upon their ghastly visages impress'd,
Lie horribly ! — For ev'ry widow's tear
Shed in our clan, let matron Campbells howl !

Loch. Indeed, my friends, although too much in
ire,

Benlora wisely speaks. — Shall we in truth
Wait for our ruin from a crafty foe,
Who here maintains this keenly watchful spy
In gentle kindness masked ?

Glen. Nor need we fear,
As good Lochtarish hath already urged,
Her death will rouse Argyll. It will be deem'd,
As we shall grace it with all good respect
Of funeral pomp, a natural visitation. [book,

Loch. Ay, and besides, we'll swear upon the
And truly swear, if we are call'd upon,
We have not shed her blood.

Ben. I like not this.
If ye her life will take, in open day
Let her a public sacrifice be made.
Let the loud trumpet far and near proclaim
Our bloody feast, and at the rousing sound,
Let every clans-man of the hated name

His vengeful weapon clench. —

I like it not, Lochtarish. What we do,
Let it be boldly done. — Why should we slay her ?
Let her in shame be from the castle sent ;
Which, to her haughty sire, will do, I ween,
Far more despite than taking of her life. —
A feeble woman's life ! — I like it not.

[Turning on his heel angrily, and striding to the
bottom of the stage.

Loch. (aside to GLEN.) Go to him, friend, and
soothe him to our purpose.

The fiery fool ! how madly will he is !

[GLENFADDEN goes to the bottom of the stage,
and is seen remonstrating, in dumb-show, with
BENLORA, while LOCHTARISH speaks to the
vassals on the front.

Loch. My friends, why on each other look ye
thus

In gloomy silence ? freely speak your thoughts.
Mine have I freely spoken : that advising
Which for the good — nay, I must say existence,
Of this our ancient clan most needful is.
When did Lochtarish ever for himself
A separate 'vantage seek, in which the clan
At large partook not ? Am I doubted now ?

2d vas. No, nothing do we doubt thy public zeal.

Loch. Then is my long experience o' the sudden
To childish folly turn'd ?

Thinkst thou, good Thona,
We should beneath this artful mistress live,
Hush'd in deceitful peace, till John of Lorne,
For whom the office of a treacherous spy
She doth right slyly manage, with his powers
Shall come upon us ? Once ye would have spurn'd
At thoughts so base ; but now, when forth I stand
To do what vengeance, safety, nay, existence,
All loudly call for ; even as though already
The enemy's baleful influence hung o'er you,
Like quell'd and passive men ye silent stand.

1st vas. (roused). Nay, cease, Lochtarish ! quell'd
and passive men

Thou knowst we are not.

Loch. Yet a woman's life,
And that a treacherous woman, moves you thus.
Bold as your threats of dark revenge have been,
A strong decisive deed appeals you now.
Our chieftain's feeble undetermined spirit
Infects you all : ye dare not stand by me.

Omnes. We dare not, sayst thou ?

Loch. Dare not, will I say !
Well spoke the jeering Camerons, I trow,
As past their fishing boats our vessel steer'd,
When with push'd lip, and finger pointing thus,
They call'd our crew the Campbell-cow'd Macleans.

Omnes (roused fiercely). The Campbell-cow'd
Macleans !

2d vas. Infernal devils !
Dare they to call us so ?

Loch. Ay, by my truth !

Nor think that from the Camerons alone
Ye will such greeting have, if back ye shrink,
And stand not by me now.

Omnes (eagerly). We'll stand !— We'll stand !

2d vas. Tempt us no more. There's ne'er a man
of us

That will not back thee boldly.

Loch. Ay, indeed ?

Now are ye men ! Give me your hands to this.

[*They all give him their hands.*]

Now am I satisfied. [*Looking off the stage.*]

The chief approaches.

Ye know full well the spirit of the man

That we must deal withal ; therefore be bold.

Omnes. Mistrust us not.

Enter MACLEAN, who advances to the middle of the stage, while LOCHTARISH, BENLORA, GLENFADDEN, and all the other vassals gather round him with stern determined looks. A pause ; MACLEAN eyeing them all round with inquisitive anxiety.

Mac. A goodly meeting at this hour convened.

[*A sullen pause.*]

Benlora ; Thona ; Allen of Glenore ;

And all of you, our first and bravest kinsmen ;

What mystery in this sullen silence is ?

Hangs any threaten'd evil o'er the clan ? [*blood*]

Ben. Yes, chieftain ; evil, that doth make the
Within your grey-hair'd warriors' veins to burn,
And their brogue'd feet to spurn the ground that
bears them.

Loch. Evil, that soon will wrap your tower in
flames,

Your ditches fill with blood, and carrion birds

Glut with the butcher'd corpses of your slain.

Glen. Ay ; evil, that doth make the hoary locks

Of sighted men around their age-worn scalps

Like quicken'd points of crackling flame to rise ;

Their teeth to grind, and strained eye-balls roll

In fitful frenzy, at the horrid things,

In terrible array before them raised.

1st vas. The mermaid hath been heard upon
our rocks :

The fatal song of waves.

Glen. The northern deep

Is heard with distant moanings from our coast,

Uttering the dismal doleful sounds of death.

2d vas. The funeral lights have shone upon our
heath,

Marking in countless groups the graves of thousands.

Ben. Yea, chief ; and sounds like to thy father's
voice

Have from the sacred mould wherein he lies,

At dead of night, by wakeful men been heard

Three times distinctly. [*Turning to GLENFADDEN.*]

Saidst thou not thrice ?

Glen. Yes ; three times heard distinctly. *

Mac. Ye much amaze me, friends.—Such things
have been ?

Loch. Yea, chief ; and thinkst thou we may
lightly deem

Of coming ills, by signs like these forewarn'd ?

Mac. Then an it be, high heav'n have mercy
on us !

Loch. (in a loud solemn voice). Thyself have
mercy on us !

Mac. How is this ?

Your words confuse and stun me.—Have I power
To ward this evil off ?

Omnes. Thou hast ! thou hast !

Mac. Then God to me show mercy in my need,

As I will do for you and for my clan

Whate'er my slender power enables me.

Omnes. Amen ! and swear to it.

Mac. (starting back). What words are these,
With such wild fierceness utter'd ? name the thing
That ye would have me do.

Ben. (stepping out from the rest). Ay, we will
name it.

Helen the Campbell, foster'd in your bosom,

A serpent is, who wears a hidden sting

For thee and all thy name ; the oath-bound spy

Of dark Argyll, our foe ; the baleful plague

To which ill-omen'd sounds and warnings point,

As that on which existence or extinction—

The name and being of our clan depend ;—

A witch of deep seduction.—Cast her forth.

The strange, unnatural union of two bloods,

Adverse and hostile, most abhorred is.

The heart of every warrior of your name

Rises against it. Yea, the grave calls out,

And says it may not be.—Nay, shrink not, chief,

When I again repeat it,—cast her off.

Mac. Art thou a man ? and bidst me cast her
off,

Bound as I am by sacred holy ties ?

Loch. Bound as thou art by that which thou
regardst

As sacred holy ties ; what tie so sacred

As those that to his name and kindred vassals

The noble chieftain bind ? If ties there be

To these opposed, although a saint from heav'n

Had bless'd them o'er the cross'd and holy things,

They are annull'd and broken.

Ben. Ay, Lochtarish ;

Sound doctrine hast thou utter'd. Such the creed

Of ancient warriors was, and such the creed

That we their sons will with our swords maintain.

[*Drawing his sword fiercely, whilst the rest
follow his example.*]

Mac. Ye much confound me with your violent
words.

I can in battle strive, as well ye know :

But how to strive with you, ye violent men,

My spirit knows not.

Loch. Decide—decide, Maclean : the choice is
thine

To be our chieftain, leading forth thy bands,

As heretofore thy valiant father did,
Against our ancient foe, or be the husband,
Despised, forsaken, cursed, of her thou prizest
More than thy clan and kindred.

Glen. Make thy choice.

Benlora, wont in better times to lead us
Against the Campbells, with a chieftain's power,
Shall, with the first blast of his warlike horn,
If so he will it, round his standard gather
Thy roused and valiant vassals to a man.

Mac. (greatly startled). Ha! go your thoughts to
this? Desert me so?

My vassals so desert me?

Loch. Ay, by my faith, our very women too:
And in your hall remain, to serve your state,
Nor child nor aged crone.

Mac. (after great agitation). Decide, and east
her off!—How far the thoughts

To which these words ye yoke may go, I guess
not.

(Eagerly.) They reach not to her life?

*[Pauses and looks at them anxiously, but they
are silent.]*

Oh, oh! oh, oh! that stern and dreadful silence!

Loch. We will not shed her blood.

Mac. Then ye will spare her?

Loch. Commit her to our keeping: ask us not
How we shall deal with her.

Mac. Some fearful mystery is in your words,
Which covers cruel things. O woe the day,
That I on this astounding ridge am poised!
On every side a fearful ruin yawns.

*[A voice heard without, uttering wild incoherent
words, mixed with shrieks of horror.]*

What frenzied voice is that?

Enter 4th vassal, as if terribly frightened.

Loch. (to 4th vas.) What brings thee hither?

4th vas. He fixes wildly on the gloomy void
His starting eyeballs, bent on fearful sights,
That make the sinews of his aged limbs
In agony to quiver.

Loch. Who didst thou say?

4th vas. John of the Isle, the sighted awful man.
Go, see yourselves: 't' the outer cave he is.
Entranced he stands; arrested on his way
By horrid visions, as he hurried hither
Enquiring for the chief.

[Voice heard without, as before.]

Loch. Hark! hark, again! dread powers are
dealing with him.

Come, chieftain—come and see the awful man.
If heaven or hell hath power to move thy will,
Thou canst not now withstand us.

(Peising for him to go.) Hearst thou not?

And motionless?

Mac. I am beset and stunn'd,
And every sense bewilder'd. Violent men!
If ye unto this fearful pitch are bent,—

When such necessity is press'd upon me,
What doth avail resistance? Woe the day!
Even lead me where ye will.

*[Exit MACLEAN, exhausted and trembling, leaning
on LOCHTARISH, and followed by BENLORA
and GLENFADDEN and vassals; two inferior
vassals alone left upon the stage.]*

1st vas. (looking after MACLEAN). Ay, there he
goes; so spent, and scared, and feeble!

Without a prophet's skill, we may foretell,
John of the Isle, by sly Lochtarish taught,
Will work him soon to be an oath-bound wretch
To this their fell design.—Are all things ready?

2d vas. All is in readiness.

1st vas.

When ebbs the tide?

2d vas. At early dawn, when in the narrow creek
Near to the castle, with our trusty mates,
Our boat must be in waiting to receive her.

1st vas. The time so soon! alas, so young and
fair!

That slow and dismal death! To be at once
Plunged in the closing deep many have suffer'd,
But to sit waiting on a lonely rock
For the approaching tide to throttle her—
But that she is a Campbell, I could weep.

2d vas. Weep, fool! think soon how we'll to war
again

With our old enemy; and, in the field,
Our good elaymours dye with their hated blood:
Think upon this, and change thy tears to joy.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE III.

The bed-chamber of MACLEAN.

Enter MACLEAN, followed by HELEN.

Helen. Ah! wherefore art thou so disturb'd?
the night

Is almost spent: the morn will break ere long,
And rest last thou had none. Go to thy bed:
I pray thee, go.

Mac. I cannot: urge me not.

Helen. Nay, try to rest: I'll sit and watch by
thee.

Mac. Thou'lt sit and watch! O woe betide the
hour!

And who will watch for thee?

Helen. And why for me?

Can any harm approach? When thou art near,
Or sleeping or awake, I am secure.

Mac. (pacing to and fro distractedly). O God!
O God!

Helen. Those exclamations!

[Going up to him, while he avoids her.]

Turnst thou from me thus?

Have I offended? dost thou doubt my faith?
Hath any jealous thought— I freely own
Love did not make me thine: but, being thine,
To no love-wedded dame, bound in the ties

Of dearest sympathy, will I in duty—
In steady, willing, cheerful duty yield.
Yea, and though here no thrilling rapture be,
I look to spend with thee, by habit foster'd,
The evening of my days in true affection.

Mac. The evening of thy days! alas, alas!
Would heaven had so decreed it!

[*Pulling away his hand from hers.*]

Grasp me not!
It is a fiend thou clingst to. [*A knock at the door.*]
Power of heaven!

Are they already at the chamber door!

Helen. Are those who knock without unwelcome?
—hush!

Withdraw thyself, and I will open to them.

[*Goes to the door.*]

Mac. O go not! go not!

[*Runs after her to draw her back, when a vassal, rushing from behind the bed, lays hold of him.*]

Vas. Art thou not sworn to us? Where is thy faith?

Mac. I know, I know! the bands of hell have bound me.

O fiends! ye've made of me—what words can speak

The hateful wretch I am!

Hark! hark! she cries!

She shrieks and calls on me!

[*HELEN'S cries heard without, first near and distinct, afterwards more and more distant as they bear her away; while the vassal leads MACLEAN forcibly off the stage by the opposite side, he breaks from him, and hastens towards that by which HELEN went out.*]

Vas. Thou art too strong for me. Do as thou wilt;

[*ment*]

But if thou bringst her back, even from that mo-
Benlora is our leader, and thyself,
The Campbell's husband, chieftain and Maclean
No more shalt be. We've sworn as well as thou.

[*MACLEAN stops irresolutely, and then suffers the vassal to lead him off by the opposite side.*]

ACT III.

SCENE I.

A small island, composed of a rugged craggy rock, on the front of the stage, and the sea in the back-ground.

Enter two vassals dragging in HELEN, as if just come out of their boat.

Helen. O why is this? Speak, gloomy, ruthless men!

Our voyage ends not here?

1st vas. It does: and now,
Helen the Campbell, fare thee—fare thee well!

2d vas. *Helen* the Campbell, thy last greeting take

From mortal thing.

Helen. What! leave me on this rock,
This sea-grit rock, to solitude and famine?

1st vas. Next rising tide will bring a sure relief
To all the ills we leave thee.

Helen (starting). I understand you.

[*Raising her clasped hands to heaven.*]

Lord of heaven and earth;

Of storms and tempests, and th' unfathom'd deep;
Is this thy righteous will?

[*Grasping the hands of the men imploringly*]

Ye cannot mean it!

Ye cannot leave a human creature thus
To perish by a slow approaching end,
So awful and so terrible! Instant death
Were merciful to this.

1st vas. If thou prefer it, we can shorten well
Thy term of pain and terror: from this crag,
Full fourteen fathom deep thou mayst be plunged.
In shorter time than three strokes of an oar
Thy pains will cease.

2d vas. Come, that were better for thee.

[*Both of them take her hands, and are going to hurry her to the brink of the rock, when she shrinks back.*]

Helen. O no! the soul recoils from swift destruction!

Pause ye awhile. [*Considering for a moment.*]

The downward terrible plunge!

The coil of whelming waves!—O fearful nature!

[*Catching hold of a part of the rock near her.*]

To the rough rock I'll cling: it still is something
Of firm and desp'rate hold—Depart and leave me.

[*Waving her hand for the vassals to go, whilst she keeps close hold of the rock with the other.*]

1st vas. Thou still mayst live within a prison pent,

If life be dear to thee.

Helen (eagerly). If life be dear!—Alas, it is not dear!

Although the passing fearful act of death
So very fearful is.—Say how, even in a prison,
I still may wait my quiet natural end.

1st vas. Whate'er thou art, such has thy conduct been,

Thy wedded faith, e'en with thy fellest foes,
Sure and undoubted stands:—Sign thou this scroll,
Owning the child, thy son, of bastard birth;
And this made sure, Lochtarish bade me say
Thy life shall yet be spared.

Helen (pushing him away with indignation as he offers her the scroll). Off, off, vile agent of a wretch so devilish!

Now do I see from whence my ruin comes:
I and my infant foil his wicked hopes.

O harmless babe ! will heav'n abandon thee ?
It will not !—No ; it will not !

[Assuming firmness and dignity.
Depart and leave me. In my rising breast
I feel returning strength. Heav'n aids my weak-
ness :

I'll meet its awful will.

[Waving them off with her hand.
1st *vas.* Well, in its keeping rest thee : fare thee
well,

Helen the Campbell !

2d *vas.* Be thy suff'rings short !
(*Aside to the other.*) Come, quickly let us go, nor
look behind.

Fell is the service we are put upon :
Would we had never ta'en that cruel oath !

[*Exeunt vassals.*
*Helen (alone, after standing some time gazing round
her, paces backwards and forwards with agi-
tated steps, then, stopping suddenly, bends her
ear to the ground as if she listened earnestly
to something).* It is the sound ; the heaving
hollow swell

That notes the turning tide. — Tremendous agent !
Mine executioner, that, step by step,
Advances to the awful work of death. —
Onward it wears : a little space removed
The dreadful conflict is.

[*Raising her eyes to heaven, and moving her
lips, as in the act of devotion, before she
again speaks aloud.*

Thou art i' the blue coped sky—th' expanse im-
measurable ;

I' the dark roll'd clouds, the thunder's awful home :
Thou art i' the wide-shored earth,—the pathless
desert ;

And in the dread immensity of waters,—

I' the fathomless deep Thon art.

Awful but excellent ! beneath Thy hand,
With trembling confidence, I bow me low,
And wait Thy will in peace.

[*Sits down on a crag of the rock, with her arms
crossed over her breast in silent resignation ;
then, after a pause of some length, raises her
head hastily.*

Is it a sound of voices in the wind ?
The breeze is on the rock : a gleam of sunshine
Breaks through those farther clouds. It is like hope
Upon a hopeless state.

[*Starting up, and gazing eagerly around her.*
I'll to that highest crag and take my stand :
Some little speck upon the distant wave
May to my eager gaze a vessel grow—
Some onward wearing thing,—some boat—some
raft—

Some drifted plank.—O hope ! thou quitt'st us
never !

[*Exit, disappearing amongst the rugged divisions
of the rock.*

SCENE II.

*A small island, from which the former is seen in the
distance, like a little pointed rock standing out of
the sea.*

*Enter SIR HUBERT DE GREY, followed by two
fishermen.*

De Grey. This little swarded spot, that o'er the
waves,

Cloth'd in its green light, seem'd to beckon to us,
Right pleasant is : until our comrades join,
Here will we rest. I marvel much they stand
So far behind. In truth, such lusty rowers
Put shame upon their skill.

1st *fish.* A cross-set eurrent bore them from the
track,

But see, they now bear on us rapidly.

(*Voices without.*)

Holla !

2d *fish.* They call to us. — Holla ! holla !

How fast they wear ! they are at hand already.

De Grey. Right glad I am : the Lord of Lorne,
I fear,

Will wait impatiently : he has already
With rapid oars the nearer mainland gain'd,
Where he appointed us to join him. — Ho !

[*Calling off the stage.*

Make to that point, my lads.

(*To those near him.*) Here, for a little while, upon
the turf

We'll snatch a hasty meal, and, so refresh'd,
Take to our boats again.

*Enter three other Fishermen, as from their boat, on
the other side of the stage.*

Well met, my friends ! I'm glad you're here at last.
How was it that you took that distant track ?

3d *fish.* The current bore us wide of what we
wist ;

And, were it not your honour is impatient
Mainland to make, we had not come so soon.

De Grey. What had detain'd you ?

3d *fish.* As near yon rock we bore, that o'er the
waves

Just shows its jetty point, and will, ere long,
Beneath the tide be hidd'n, we heard the sound
Of feeble lamentation.

De Grey. A human voice ?

3d *fish.* I cannot think it was ;
For on that rock, sea-girt, and at high tide
Sea-cover'd, human thing there cannot be ;
Though, at the first, it sounded in our ears
Like a faint woman's voice.

De Grey. Perceived ye aught ?

3d *fish.* Yes ; something white that moved, and,
as we think,

Some wounded bird that there hath dropp'd its wing,
And cannot make its way.

4th fish. Perhaps some dog,
Whose master, at low water, there hath been,
And left him.

3d fish. Something 'tis in woeful case,
Whate'er it be. Right fain I would have gone
To bear it off.

De Grey (eagerly). And wherefore didst thou
not?

Return and save it. Be it what it may;
Something it is, lone and in jeopardy,
Which hath a feeling of its desperate state,
And therefore doth to woe-worn, fearful man,
A kindred nature bear. — Return, good friend: —
Quickly return and save it, ere the tide
Shall wash it from its hold. I to the coast
Will steer the while, and wait your coming there.

3d fish. Right gladly, noble sir.

4th fish. We'll gladly go:
For, by my faith! at night I had not slept
For thinking of that sound.

De Grey. Heaven speed you then! whate'er ye
bring to me

Of living kind, I will reward you for it.
Our different tracks we hold; nor longer here
Will I remain. Soon may we meet:
God speed you!

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE III.

A fisherman's house on the mainland.

Enter JOHN OF LORNE and SIR HUBERT DE GREY.

Lorne. Then wait thou for thy boat; I and my
men

Will onward to the town, where, as I hope,
My trusty vassals and our steeds are station'd.
But lose not time.

De Grey. Fear not; I'll follow quickly.

Lorne. I must unto the eastle of Argyll
Without delay proceed; therefore, whate'er
Of living kind, bird, beast, or ereeping thing,
This boat of thine produces, bring it with thee;
And, were it eaglet fierce, or wolf, or fox,
On with us shall it travel, mounted bravely,
Our homeward cavaleade to grace. Farewell!

De Grey. Farewell, my friend! I shall not long
delay

Thy homeward journey.

Lorne (calling off the stage). But ho! good host
and hostess! (*To DE GREY.*) Ere I go

I must take leave of honest Duncan here,
And of his rosy wife. — Ay, here they come.

Enter the host and his wife.

(*To host, &c.*) Farewell, my friends, and thanks be
to you both!

Good cheer, and kindly given, of you we've had.

Thy hand, good host. May all the fish o' th' ocean
Come crowding to thy nets! — And healthy brats,
Fair dame, have thou! with such round rosy cheeks
As brats of thine befit: and, by your leave,

[*Kissing her.*]

So be they kiss'd by all kind comers too!

Good luck betide you both!

Host. And, sir, to you the same. Whoe'er you be,
A brave man art thou, that I will be sworn.

Wife. Come you this way again, I hope, good sir,
You will not pass our door.

Lorne. Fear not, good hostess;
It is a pleasant, sunny, open door,
And bids me enter of its own accord;
I cannot pass it by. — Good luck betide you!

[*Exit, followed to the door by SIR HUBERT.*]

Host. I will be sworn it is some noble chieftain,
Though homely be his garb.

Wife. Ay, so will I; the Lord of Lorne himself
Could not more courteous be.

Host. Hush! hush! be quiet!
We live not now amongst the Campbells, wife.

Should some Maelean o'erhear thee — hush, I say.

[*Eyeing DE GREY, who returns from the door.*]
And this man, too; right noble is his mien;
He is no common rambler.

(*To DE GREY.*) By your leave,
If I may be so bold without offending,
Your speech, methinks, smacks of a southern race;
I guess at least of Lowland kin ye be.

But think no shame of this; we'll ne'ertheless
Regard thee: thieves and cowards be not all
Who from the Lowlands come.

Wife. No; no, in sooth! I knew a Lowlander,
Some years gone by, who was as true and honest —
Ay, and I do believe well nigh as brave,
As though, with brogued feet, he never else
Had all his days than muir or mountain trodd'n.

De Grey. Thanks for your gentle thoughts! —
It has indeed

Been my misluek to draw my earliest breath
Where meadows flower, and corn fields wave 't th'
sun.

But let us still be friends! Heaven gives us not
To choose our birth-place, else these wilds, no doubt,
Would be more thickly peopled.

Host. Ay, true it is, indeed.

Wife. And hard it were
To quarrel with him too for his misfortune.

[*Noise heard without.*]

De Grey. Ha! 'tis my boat return'd.

Enter 1st Fisherman.

1st fish. Ay, here we are.

De Grey. And aught saved from the rock?

1st fish. Yes, by my faith! but neither bird nor
beast.

Look there, my master. [*Pointing to the door.*]

Enter HELEN, extremely exhausted, and almost senseless, wrapped closely up in one of their plaids, and supported by the other two Fishermen.

De Grey. A woman! Heaven in mercy! was it then

A human creature there exposed to perish?

1st fish. (opening the plaid to show her face). Ay, look; and such a creature!

De Grey (starting back). Helen of Argyll!

O God! was this the feeble wailing voice?

[Clasping his arms about her knees, as she stands almost senseless, supported by the fishermen, and bursting into tears.]

Could heart of man so leave thee? thou, of all That lovely is, most lovely.—Woe is me!

Some aid, I pray you. *[To host and his wife.]*

Bear her softly in,

And wrap warm garments round her. Breathes she freely?

Her eyes half open are, but life, alas!

Is almost spent, and holds within her breast

A weak uncertain seat. *[HELEN moves her hand.]*

She moves her hand:—

She knows my voice.—O heaven, in mercy save her!

Bear her more gently, pray you:—Softly, softly!

How weak and spent she is!

1st fish. No marvel she is weak: we reach'd her not

Until the swelling waters laved her girdle.

And then to see her—

De Grey. Cease, I pray thee, friend,

And tell me not—

2d fish. Nay, faith, he tells you true:

She stood above the water, with stretched arms

Clung to the dripping rock, like the white pinions—

De Grey. Peace, peace, I say! thy words are agony:—

Give to my mind no image of the thing!

[Exeunt, bearing HELEN into an inner part of the house.]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

A small Gothic hall, or ante-room, in ARGYLL's castle, a door at the bottom of the stage, leading to the apartment of the earl, before which is discovered the piper pacing backwards and forwards, playing on his bagpipe.

Enter DUGALD.

Dugald. Now, pray thee, piper, cease! That stunning din

Might do good service by the ears to set

Two angry clans; but for a morning's rouse,

Here at an old man's door, it does, good sooth, Exceed all reasonable use. The Earl Has pass'd a sleepless night: I pray thee now Give o'er, and spare thy pains.

Piper. And spare my pains, sayst thou? I'll do mine office,

As long as breath within my body is.

Dug. Then mercy on us all! if wind thou meanst,

There is within that sturdy trunk of thine,

Old as it is, a still exhaustless store.

A Lapland witch's bag could scarcely match it.

Thou couldst, I doubt not, belly out the sails

Of a three-masted vessel with thy mouth:

But be thy mercy equal to thy might!

I pray thee now give o'er: in faith the earl

Has pass'd a sleepless night.

Piper. Thinkst thou I am a Lowland, day-hired minstrel,

To play or stop at bidding? Is Argyll

The lord and chieftain of our ancient clan,

More certainly, than I to him, as such,

The high hereditary piper am?

A sleepless night, forsooth! He's slept full oft

On the hard heath, with fifty harness'd steeds

Champing their fodder round him;—soundly too.

I'll do mine office, loon, chafe as thou wilt.

[Continuing to pace up and down, and play as before.]

Dugald. Nay, thou the chafer art, red-crested cock!

The Lord of Lorne has spoilt thee with indulging

Thy wilful humours. Cease thy cursed din!

See; here the earl himself comes forth to chide thee. *[Exit.]*

Enter ARGYLL, attended, from the chamber.

Arg. Good morrow, piper! thou hast roused me bravely:

A younger man might gird his tartans on With lightsome heart to martial sounds like these, But I am old.

Piper. O no, my noble chieftain! It is not age subdues you.

Arg. No; what else?

Piper. Alack! the flower and blossom of your house

The wind hath blown away to other towers.

When she was here, and gladsome faces brighten'd

With looking on her, and around your board

Sweet lays were sung, and gallants in the hall

Footed it trimly to our varied measures,

There might, indeed, be found beneath your roof

Those who might reckon years fourscore and odds,

But of old folks, I warrant, ne'er a soul.

No; we were all young then.

Arg. (sighing deeply). 'Tis true, indeed,

It was even as thou sayst. Our earthly joys

Fly like the blossoms scatter'd by the wind.

Enter a Servant.

Serv. Please you, my lord,
Some score of vassals in the hall attend
To bid good morrow to you, and the hour
Wears late: the chamberlain hath bid me say
He will dismiss them, if it please your honour.

Arg. Nay, many a mile have some of them, I know,

With suit or purpose lurking in their minds,
Ridd'n o'er rough paths to see me; disappointed
Shall none of them return. I'm better now.
I have been rather weary than unwell.

Say, I will see them presently. [*Exit servant.*]

Re-enter DUGALD in haste.

(*To DUGALD.*) Thou comest with a busy face:
what tidings?

Dugald. The Lord of Lorne's arrived, an' please
your honour:

Sir Hubert too, and all their jolly train;
And with them have they brought a lady, closely
In hood and mantle muffled: ne'er a glimpse
May of her face be seen.

Arg. A lady, sayst thou?

Dugald. Yes; closely muffled up.

Arg. (*pacing up and down, somewhat disturbed.*)

I like not this. — It cannot surely be —

[*Stopping short, and looking hard at DUGALD.*]
Whence comes he?

Dugald. He a-hunting went, I know,
To Cromack's ancient laird, whose youthful dame
So famed for beauty is; but whence he comes,
I cannot tell, my lord.

Arg. (*pacing up and down, as he speaks to himself
in broken sentences, very much disturbed.*) To
Cromack's ancient laird! — If that indeed —

Beshrew me, if it be! — I'd rather lose
Half of my lands, than son of mine such wrong,
Such shameful wrong, should do. This sword I've
drawn

Like robbery to revenge, ne'er to abet it:
And shall I now with hoary locks — No, no! —
My noble Lorne! he cannot be so base.

Enter LORNE, going up to ARGYLL with agitation.

Arg. (*eyeing him suspiciously.*) Well, John, how
is it? Welcome art thou home,
If thou returnst, as well I would believe,
Deserving of a welcome.

Lorne. Doubts my lord

That I am so return'd?

[*Aside to ARGYLL, endeavouring to draw him
apart from his attendants.*]

Your ear, my father.

Let these withdraw: I have a thing to tell you.

Arg. (*looking still more suspiciously upon LORNE,
from seeing the eagerness and agitation with
which he speaks, and turning from him indig-*

nantly.) No, by this honest blade! if wrong
thou'st done,

Thou hast no shelter here. In open day,
Before th' assembled vassals shalt thou tell it;
And he whom thou hast injured be redress'd,
While I have power to bid my Campbells fight
T' the fair and honour'd cause.

Lorne.

I pray, my lord —

Will you vouchsafe to hear me?

Arg.

Thoughtless boy!

How far unlike the noble Lorne I thought thee! —
Proud as I am, far rather would I see thee
Join'd to the daughter of my meanest vassal,
Than see thy manly, noble worth engaged
In such foul raid as this.

Lorne.

Nay, nay! be pacified!

I'd rather take, in faith, the tawny hand
Of homeliest maid, that doth, o' holidays,
Her sun-burnt locks with worsted ribbon bind,
Fairly and freely won, than brightest dame
That e'er in stately bower or regal hall
In graceful beauty shone, gain'd by such wrong —
By such base treachery as you have glanced at.
These are plain words: then treat me like a man,
Who hath been wont the manly truth to speak.

Arg. Ha! now thy countenance and tone again
Are John of Lorne's. That look, and whispering
voice,

So strange appear'd, in truth I liked it not.

Give me thy hand. — Where is the stranger dame?
If she in trouble be —

Lorne (aside).

Make these withdraw,

And I will lead her hither.

[*Exit, while the earl waves his hand, and DU-
GALD and attendants, &c. go out: presently
re-enter LORNE, leading in HELEN, covered
closely up in a mantle.*]

Lorne. This is the dame, who, houseless and de-
serted,

Seeks shelter here, nor fears to be rejected.

*Helen (sinking down, and clasping ARGYLL's
knees).* My father!

Arg. That voice! — O God! — unveil — unveil,
for mercy!

[*Tearing off the mantle that conceals her.*]
My child! my Helen!

[*Clasping her to his heart, and holding her there
for some time, unable to speak.*]

My child! my dearest child! — my soul! my pride!
Deserted! — houseless! — com'st thou to me thus?
Here is thy house — thy home: this aged bosom
Thy shelter is, which thou shalt quit no more.

My child! my child!

[*Embracing her again; HELEN and he weeping
upon one another's necks.*]

Houseless! deserted! — 'neath the cope of heaven
Breathes there a wretch who could desert thee? —

Speak,

If he hath so abused his precious trust,

If he — it makes me tear these hoary locks
To think what I have done! — Oh thoughtless
father!

Thoughtless and selfish too!

[*Tearing his hair, beating his forehead with all
the violent gestures of rage and grief.*

Helen. Oh! forbear! It was not you, my
father;

I gave myself away: I did it willingly:
We acted both for good; and now your love
Repay me richly — stands to me instead
Of many blessings. — Noble Lorne, besides —
O, he hath been to me so kind — so tender!

[*Taking her brother's hand, and pressing it to
her breast; then joining her father's to it, and
pressing them both ardently to her lips.*

Say not I am deserted: heaven hath chid me —
Hath chid me sorely: but hath bless'd me too, —
O, dearly bless'd me!

Arg. Hath chid thee sorely! — how I burn to
hear it!

What hast thou suffer'd? [chamber,
Lorne. We will not tell thee now. Go to thy
And be awhile composed. We have, my father,
A tale to tell that will demand of thee
Recruited strength to hear. — We'll follow thee.

[*Exeunt; LORNE supporting his father and
HELEN into the chamber.*

SCENE II.

The garden of the castle.

*Enter ARGYLL, LORNE, and SIR HUBERT DE GREY,
speaking as they enter.*

Lorne. A month! — A week or two! — No, not
an hour

Would I suspend our vengeance. Such atrocity
Makes e'en the little term between our summons,
And the dark crowding round our martial pipes
Of plumed bonnets nodding to the wind,
Most tedious seem; yea, makes the impatient foot
To smite the very earth beneath its tread,
For being fix'd and inert.

Arg. Beless impatient, John: thou canst not doubt
A father's keen resentment of such wrong:
But let us still be wise; this short delay
Will make revenge the surer; to its aim
A just direction give.

De Grey. The earl is right:
We shall but work in the dark, impatient Lorne,
If we too soon begin.

Arg. How far Maclean
Hath to this horrible attempt consented,
Or privy been, we may be certified,
By waiting silently to learn the tale
That he will tell us of his lady's loss,
When he shall send to give us notice of it,
As doubtless soon he will.

De Grey. If he, beset and threaten'd, to those
fiends,

Unknowing of their purpose, hath unwillingly
Committed her, he will himself, belike,
If pride prevent him not, your aid solicit
To set him free from his disgraceful thralldom.

Lorne. And if he should, shrunk be this sinew'd
arm,

If it unsheath a weapon in his cause!
Let ev'ry ragged stripling on his lands
In wanton mock'ry mouth him with contempt;
Benlora head his vassals; and Lochtarish —
That serpent, full of ev'ry devilish wile,
His prison-keeper and his master be!

De Grey. Ay; and the keeper also of his son,
The infant heir.

Lorne (starting). I did not think of this.

Arg. Then let thy headstrong fury pause upon it.
Thanks to Sir Hubert's prudence! thou as yet
Before thy followers hast restrained been;
And who this lady is, whom to the castle,
Like a mysterious stranger, ye have brought,
From them remains conceal'd. — My brave De Grey!
This thy considerate foresight, join'd to all
Thy other service in this woeful matter,
Hath made us much thy debtor.

De Grey. I have indeed, my lord, consider'd
only

What I believed would Helen's wishes be,
Ere she herself could utter them; if this
Hath proved equivalent to wiser foresight,
Let it direct us still; let Helen's wishes
Your measures guide.

Arg. Ah, brave De Grey! would they had ever
done so!

I had not now —

[*Taking SIR HUBERT'S hand with emotion.*

Forgive me, noble youth!

Alas, alas! the father's tenderness
Before the chieftain's policy gave way,
And all this wreck hath been.

Lorne. 'Tis even so.
That cursed peace; that coward's shadeless face
Of smiles and promises, to all things yielding
With weak, unmanly pliancy, so gain'd you —
Even you, the wise Argyll! — it made me mad!
Who hath no point that he maintains against you,
No firmness hath to hold him of your side:
Who cannot sturdily against me stand,
And say, "Encroach no farther," friend of mine
Shall never be.

De Grey. Nay, Lorne, forbear! — forbear!
Thine own impetuous wilfulness did make
The other's pliant mind more specious seem;
And thou thyself didst to that luckless union,
Although unwittingly, assistance lend.
Make now amends for it, and curb thy spirit,
While that the Earl with calmer judgment waits
His time for action.

Lorne. Beshrew me, but thy counsel strangely
smacks

Of cautious timid age! In faith, De Grey,
But that I know thy noble nature well,
I could believe thee——

Arg. Peace, unruly spirit!
Bold as thou art, methinks, with locks like these,
Thy father still may say to thee, "Be silent!"

Lorne (checking himself, and bowing very low to
ARGYLL). And be obey'd devoutly. — O
forgive me!

Those locks are to your brows a kingly fillet
Of strong authority, to which my heart
No rebel is, though rude may be my words.

[*Taking SIR HUBERT's hand with an assured*
countenance.

I ask not thee, De Grey, to pardon me.
Resistance here with gentleness is join'd:
Therefore I've loved thee, and have laid upon thee
The hand of sure possession! claiming still
A friend's endurance of my froward temper,
Which, froward as it is, from thee hath borne
What never human being but thyself
Had dared to goad it with.

De Grey. It is indeed
Thy well-earn'd right thou askest, noble Lorne,
And it is yielded to thee cheerfully.

Arg. My aged limbs are tired with pacing here;
Some one approaches: within that grove
We'll find a shady seat, and there conclude
This well-debated point. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

A court within the castle, surrounded with buildings.

Enter DUGALD and a Vassal, two servants at the
same time crossing the stage, with covered dishes in
their hands.

Vas. I'll wait until the Earl shall be at leisure;
My business presses not. Where do they carry
Those cover'd meats? Have ye within the castle
Some new prisoner?

Dugald. Would so it were! but these are days of
peace.

They bear them to the stranger dame's apartment,
Whom they have told thee of. There, at her door,
An ancient faithful handmaid of the house,
Whate'er they bring receives; for none beside
Of the household is admitted.

Vas. Now, by my fay! my purse and dirk I'd
give

To know who this may be. — Some chieftain's lady
Whom John of Lorne——

Dugald. Nay, there, I must believe,
Thou guesst erringly. — I grant, indeed,
He doffs his bonnet to each tacks-man's wife,
And is with every coif amongst them all,
Both young and old, in such high favour held,

Nor maiden, wife, nor beldame of the clan
But to the Earl doth her petition bring
Through intercession of the Lord of Lorne;
But never yet did husband, sire, or brother,
Of wrong from him complain.

Vas. I know it well.

Dugald. But be she who she may,
This stranger here; I doubt not, friend, ere long,
We shall have bickering for her in the field
With some fierce foe or other.

Vas. So I trust:
And by my honest faith! this peace of ours
Right long and tiresome is. — I thought, ere now,
Some of our restless neighbours would have tres-
pass'd

And inroads made: but no; Argyll and Lorne
Have grown a terror to them: all is quiet;
And we ourselves must the aggressors be,
Or still this dull and slothful life endure,
Which makes our men of three-score years and
ten

To fret and murmur.

Enter ROSA, with a servant conducting her.

Serv. (to DUGALD). A lady here, would see my
Lord of Lorne.

Dugald. Yes, still to him they come.

[*Looking at ROSA.*
Ha! see I rightly?

Rosa from Mull?

Rosa. Yes, Dugald; here thou seest
A woeful bearer of unwelcome tidings.

Dugald. What, hath thy lady sent thee?

Rosa. Alas, alas! I have no lady now.

Dugald. Ha! is she dead? not many days ago
She was alive and well. — Hast thou so soon
The castle quitted — left thy lady's corse?

Rosa. Thinkst thou I would have left her? —
On the night

When, as they say, she died, I from the castle
By force was ta'en, and to mainland convey'd;
Where in confinement I remain'd, till chance
Gave me the means of breaking from my prison;
And hither am I come, in woeful plight,
The dismal tale to tell.

Dugald. A tale, indeed,
Most dismal, strange, and sudden.

Rosa. How she died
God knows; but much I fear foul play she had.
Where is the Lord of Lorne? for first to him
I wish to speak.

Dugald. Come, I will lead thee to him. — Had
foul play!

Vassal. Fell fiends they are could shed her
blood! If this

Indeed hath been, 'twill make good cause, I wot;
The warlike pipe will sound our summons soon.

[*Exeunt DUGALD and ROSA, &c., as ARGYLL*
and SIR HUBERT enter by the opposite side.

Arg. And wilt thou leave us then, my noble friend ?

May we not still for some few days retain thee ?

De Grey. Where'er I go, I carry in my heart
A warm remembrance of the friendly home
That still within these hospitable walls
I've found ; but longer urge me not to stay.
In Helen's presence now, constrain'd and strange,
With painful caution, chasing from my lips
The ready thought, half-quiver'd into utterance,
For cold corrected words, expressive only
Of culprit consciousness,—I sit ; nor e'en
May look upon her face but as a thing
On which I may not look ; so painful now
The mingled feeling is, since dark despair
With one faint ray of hope hath temper'd been.
I can no more endure it. She herself
Perceives it, and it pains her.—Let me then
Bid you farewell, my lord. When evening comes,
I'll, under favour of the rising moon,
Set forth.

Arg. Indeed ! so soon ? and must it be ?

De Grey. Yes ; to Northumberland without delay

I fain would take my road. My aged father
Looks now impatiently for my return.

Arg. Then I'll no longer urge thee. To thy father,

The noble baron, once, in better days,
My camp-mate and my friend, I must resign thee.
Bear to him every kind and cordial wish
An ancient friend can send, and —

[*A horn heard without.*

Hark ! that horn !

Some messenger of moment is arrived.—
We'll speak of this again.—The moon to-night
Is near the full, and at an early hour —

Enter a Messenger, bearing a letter.

Whose messenger art thou, who in thy hand
That letter bearest with broad and sable seal,
Which seems to bring to me some dismal tidings ?

Mess. From Mull, my lord, I come ; and the
Maclean,

Our chief, commission'd me to give you this,
Which is indeed with dismal tidings fraught.

[*ARGYLL opens the letter, and reads it with affected surprise and sorrow.*

Arg. Heavy, indeed, and sudden is the loss —
The sad calamity that hath befallen.
The will of heaven be done !

[*Putting a handkerchief to his eyes, and leaning, as if for support, upon SIR HUBERT ; then, after a pause, turning to the messenger.*

How didst thou leave the chieftain ? He, I hope,
Permits not too much sorrow to o'ercome
His manhood. Doth he bear his grief composedly ?

Mess. O no, it is most violent ! At the funeral,
Had not the good Lochtarish, by his side,

Supported him, he had with very grief
Sunk to the earth.—And good Lochtarish too
Was in right great affliction.

Arg. Ay, good man ;
I doubt it not.—Ye've had a splendid funeral ?

Mess. O yes, my lord ! that have we had. Good truth !

A grand and stately burial has it been.
Three busy days and nights through all the isle
Have bagpipes play'd, and sparkling beakers
flow'd ;

And never corse, I trow, i' th' earth was laid
With louder lamentations.

Arg. Ay, I doubt not,
Their grief was loud enough.—Pray pass ye in.
(*To attendants at a distance.*) Conduct him there ;
and see that he be treated,
After his tedious journey, as befits
A way-tired stranger.

[*Exeunt all but ARGYLL and SIR HUBERT.*
This doth all hope and all belief exceed.

Maclean will shortly follow this his notice,
[*Giving SIR HUBERT the letter.*

To make me here a visit of condolence ;
And thus within our power they put themselves
With most assured blindness.

De Grey (after reading it). 'Tis Lochtarish,
In all the arts of dark hypocrisy
So deeply skill'd, who doth o'ershoot his mark,
As such full often do.

Arg. And let him come !
At his own arts we trust to match him well.—

Their force, I guess, is not in readiness ;
Therefore, meantime, to stifle all suspicion,
This specious mummery he hath devised ;
And his most wretched chief, led by his will,
Most wretchedly submits.—Well, let us go
And tell to Lorne the news, lest too unguardedly
He should receive it. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

An apartment in the castle.

Enter SIR HUBERT DE GREY, beckoning to ROSA, who appears on the opposite side.

De Grey. Rosa ; I pray thee, spare me of thy
leisure

Some precious moments : something would I say :
Wilt thou now favour me ?

Rosa. Most willingly.

De Grey. As yet thy mistress knows not of the
letter

Sent by Maclean, announcing his design
Of paying to the earl this sudden visit—
This mockery of condolence ?

Rosa. No ; the earl

Forbade me to inform her.

De Grey. This is well ;

Her mind must be prepared. Meantime I go,
And thou art here to comfort and attend her :
O do it gently, Rosa ! do it wisely !

Rosa. You need not doubt my will. — Go ye so soon ;

And to Northumberland ?

De Grey. So I intended.

And so Argyll and John of Lorne believe :
But since this messenger from Mull arrived,
Another thought has struck me. — Saidst thou not
The child — thy lady's child, ta'en from the castle,
Is to the keeping of Lochtarish' mother
Committed, whose lone house is on the shore ?

Rosa. Yes, whilst in prison pent, so did I hear
My keeper say, and much it troubled me.

De Grey. Canst thou to some good islander com-
mend me,

Within whose house I might upon the watch
Conceal'd remain ? — It is to Mull I go,
And not to England. While Maclean is here,
Attended by his vassals, the occasion
I'll seize to save the infant.

Rosa. Bless thee for it !

Heaven bless thee for the thought ! — I know a
man —

An aged fisherman, who will receive you ;
Uncle to Morton : and if he himself
Still in the island be, there will you find him,
Most willing to assist you.

De Grey. Hush, I pray

I hear thy lady's steps.

Rosa. Near to the castle gate, ere you depart,
I'll be in waiting to inform you farther
Of what may aid your purpose.

De Grey. Do, good Rosa,

And make me much thy debtor. But be secret.

Rosa. You need not doubt me.

*Enter HELEN, and DE GREY goes up to her as if he
would speak, but the words falter on his lips, and
he is silent.*

Helen. Alas ! I see it is thy parting visit ;

Thou com'st to say "farewell !" [thee

De Grey. Yes, Helen : I am come to leave with

A friend's dear benison — a parting wish —

A last — rest ev'ry blessing on thy head !

Be this permitted to me :

[*Kissing her hand with profound respect.*

Fare thee well !

Heaven aid and comfort thee ! Farewell ! farewell !

[*Is about to retire hastily, whilst HELEN follows
to prevent him.*

Helen. O go not from me with that mournful
look !

Alas ! thy gen'rous heart, depress'd and sunk,

Looks on my state too sadly. —

I am not, as thou thinkst, a thing so lost

In woe and wretchedness. — Believe not so !

All whom misfortune with her rudest blasts

Hath buffeted, to gloomy wretchedness
Are not therefore abandon'd. Many souls
From cloister'd cells, from hermits' caves, from holds
Of lonely banishment, and from the dark
And dreary prison-house, do raise their thoughts
With humble cheerfulness to heaven, and feel
A hallow'd quiet, almost akin to joy ;
And may not I, by heaven's kind mercy aided,
Weak as I am, with some good courage bear
What is appointed for me ? — O be cheer'd !
And let not sad and mournful thoughts of me
Depress thee thus. — When thou art far away,
Thou'lt hear, the while, that in my father's house
I spend my peaceful days, and let it cheer thee.
I too shall ev'ry southern stranger question,
Whom chance may to these regions bring, and learn
Thy fame and prosperous state.

De Grey. My fame and prosperous state, while
thou art thus !

If thou in calm retirement liv'st contented,
Lifting thy soul to heaven, what lack I more ?
My sword and spear, changed to a pilgrim's staff,
Will be a prosperous state ; and for my fame, —
A feeble sound that after death remains,
The echo of an unrepeat'd stroke
That fades away to silence, — surely this
Thou dost not covet for me.

Helen. Ah, I do !

Yet, granting here I err, didst thou not promise
To seek in wedded love and active duties
Thy share of cheerful veal ? — and dost thou now
Shrink from thy gen'rous promise ? — No, thou
shalt not.

I hold thee bound — I claim it of thee boldly.

It is my right. If thou, in sad seclusion,

A lonely wanderer art, thou dost extinguish

The ray that should have cheer'd my gloom : thou
makest

What else had been a calm and temper'd sorrow,

A state of wretchedness. — O no ! thou wilt not !

Take to thy gen'rous heart some virtuous maid,

And doubt not thou a kindred heart will find.

The cheerful tenderness of woman's nature

To thine is suited, and when join'd to thee,

Will grow in virtue : — Take thou then this ring,

If thou wilt honour so my humble gift,

And put it on her hand ; and be assured

She who shall wear it, — she whose happy fate

Is link'd with thine, will prove a noble mate.

De Grey. O there I am assured ! she whose fate

Is link'd with mine, if fix'd be such decree,

Most rich in every soft and noble trait

Of female virtue is : in this full well

Assured I am. — I would — I thought — forgive —

I speak but raving words : — a hasty spark,

Blown and extinguish'd, makes me waver thus.

Permit me then again.

[*Kissing her hand.*

High heaven protect thee !

Farewell !

Helen. Farewell! and heaven's good charge be thou!

[*They part, and both turn away to opposite sides of the stage, when SIR HUBERT, looking round just as he is about to go off, and seeing HELEN also looking after him sorrowfully, eagerly returns.*

De Grey. Ah! are those looks—

[*Going to kneel at her feet, but immediately checking himself with much embarrassment.*

Alas! why come I back?

Something there was—thou gavest me a ring;
I have not dropp'd it?

Rosa (coming forward). No, 'tis on your finger.

De Grey. Ay, true, good Rosa; but my wits are wilder'd;

I knew not what I sought.—

Farewell! farewell!

[*Exit DE GREY hastily, while HELEN and ROSA go off by the opposite side.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

ARGYLL's castle, the vestibule, or grand entrance; a noise of bustle and voices heard without, and servants seen crossing the stage, as the scene opens.

Enter DUGALD, meeting 1st servant.

Dugald. They are arrived, Maclean and all his train;

Run quickly, man, and give our chieftains notice.

1st serv. They know already: from the tower we spied

The mournful cavalcade: the Earl and Lorne
Are down the staircase hasting to receive them.

Dugald. I've seen them light, a sooty-coated train,

With lank and woeful faces, and their eyes
Bent to the ground, as though our castle gate
Had been the scutcheon'd portal of a tomb,
Set open to receive them.

2d serv. Ay, on the pavement fall their heavy steps

Measured and slow, as if her palled coffin
They follow'd still.

Dugald. Hush, man! Here comes the Earl,
With face composed and stern; but look behind him

How John of Lorne doth gnaw his nether lip,
And beat his clenched hand against his thigh,
Like one who tampers with half-bridled ire!

2d serv. Has any one offended him?

Dugald. Be silent,

For they will overhear thee.—Yonder too

[*Pointing to the opposite side of the stage.*

Come the Macleans: let us our stations keep,
And see them meet.

[*Retiring with the other to the bottom of the stage.*

Enter ARGYLL and LORNE, attended, and in deep mourning; while, at the same time, by the opposite side of the stage, enter MACLEAN, BENLORA, LOCHTARISH, and GLENFADDEN, with attendants, also in deep mourning: ARGYLL and MACLEAN go up to one another, and formally embrace.

Arg. Welcome! if such a cheerful word as this
May with our deep affliction suited be.

Lochtarish too, and brave Benlora, ay,
And good Glenfadden also,—be ye all

With due respect received, as claims your worth.

[*Taking them severally by the hand as he names them. MACLEAN then advances to embrace LORNE, who shrinks back from him, but immediately correcting himself, bends his body another way, as if suddenly seized with some violent pain.*

Arg. (to MACLEAN). Regard him not: he hath imprudently

A recent wound exposed to chilling air,
And oft the pain with sudden pang attacks him.

Loch. Ay, what is shrewder? we have felt the like,

And know it well, my lord.

Arg. (bowing to LOCHTARISH, but continuing to speak to MACLEAN). Yet, ne'ertheless, good
son-in-law and chieftain,

Believe thou well that with a brother's feelings,
Proportion'd to the dire and dismal case
That hath befallen, he now receives you; also
Receiving these your friends with equal favour.
This is indeed to us a woeful meeting,
Chieftain of Mull.

[*Looking keenly in his face, while the other shuns his eye.*

I see full well the change
Which violent grief upon that harrow'd visage
So deeply hath impress'd.

Mac. (still embarrassed, and shrinking from ARGYLL's observation). Ah! ah! the woeful day!
—I cannot speak.

Alas, alas!

Arg. Alas, in truth,

Too much the woeful widower's alter'd looks,
Upon thy face I see.

Loch. (to ARGYLL). You see, my lord, his eyes
with too much weeping [marvel:
Are weak, and shun the light. Nor should we
What must to him the sudden loss have been,
When even to us, who were more distantly
Connected with her rare and matchless virtue,
It brought such keen affliction?

Arg. Yes, good Lochtarish, I did give her to you—
To your right worthy chief, a noble creature,
With every kindly virtue—every grace

That might become a noble chieftain's wife :
And that ye have so well esteem'd — so well
Regarded, cherish'd, and respected her,
As your excessive sorrow now declares,
Receive from me a grateful father's thanks.
Lochtarish, most of all to thy good love
I am beholden.

Loch. Ah ! small was the merit
Such goodness to respect.

Arg. And thou, Benlora ;
A woman, and a stranger, on the brave
Still potent claims maintain ; and little doubt I
They were by thee regarded.

[*BENLORA steps back, frowning sternly, and remains silent.*

And, Glenfadden,

Be not thy merits overlook'd.

Glen. Alas !
You overrate, my lord, such slender service.

Arg. Wrong not, I pray, thy modest worth. —
But here, [*Turning again to MACLEAN.*
Here most of all, from whom her gentle virtues,
(And so indeed it right and fitting was,)
Their best and dearest recompense received,
To thee, most generous chieftain, let me pay
The thanks that are thy due.

Mac. Oh, oh ! alas ! [*eyes*
Arg. Ay, in good sooth ! I see thy grief-worn
Do shun the light.

But grief is ever sparing of its words.
In brief, I thank you all : and for the love
Ye have so dearly shown to me and mine,
I trust, before we part, to recompense you
As suits your merit and my gratitude.

Lorne (*aside to ARGYLL*). Ay, father ; now ye
speak to them shrewd words ;
And now I'm in the mood to back you well.

Arg. (*aside to LORNE*). 'Tis well thou art ; but
check those eager looks ;
Lochtariſh eyes thee keenly.

[*Directing a hasty glance to LOCHTARISH, who is whispering to GLENFADDEN, and looking suspiciously at LORNE.*

Lorne (*stepping forward to MACLEAN, &c.*). Chieftain, and honour'd gentlemen, I pray

The sullen, stern necessity excuse
Which pain imposed upon me, and receive,
Join'd with my noble father's, such poor thanks
As I may offer to your loving worth.

Arg. Pass on, I pray you ; till the feast be ready,
Rest ye above, where all things are prepared
For your refreshment. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A narrow arched room or closet, adjoining to a gallery.

Enter LOCHTARISH and GLENFADDEN.

Loch. How liketh thou this, Glenfadden ? Doth
the face

Argyll assumes, of studied courtesy,
Raise no suspicion ?

Glen. Faith, I know not well ! —
The speech, indeed, with which he welcomed us,
Too wordy, and too artificial seem'd
To be the native growth of what he felt.

Loch. It so to me appear'd : and John of Lorne,
First shrinking from Maclean, with sudden pain,
As he pretended, struck ; then stern and silent ;
Till presently assuming, like his father,
A courtesy minute and over-studied,
He glozed us with his thanks : —
Didst thou not mark his keenly flashing eye,
When spoke Argyll of recompensing us
Before we part ?

Glen. I did indeed observe it.

Loch. This hath a meaning.

Glen. Faith, I do suspect
Some rumour must have reach'd their ear ; and yet
Our agents faithful are ; it cannot be.

Loch. Or can, or can it not, beneath this roof
A night I will not sleep. When evening comes
Meet we again. If at this banquet, aught
Shall happen to confirm our fears, forthwith
Let us our safety seek in speedy flight.

Glen. And leave Maclean behind us ?

Loch. Ay, and Benlora too. Affairs the better
At Mull will thrive, when we have rid our hands
Of both these hind'rances, who in our way
Much longer may not be. [*Listening.*

We're interrupted.

Let us into the gallery return,
And join the company with careless face,
Like those who have from curiosity
But stepp'd aside to view the house. — Make haste !
It is Argyll and Lorne.

[*Exeunt, looking at the opposite side, alarmed, at which enter ARGYLL and LORNE.*

Lorne. Are you not now convinced ? his conscious
guilt

Is in his downcast and embarrass'd looks,
And careful shunning of all private converse
Whene'er aside you've drawn him from his train,
Too plainly seen : you cannot now, my lord,
Doubt of his share in this atrocious deed.

Arg. Yet, Lorne, I would, ere further we proceed,
Prove it more fully still. The dinner hour
Is now at hand. [*Listening.*

What steps are those,
That in the gallery, close to this door,
Like some lone straggler from the company
Withdrawn, sound quickly pacing to and fro ?
Look out and see.

Lorne (*going to the door, and calling back to ARGYLL in a low voice*). It is Maclean himself.

Arg. Beckon him hither then. — Thank heaven
for this !

Now opportunity is fairly given,

If that constrainedly he cloaks their guilt,
To free him from their toils.

Enter MACLEAN, conducted by LORNE.

Arg. (to MACLEAN). My son, still in restraint
before our vassals

Have we conversed ; but now in privacy—
Start not, I pray thee :—sit thee down, Maclean :
I would have close and private words of thee :
Sit down, I pray ; my aged limbs are tired.

[*ARGYLL and MACLEAN sit down, whilst LORNE stands behind them, with his ear bent eagerly to listen, and his eyes fixed with a side-glance on MACLEAN.*

Chieftain, I need not say to thee, who deeply
Lament'st with us our sad untimely loss,
How keenly I have felt it.—

And now indulge a father in his sorrow,
And say how died my child.—Was her disease
Painful as it was sudden ?

Mac. It was—alas ! I know not how it was.
A fell disease !—Her end was so appointed.

Lorne (behind). Ay, that I doubt not.

Mac. A fearful malady ! though it received
All good assistance.

Lorne (behind). That I doubt not either.

Mac. A cruel ill !—but how it dealt with her,
My grief o'erwhelm'd me so, I could not tell.

Arg. Say—wast thou present ? didst thou see
her die ?

Mac. Oh, oh ! the woeful sight, that I should
see it !

Arg. Thou didst not see it then ?

Mac. Alack ! alack !

O would that I had seen—O woe is me !

Her pain—her agony was short to mine !

Lorne (behind, impatiently). Is this an answer,
chieftain, to the question

Argyll hath plainly ask'd thee—wast thou present
When Helen died ? didst thou behold her death ?

Mac. O yes ; indeed I caught your meaning
lamely ;

I meant—I thought—I know not certainly
The very time and moment of her death,
Although within my arms she breathed her last.

Lorne (rushing forward eagerly). Now are we
answered.

[*ARGYLL, covering his face with his hands, throws himself back in his chair for some time without speaking.*

Mac. (to ARGYLL). I fear, my lord, too much I
have distress'd you.

Arg. Somewhat you have indeed.—And further
now

I will not press your keen and recent sorrow
With questions that so much renew its anguish.

Mac. You did, belike, doubt of my tenderness.

Arg. O no ! I have no doubts. Within your arms
She breathed her last ?

Mac. Within my arms she died.
Arg. (looking hard at MACLEAN, and then turning away). His father was a brave and honest
chief !

Mac. What says my lord ?

Arg. A foolish exclamation,
Of no determined meaning. [*Bell sounds without.*
Dry our tears :

The hall-bell warns us to the ready feast ;
And through the gallery I hear the sound
Of many footsteps hastening to the call.
Chieftain, I follow thee.

[*Exeunt ARGYLL and MACLEAN.*

Lorne (alone, stopping to listen). The castle,
throng'd throughout with moving life,
From every winding stair, and arched aisle,
A mingled echo sends.

Ay ; light of foot, I hear their sounding steps
A-trooping to the feast, who never more
At feast shall sit, or social meal partake.

O wretch ! O fiend of vile hypocrisy !
How fiercely burns my blood within my veins
Till I am match'd with thee ! [*Exit.*

SCENE III.

The great hall of the castle, with a feast set out, and the company already placed at table, with servants and attendants in waiting, who fill the stage in every part : ARGYLL is seated at the head of the table, with MACLEAN on his left hand, and a chair left empty on his right.

Arg. (to MACLEAN, &c.) Most worthy chief, and
honour'd guests and kinsmen,

I crave your pardon for this short delay :
One of our company is wanting still,
For whom we have reserved this empty place ;
Nor will the chief of Mull unkindly take it,
That on our better hand this chair of honour
Is for a lady kept.

Omnes. A lady !

[*A general murmur of surprise is heard through the hall.*

Arg. Yes ;
Who henceforth of this house the mistress is ;
And were it palace of our Scottish king,
Would so deserve to be.

Omnes. We give you joy, my lord.

[*A confused murmur heard again.*

Mac. We give you joy, my lord : your age is
bless'd.

We little thought, in these our funeral weeds,
A bridal feast to darken.

Lorne. No, belike.
Many who don their coat at break of day,
Know not what shall befal them, therein girt,
Ere evening close. [*Assuming a gay tone.*
The Earl hath set a step-dame o'er my head

To cow my pride—What think you, brave Maclean?
This world so fleeting is and full of change,
Some lose their wives, I trow, and others find them.
Bridegrooms and widowers do, side by side,
Their beakers quaff; and which of them at heart
Most glad or sorry is, the subtle fiend,
Who in men's hollow hearts his council holds,
He wotteth best, though each good man will swear,
His, *lost or found*, all other dames excell'd.

Arg. Curb, Lorne, thy saucy tongue: Maclean himself

Shall judge if she—the lady I have found,
Equal in beauty her whom he hath lost.

In worth I'm sure she does. But hush! she comes.

[*A great commotion through the hall amongst the attendants, &c.*

Ommes. It is the lady.

Arg. (*rising from his seat, and making signs to the attendants nearest the door*). Ho there! make room, and let the lady pass.

[*The servants, &c. stand apart, ranging themselves on every side to let the lady pass; and enter HELEN, magnificently dressed, with a deep white veil over her face; while LORNE, going forward to meet her, conducts her to her chair on ARGYLL's right hand.*

Arg. (*to the CAMPBELLS*). Now, fill a cup of welcome to our friends!

Loch. (*to MACLEAN*). Chieftain, forgettest thou to greet the lady?

Mac. (*turning to ARGYLL*). Nay, rather give, my lord, might I presume,

Our firstling cup to this fair lady's health,
The noble dame of this right princely house.
And though close veil'd she be, her beauty's lustre
I little question.

[*Fills up a goblet, while LOCHTARISH, BENLORA, &c. follow his example, and standing up, bow to the lady.*

Your health, most noble dame!

[*HELEN, rising also, bows to him, and throws back her veil: the cup falls from his hands; all the company start up from table; screams and exclamations of surprise are heard from all corners of the hall, and confused commotion seen every where. MACLEAN, LOCHTARISH, and GLENFADDEN, stand appalled and motionless; but BENLORA, looking fiercely round him, draws his sword.*

Ben. What! are we here like deer bay'd in a nook?

And think ye so to slay us, crafty foe?

No, by my faith! like such we will not fall,
Arms in our hands, though by a thousand foes
Encompass'd. Cruel, murderous, ruthless men,
Too good a warrant have you now to think us,
But cowards never!

Rouse ye, base Macleans!

And thou, whose subtlety around us thus

With wreckful skill these cursed toils hast wound,
Sinks thy base spirit now? [*To LOCHTARISH.*

Arg. (*holding up his hand*). Be silence in the hall!

Macleans, ye are my guests; but if the feast
Delight you not, free leave ye have to quit it.
Lorne, see them all, with right due courtesy,
Safely protected to the castle gate.

[*Turning to MACLEAN.*

Here, other name than chieftain or Maclean
He may not give thee; but, without our walls,
If he should call thee murderer, traitor, coward,
Weapon to weapon, let your fierce contention
Be fairly held, and he, who first shall yield,
The liar be.—

Campbells! I charge you there,
Free passage for the chieftain and his train.

[*MACLEAN and LOCHTARISH, &c., without speaking, quit the hall through the crowd of attendants, who divide, and form a line to let them pass. HELEN, who had sunk down almost senseless upon her seat, seeing the hall cleared of the crowd, who go out after the MACLEANS, now starts up, and catches hold of ARGYLL with an imploring look of strong distress.*

Helen. O father! well I know foul are his crimes,

But what—O what, am I, that for my sake
This bloody strife should be?—O think, my lord!
He gave consent and sanction to my death,
But thereon could not look: and at your gate—
E'en on your threshold, must his life be ta'en?
For well I know the wrath of Lorne is deadly.
And gallant Lorne himself, if scath should be,—
O pity! pity!—O for pity stay them!

Arg. Let go thy hold, weak woman: pity now!

Rosa, support her hence.

[*Committing her to ROSA, who now comes forward, and tearing himself away.*

Helen (*endeavouring to run after him, and catch hold of him again*). O be not stern! beneath the ocean rather

Would I had sunk to rest, than been the cause
Of horrid strife like this! O pity! pity!

[*Exeunt, she running out after him distractedly.*

SCENE IV.

Before the gate of the castle: a confused noise of an approaching crowd heard within, and presently enter, from the gate, MACLEAN, BENLORA, LOCHTARISH, and GLENFADDEN, with their attendants, conducted by LORNE, and followed by a crowd of CAMPBELLS, who range themselves on both sides of the stage.

Lorne (*to MACLEAN*). Now, chieftain, we the gate have pass'd,—the bound

That did restrain us. Host and guest no more,
But deadly foes we stand, who from this spot
Shall never both with life depart. Now, turn,
And boldly say to him, if so thou darest,
Who calls thee villain, murd'rer, traitor, coward,
That he belies thee. Turn then, chief of Mull!
Here, man to man, my single arm to thine,
I give thee battle; or, refusing this,
Our captive here retain thee to be tried
Before the summon'd vassals of our clans,
As suits thy rank and thine atrocious deeds.
Take thou thy choice.

Mac. Yes, John of Lorne, I turn.
This turf on which we tread my death-bed is;
This hour my latest term; this sky of light
The last that I shall look on. Draw thy sword:
The guilt of many crimes o'erwhelms my spirit
But never will I shame my brave Macleans,
By dying, as their chief, a coward's death.

Ben. What! shalt thou fight alone, and we stand
by
Idly to look upon it? [*Going up fiercely to LORNE.*
Turn me out

The boldest, brawnier Campbell of your bands;
Ay, more than one, as many as you will;
And I the while, albeit these locks be grey,
Leaning my aged back against this tree,
Will show your youngsters how, in other days,
Macleans did fight, when baited round with foes.

Lorne. Be still, Benlora; other sword than
these,

Thy chiefs' and mine, shall not this day be drawn.
If I prevail against him, here with us
Our captives you remain. If I be conquer'd,
Upon the faith and honour of a chieftain,
Ye shall again to Mull in safety go.

Ben. Spoken like a noble chieftain!

Lorne. Ye shall, I say, to Mull in safety go.
But there prepare ye to defend your coast
Against a host of many thousand Campbells.
In which, be well assured, swords as good
As John of Lorne's, to better fortune join'd,
Shall of your crimes a noble vengeance take.

[*LORNE and MACLEAN fight; and, after a
combat of some length, MACLEAN is mortally
wounded, and the CAMPBELLS give a loud shout.*

Mac. It is enough, brave Lorne; this wound is
death:

And better deed thou couldst not do upon me,
Than rid me of a life disgraced and wretched.
But guilty though I be, thou seest full well,
That to the brave opposed, arms in hand,
I am no coward. — Oh! could I as bravely,
In home-raised broils, with violent men have
striv'n,

It had been well: but there, alas! I proved
A poor, irresolute, and nerveless wretch.

[*After a pause, and struggling for breath.*
To live, alas! in good men's memories

Detested and condemn'd: — to be with her
For whom I thought to be — Come, gloomy
grave!

Thou covrest all!

[*After another painful struggle, every one stand-
ing in deep silence round him, and LORNE
bending over him compassionately.*

Pardon of man I ask not,
And merit not. — Brave Lorne, I ask it not;
Though in thy piteous eye a look I see
That might embolden me. — There is above
One who doth know the weakness of our nature, —
Our thoughts and conflicts: — all that e'er have
breathed, [soul
The bann'd and bless'd must pass to Him: — my
Into His hands, in humble penitence,
I do commit. [*Dies.*

Lorne. And may Heaven pardon thee, unhappy
man!

*Enter ARGYLL, and HELEN following him, attended
by ROSA.*

Lorne (to attendants). Alas, prevent her!
[*Endeavouring to keep her back.*
Helen, come not hither:

This is no sight for thee.

Helen (pressing forward, and seeing the body).
Oh! oh! and hast thou dealt with him so
quickly,

Thou fell and ruthless Lorne? — No time allow'd?
[*Kneeling by the body.*

O that within that form sense still were lodged!
To hear my voice, — to know that in my heart
No thought of thee — Let others scan thy deeds,
Pitied and pardon'd art thou here.

[*Her hand on her breast.*

Alas!

So quickly fell on thee th' avenging stroke,
No sound of peace came to thy dying ear,
No look of pity to thy closing eyes!
Pitied and pardon'd art thou in this breast,
But canst not know it now. — Alas! alas!

Arg. (to attendants). Prepare ye speedily to
move the body.

Mean time, our prisoners within the castle
Secure ye well.

[*To other attendants, who lay hold of LOCH-
TARISH and GLENFADDEN, while BENLORA,
drawing his sword, attacks furiously those who
attempt to seize and disarm him, and they,
closing round and endeavouring to overpower
him, he is mortally wounded in the scuffle.*

Ben. Ay, bear me now within your prison walls;
Alive indeed, thought ye to bind me? No.
Two years within your dungeons have I lived,
But lived for vengeance: closed that hope, the
earth

Close o'er me too! — Alive to bind Benlora!

[*Falls.*

Lorne (running up to him). Ha! have ye slain him? — Fierce and warlike spirit!
I'm glad that thou hast had a soldier's death,
Arms in thy hands, all savage as thou art.

[Turning to LOCHTARISH and GLENFADDEN.
But thou, the artful, base, contriving villain,
Who hast of an atrocious, devilish act
The mover been, and this thy vile associate,
Prepare ye for the villains' shameful end,
Ye have so dearly earn'd.

[Waving his hand for the attendants to lead them off.

Loch. Be not so hasty, *Lorne*. — Thinkst thou indeed

Ye have us here within your grasp, and nought
Of hostage or security retain'd
For our protection?

Lorne. What dost thou mean?

Loch. Deal with us as ye will:
But if within a week, return'd to Mull,
In safety I appear not, with his blood,
The helpless heir, thy sister's infant son,
Who in my mother's house our pledge is kept,
Must pay the forfeit.

Helen (starting up from the body in an agony of alarm). O horrible! ye will not murder him?

Murder a harmless infant!

Loch. My aged mother, lady, loves her son
As thou dost thine; and she has sworn to do it.

Helen. Has sworn to do it! Oh! her ruthless nature

Too well I know.

(To *Lorne* eagerly.) Loose them, and let them go!

Lorne. Let fiends like these escape?

Arg. (to *HELEN*). He does but threaten
To move our fears: they dare not slay the child.

Helen. They dare! they will! — O if thou art my father!

If Nature's hand e'er twined me to thy heart

As this poor child to mine, have pity on me!

Loose them and let them go! — Nay, do it quickly.

O what is vengeance? Spare my infant's life!

Unpitying *Lorne*! — art thou a brother too?

The hapless father's blood is on thy sword,

And wilt thou slay the child? O spare him! spare him!

[Kneeling to ARGYLL and LORNE, who stand irresolute, when enter SIR HUBERT DE GREY, carrying something in his arms, wrapped up in a mantle, and followed by MORTON. On seeing SIR HUBERT, she springs from the ground, and rushes forward to him.

Ha! art thou here? in blessed hour return'd

To join thy prayers with mine, — to move their hearts —

Their flinty hearts; — to bid them spare my child!

De Grey (lifting up the mantle, and showing a sleeping child). The prayer is heard already:
look thou here

Beneath this mantle where he soundly sleeps.

[*HELEN* utters a cry of joy, and holds out her arms for the child, but at the same time sinks to the ground, embracing the knees of SIR HUBERT. ARGYLL and LORNE run up to him, and all their vassals, &c., crowding round close them about on every side, while a general murmur of exultation is heard through the whole. LOCHTARISH and GLENFADDEN, remaining on the side of the stage with those who guard them, are struck with astonishment and consternation.

Arg. (to those who guard LOCHTARISH, &c. stepping forward from the crowd). Lead to the grated keep your prisoners,

There to abide their doom. Upon the guilty
Our vengeance falls, and only on the guilty.

To all their clan beside, in which I know

Full many a gallant heart included is,

I still extend a hand of amity.

If they reject it, fair and open war

Between us be: and trust we still to find them

The noble, brave Macleans, the valiant foes,

That, ere the dark ambition of a villain,

For wicked ends, their gallant minds had warp'd,

We heretofore had found them.

O that men

In blood so near, in country, and in valour,

Should spend in petty broils their manly strength,

That might, united for the public weal,

On foreign foes such noble service do!

O that the day were come when gazing southron,

Whilst these our mountain warriors, marshall'd forth

To meet in foreign climes their country's foes,

Along their crowded cities slowly march,

To sound of warlike pipe, their plaided bands,

Shall say, with eager fingers pointing thus, [brows:

"Behold those men! — their sunn'd but thoughtful

Their sinewy limbs; their broad and portly chests,

Lapp'd in their native vestments, rude but grace-

ful! —

Those be our hardy brothers of the north; —

The bold and gen'rous race, who have, beneath

The frozen circle and the burning line,

The rights and freedom of our native land

Undauntedly maintain'd."

That day will come,

When in the grave this hoary head of mine,

And many after heads, in death are laid;

And happier men, our sons, shall live to see it.

O may they prize it too with grateful hearts;

And, looking back on these our stormy days

Of other years, pity, admire, and pardon

The fierce, contentious, ill-directed valour

Of gallant fathers, born in darker times!

[The curtain drops.

EPILOGUE.

WRITTEN BY HENRY MACKENZIE, ESQ.

SPOKEN BY MRS. H. SIDDONS, IN HER
ORDINARY DRESS.

WELL ! here I am, those scenes of suff'ring o'er,
Safe among you, "a widow'd thing" no more ;
And though some squeamish critics still contend
That not so soon the tragic tone should end,
Nor flippant Epilogue, with smiling face,
Elbow her serious sister from the place ;
I stand prepared with precedent and custom,
To plead the adverse doctrine—Won't you trust'em ?
I think you will, and now the curtain's down,
Unbend your brows, nor on my prattle frown.

You've seen how, in our country's ruder age,
Our moody lords would let their vassals rage,
And while they drove men's herds, and burnt their
houses,

To some lone isle condemn'd their own poor spouses ;
Their portion—drowning when the tide should serve ;
Their separate aliment—a leave to starve ;
And for the Scottish rights of *Dower* and *Tierce*,
A deep-sea burial, and an empty hearse.

Such was of old the fuss about this matter ;
In our good times, 'tis managed greatly better ;
When modern ladies part with modern lords,
Their business no such tragic tale affords ;
Their "Family Legends," in the *Charter-chest*,
In deeds of ink, not deeds of blood, consist ;
In place of ruffians ambush'd in the dark,
Comes, with his pen, a harmless lawyer's clerk,
Draws a long—bond, my lady packs her things,
And leaves her mate to smooth his ruffled wings.

In the free code of first enlighten'd France,
Marriage was broke for want of *convenance* ;
No fault to find, no grievances to tell,
But, like tight shoes, they did not *fit* quite well.
The lady curtsy'd, with "*Adieu, Monsieur,*"
The husband bow'd, or shrugg'd, "*de tout mon*
cœur !"

"*L'affaire est faite ;*" each partner free to range,
Made life a dance, and every dance a change.

In England's colder soil they scarce contrive
To keep these foreign freedom-plants alive ;
Yet in some gay parterres we've seen, e'en there,
Its blushing fruit this frail exotic bear ;—
Couples make shift to slip the marriage chain,
Cross hands—cast off—and are themselves again.

[*Bell rings.*]

But, soft, I hear the Prompter's summons rung,
That calls me off, and stops my idle tongue ;
A Sage, our fair and virtuous Author's friend,
Shakes his stern head, and bids my nonsense end ;—
Bids me declare, she hopes her parent land
May long this current of the times withstand,
That here, in purity and honour bred,
Shall love and duty wreath the nuptial bed ;
The brave good husband, and his faithful wife,
Revere the sacred charities of life ;
And bid their children, like their sires of old,
Firm, honest, upright, for their country bold,
Here, where "Rome's eagles found unvanquish'd
foes,"

The Gallic vulture fearlessly oppose,
Chase from this favour'd isle, with baffled wing,
Bless'd in its good old laws, old manners, and old
King.

THE MARTYR :

A DRAMA, IN THREE ACTS.

PREFACE*

OF all the principles of human action, Religion is the strongest. It is often, indeed, overcome by others, and even by those which may be considered as very weak antagonists; yet on great emergencies it surmounts them all, and it is master of them all

for general and continued operation. In every country and nation, under some form or other, though often dark and distorted, it holds warfare with vice and immorality; either by destroying corrupted selfishness, or by rendering it tributary. And costly and intolerable to the feelings of nature are the tributes it will voluntarily offer,—fasting, scourging, wounds, and humiliation;—the humiliation of all worldly distinction, when the light of reason as well as the robe of dignity are thrown

* First published in the year 1826.—See Preface to three volumes of Dramas, ante, p. 312.