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CHILDREN OF THE CASTLE

A DRAMA

IN

THREE ACTS

BY

EDWARD FITZBALL

AUTHOR OF

*Jonathan Bradford—Tom Cringle—Paul Clifford—Carmilhan—
Esmeralda—Miller of Derwent—Momentous Question,
&c. &c. &c.*

THOMAS HAILES LACY,
89, STRAND,
(Opposite Southampton Street, Covent Garden Market),
LONDON.

20974X

THE CHILDREN OF THE CASTLE.

*First Performed at the Royal Marylebone Theatre,
On Monday, November 23rd, 1857.*

CHARACTERS.

Lord William, <i>the Knight of Wharley, returned from Palestine</i>	Mr. C. HOLT.
Sir Alif, <i>his Cousin—the Usurper</i>	Mr. G. CLAIR.
Oliver, <i>a faithful Follower of Lord William, in love with Merrybelle</i>	Mr. HAZLEWOOD.
Morven, <i>a Welsh Physician, a creature of Sir Alif</i>	Mr. SMITH.
Goltz, <i>a German, his minion</i>	Mr. WORRELL.
Giles Twinkle, <i>Landlord of the Maypole</i>	Mr. NEVILLE.
Needle, <i>a Tailor</i>	Mr. GARDNER.
Grim, <i>Blacksmith</i>	Mr. HENRY.
The Lady Mabel	Mrs. C. HOLT.
Alice	Miss ELLEN HOLT.
Christiline } Twin Sisters, Daughters of Mabel	Miss MAY HOLT.
Merrybelle, <i>Domestic of the Castle</i>	Miss EMMA ASTEY.
Maude, <i>Wife to Twinkle</i>	Mrs. ATKINS.

COSTUMES.

LORD WILLIAM.—Brown pilgrim's cloak and hood, dark beard, and sandals. 2nd.—Armour. 3rd.—Grey hermit's cloak, white hair. 4th.—Armour.

SIR ALIF.—Short velvet tunic, embroidered, red tights, and black morocco boots.

MORVEN.—Dark short tunic with hanging sleeves, dark tights, short black boots, turban cap.

GOLTZ.—Brown tunic, red tights, short black boots, red cap.

OLIVER.—Cloak and large hat. 2nd.—Blue shirt and tights, and russet shoes.

MABEL.—Black velvet, trimmed with gold. 2nd.—White, and veil.

CHILDREN.—White dresses, trimmed with silver.

MERRYBELLE.—Yellow over-tunic, blue petticoat and sleeves.

MAUDE.—Brown tunic, red petticoat and sleeves, coif cap.

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THE CHILDREN OF THE CASTLE.

A C T I.

SCENE I.—*A Room in the "Merry Maypole." A fire burning, r. c., on a low hearth, a variety of GUESTS drinking in an old oak settle—GRIM, NEEDLE, &c.—GILES is adding a log to the fire—MAUDE chalking up a score behind the door at back, r.*

MAUDE. There ! that exactly *doubles* thy score, Master Needle !

NEEDLE. (*seated, r. c.*) Thank ye, kind hostess—but it doth appear to me, that thy chalk marketh double—else be my sight magnified. The O with one cross, be now two O's with two crosses, and all done in a twinkling.

MAUDE. (*her arms a-kimbo, advancing, l.*) Why, how now, thou drunken sot—thou villifier of an honest woman's duties, to a good for naught of a husband—(*GILES starts and drops the log.*) who never attended to his own affairs, but leaveth all to his too prudent wife. Dolt, didst hear this fellow—this stitch of a man—didst hear, I say, what he called me ? Thy wife, thy dear lawless wife ! Art deaf ? (*violently.*)

GILES. Not I, i'faith, an if I were, thy clamour would work a miracle.

MAUDE. I, the mildest, best temperdest, the most illusidest wife in Lancashire—the most enduring, patient, peaceable—(*to NEEDLE.*) Oh, thou bodkin without a head ! thou cabbaging snip of satan ! that comest sneaking like an ugly snail into an honest man's house, swigging to thy heart's content, and trusted to the serious amount of a silver groat, thou must be ripping up grievances between man and wife, eh ? Pay thy reckoning and begone.

NEEDLE. (*troubled.*) Reckoning ! Indeed, good Mistress Maude, I spake not ill of thee, but of thy chalk—or if mine

eyes saw double, I confess to a mistake in the measure, or the strength of thy liquor.

MAUDE. Such mistakes are common enough to thee, thou crimping varlet; but to me, a poor weak, timid woman, that is not permitted to say her soul is her own—

GILES. La, I wonder the roof don't fall. (*turning and poking the fire.*)

MAUDE. What's that you say? Ah, I see—he's going to beat me with the poker.

GRIM. I'd like to see the man durst do it.

MAUDE. And I as weak as water. (*collars NEEDLE and throws him out of chair on ground, R.*) Get up, you brute, don't you see I'm a fainting. (*drops into chair, L. C.*) Have you no feeling for the softer sex? Oh, oh, o—h! (*blubbering.*)

All the GUESTS hurry out at R. D., stopping their ears.

GILES. All gone, except the one who would have gladly led the retreat.

MAUDE. (*laughing and jumping up.*) Ha, ha, ha! There, that's the way to get rid of them.

GILES. Yes, and their money also. (*castle clock strikes.*)

MAUDE. Hear'st thou not the castle bell pealing the midnight hour? It's time for all good husbands to be in bed. For my part, I wouldn't look out of window at this hour for a new buckram farthingale.

GILES. No!—why not? Beest thee afraid of seeing the deel! His ugly mug might fright thee.

MAUDE. No, not after *thine*. But gossip Gabble told me, and she they say's a witch, that the spirit of our late master, Lord William, he that was slain in Palestine, had been seen in the wood close by.

GILES. Ah, poor Lord William, kind gentleman—it's now nearly seven years, come Christmas, since he set out for the Holy Land to kill the Turkies, leaving his wife, our good Lady Mabel, to be confined of twins, whom their father never saw. And now I hear she is to be married again! Oh, woman!—oh woman! talk of constancy! Pshaw! constancy is all my eye!

MAUDE. Well, it is not her wish to be married again, poor lady. But what is she to do? the twins being girls, the next heir to the estates is Sir Alif, who left her no resource, but to pack off with her two brats, as he called them, or take him for better or for worse. And, after all, since Lord William was killed in battle—

GILES. Or—murdered, as some suspect.

MAUDE. Mur—(*terrified—a knock at door—lightning at window, L.*)

* GILES. Hush! somebody at the door!

MAUDE. (*holding him.*) Oh, don't open it. If it should be the bad spirret.

GILES. Well, there are plenty of *bad spirits* in our cellar already, and a trifle more (*lightning.*) won't make things worse. Besides, 'tis a bitter night. See, how the lightning flashes; no Christian ought to close his door against the benighted traveller, in such a storm, be he friend or foe. (*storm.*)

MAUDE. But if he should have no money—

GILES. The more uncharitable to shut him out. He's welcome to the hearth side, and a few embers to warm him, be he rich or poor. (*opens door.*) Come in!

Enter LORD WILLIAM, at R. C. door, as a Palmer, attended by OLIVER, in a similar habit, only a hat instead of cowl.

OLIVER. Good even, friends.

MAUDE. Good even, friends. But the castle clock hath stricken midnight.

OLIVER. Well, good midnight, then, since you are so mighty particular. (*swinging the wet out of his hat—LORD WILLIAM seats himself pensively, R. C.*)

MAUDE. Particular, indeed! There's one thing very certain, you're not particular, or you wouldn't have the impudence to swing your wet hat over an honest woman's fire irons, which have cost her half a day to burnish. (*wiping them.*)

OLIVER. Oh, well, if I've soiled your brass, I've gold to cover the rust with. (*chinks purse.*)

MAUDE. (*curtseying very low.*) Gold! Oh, Sir Pilgrim, as I perceive thee to be a *true saint*, gladly would I wait on thee for nothing. (*placing a stool near the fire.*) Do stir up the fire, thou inhospitable churl. (*to GILES.*) Dost not see his reverence's cloak is dripping with the rain? (*OLIVER has taken off his cloak and hangs it before the fire to dry—to SIR WILLIAM.*) And you, holy father, what would *you* like for supper?

LORD W. (*coldly.*) Oh, anything; bread and water.

MAUDE. Bread and water!

OLIVER. (*with quickness.*) And a little wine, together with some venison.

GILES. Venison, good friar?

MAUDE. Venison! Where should poor honest folks like us get venison?

OLIVER. (*laughing.*) Marry, that were easy enough; I see there are plenty of good bucks in this forest—and I remember when there was not a better snarer of such creatures than honest, sober Giles Twinkle. (*whispers.*)

GILES. (*disturbed.*) Oh, holy father, pray be merciful.

OLIVER. And I also remember there was a certain lad, a

mere stripling, a merry wag, named Oliver, who did often hold a certain wide mouthed sack, for sundry hares and pheasants, and the sack used to hang behind this very settle, with the letters G. T. upon it. Why, as I live, it hangs here now. (*takes it down from behind settle, r.*) And see, the letters are still unchanged, G. T.—Giles Twinkle, and by its weight I shouldn't wonder if—(*shoots out some game on the floor, c.*) Ah, that's your sort! Why, these look very much like hares and pheasants, eh?

GILES. The saints preserve us—the monk's a conjurer.

MAUDE. Oh, husband, we're undone.

GILES & } Mercy, holy friar, mercy! (*they fall at his feet.*)

MAUDE. } Oh, spare us, reverend gamekeeper!

OLIVER. Oh, don't alarm yourselves. We friars are not informers—so set before us the best your house affords, and I'll absolve you from all past sins. You shan't be hanged this year.

GILES. Oh, thanks—a hundred thanks! Come, bustle, wife, bustle; and if thou wouldest escape scragging keep a civil tongue in thy mouth. (*she sets the table with good eatables.*)

OLIVER. Why, what's the matter, Giles, you look quite terrified.

GILES. Ah, Master Monk, if you betray my secret, things would be very different now, under our new lord, to what they were in the days of our indulgent master, Lord William.

LORD W. (*starting.*) Lord William! thou remember'st him, then?

GILES. Remember him? ah, that I do—kind, good master. It seems but yesterday since he set off for the Crusades, leaving not a dry eye in the castle, nor out of it, for that matter, for miles around.

LORD W. Was he, then, so beloved?

GILES. Was he? ah, I see you didn't know him. He was a lamb, whose place is now supplied by as fierce a wolf, Sir Alif. Everybody hates him. (*whispers.*) I hate him—my wife hates him—my lady hates him.

LORD W. And yet she married him?

GILES. Oh, no—not yet—she's not married to him yet, but I think she will be eventually; you see those twin babes, that came after my lord's departure, turning out to be girls—now that my lord's dead, makes it a very different affair—because Sir Alif becomes heir to the estates; and my lady being but the daughter of a poor peasant, and having no fortune of her own, will certainly be driven from the castle destitute, unless she consents to wed Sir Alif. Poverty! she could

have borne poverty, poor thing, but the babies—the babies ! Ah ! that's the tender point.

LORD W. (*jealously.*) She is, then, quite reconciled to become his wife.

MAUDE. Reconciled ! Ah ! if you could only see how she is changed—her eyes so bright, and her cheek so rosy. The one quenched by tears—the other faded by grief. She'll not live long. Ah ! we poor tender women stand in need of much comfort. (*drinks.*)

LORD W. (*hastily.*) She shall be rid of him, soon—very soon !

GILES & } MAUDE. } Is it possible ! how ?

OLIVER. Oh ! his reverence means to excommunicate him, that's all.

GILES. Please couldn't you lay him in the Red Sea ?

LORD W. (*rising and walking to and fro.*)

She is unhappy, then—she weeps—

Weeps beneath his tyranny !

Her children ! Psha ! Mean subterfuge ! She should have starv'd !

Perished !—her children with her, ere she consented to become his.

Those dear little ones !—those fatherless babes !

Oh ! doating mother ! faithful wife ! victim bride ! Ha, ha, ha ! (*wildly.*)

MAUDE. (*whispering to OLIVER.*) Is the gentleman mad ?

OLIVER. (*quickly.*) Stir the fire ! and mind your own affairs.

GILES. Take the hint ! mind your own affairs.

MAUDE. Yes ; go to bed. (*pushes him back.*)

OLIVER. My dear lord, won't you eat something ? you have come a long and weary journey.

LORD W. No, no ! my heart is well nigh bursting. Do you think I believe what these peasants say of her ? she may mourn, perhaps, but not for me—no, not for me. Oh, I have wept for her, tears of blood. So this—this is my recompense for seven long years of slavery ! I return and find her about to wed a villain—a fiend to whom I had confided wife, children, home, and fortune. Oh, Heavens ! my brain will barst ; aching anguish swells my throbbing heart—my throat is parched—fire is in my mouth ; jealous frenzy scorches up my soul. Oh, water ! water ! water, or I die !

OLIVER. Here—here is wine !

LORD W. No, water ! water ! (*drinks.*) 'Tis well nigh dawn.

Get thee to bed, good host—to bed and rest.

Rest ! Oh ! what a magic word is that word—rest !
 The pillow'd head ! the heart that sleeps in quiet,
 Locking out sorrow with a golden key,
 Till even through the keyhole care cannot peep,
 With jaundiced eye, to wake us up again,
 And cry, woe ! woe ! woe ! Get thee to bed—to bed !

(*Music.—sits R. again, and buries his face in his hands, the Innkeeper and his wife stand amazed—but Oliver, pointing to the early dawn, which begins to peep through the lattice, gives them gold, and motions them up the stairs, R., to bed, they ascend, evidently wrangling about the money, &c.*)

OLIVER. (*looking anxiously at Lord William.*) Dear Master !

LORD W. Reprove me not, my good—my faithful friend.

Old scenes awaken painful memories
 To desolate hearts. Even our humble host,
 With nothing but a bed of flock, perhaps,
 Stirs up the envy of my soul's despair.
 His wife, though homely and illfavoured, is
His—his only ! his ! A rude looking-glass,
 Wherein, alone, *his* image is reflected.
 Not even another's breath hath dared to cloud
 Its rough, unpolished surface ! while
 My mirror, in my mind's eye, so bright and lovely,
 Lies broken by another on my floor.

Broken ! ay ! broken ! (*walks to and fro.*) Like this poor heart.

OLIVER. Not broken, sir, but *stolen* ; beard the thief !

He'll drop his plundered treasure,
 And the right will have his own again.

LORD W. (*indignantly.*) His own again ! The snail hath crawled
 the leaf,

And with its slimy kisses, perhaps poisoned it.

OLIVER. Then set thy foot upon the snail, good master,
 And crush it with thy heel.

LORD W. Would that bring back
 The perfume to the leaf ? the confidence so sweet,
 Which hung upon our mutual love ? Never !
 'Tis an old adage—" Women, so capricious,
 Love that the most which loveth them the least."

OLIVER. Oh, sir, thy lady's love thou dost much wrong.
 She but dissembleth with this hideous dragon,
 Till thou, with charmed sword, shall hack him dead.

LORD W. Ah ! my good Oliver—luckless for thine adage—

Thou misappliest it. Mabel deemed me dead—

Dreaming of no deliverance from *her* dragon.

And with the canting story of her children,

Forth driven from their home, but covers up

The deep delinquency of her brief—brief mourning ;

Oh ! I have not lived

With sorrow in this world near forty years,

To be so vilely gulled.

She maketh for *herself* a home, and on her children

Frames the vile excuse. I'll tear them from her.

OLIVER. But when you shew yourself to claim your children,
She'll find at once she cannot be his wife.

LORD W. And so turn round to me, the weather-vane,

That ever turneth with the strongest wind ;

But I'll not prove her so, nor claim mine own,

Save as an emissary from her former lord,

Claiming the children by her husband's will,

Leaving her still opinioned of my death.

You'll see she'll wed this man, despite her children—

Thinking him lord and heir to my estate—

So let her ! when the happy knot is tied,

I'll claim mine own again, but not my wife—

My faithless wife ; and when she finds that he

Is not the heir, she'll worship him no more,

But try to woo her first bird back again ; but no, no, no !

The caught wing flies from the decoy.

OLIVER. (*apart.*) What a cursed thing is jealousy !

I'm glad I know it not.

LORD W. (*after a pause.*) But still I'll prove her first, and if
I find

This man hath, like a sponge, outwashed my memory,

Why, let her have him. He is, after me,

In *truth* the *heir*. I have, for my twin daughters,

Fortune enough ; and for myself too much—

Ay, far too much, if she be false to me.

Oh, memory ! memory ! close up the early scenes of

My bright life, lest the remembrances of them drive me
mad. (*walks to and fro.*)

OLIVER. My dear, dear lord !

LORD W. No more remonstrance ! Prithee ope the door,

And let the dawn rush in. The bracing air

Is now my only shield to this scorched brain.

Let it come in—come in !

(OLIVER opens the door, the bright dawn is seen.

OLIVER. (*listening at the door.*) Hark! I hear voices—the voices of children, too.

LORD W. Children!

Ah! how lovely is the voice of infancy,
Stealing over the heart
Like music heard i' the spring,
Bringing back sweet memories,
When sorrow was a name unknown,
And earth, like heaven,
A paradise of love.

OLIVER. (*looking out.*) Those rich garments bespeak the children are—

LORD W. (*gazing, they pass window, l. c.*) Mine! mine! nature speaks within me. Yes; I see Their mother in their looks. Quick! step aside— They'll enter here, and then, unwatched, I'll gaze On their young happy faces.

They glide behind the settle, l. c., the CHILDREN run in at door, R., their laps filled with wild flowers.

ALICE. (c.) See, dear sister, what pretty roses. Only smell how sweet they are. When mamma weeps before the armoured figure of the warrior in the picture gallery, and Sir Alif is out hunting in the woods, we'll give her these, and then, perhaps, she'll smile.

CHRIS. Yes; these are the very flowers I heard her say poor papa loved so well. (*wiping her eyes.*) I can't help crying when I think of poor papa.

LORD W. (*troubled.*) Oh, Heaven! I suffocate!

I must—I must embrace them. (*advancing—recoils.*)

Enter MORVEN, door, R. C.

MORVEN. (*fawningly.*) So! Why have you entered here, dear children? In the forest there are strawberries. Come, let us gather some while yet the dew is on them. Your lady mother will be well delighted, should we be fortunate to take some home, so come, my little darlings, let's begone!

CHILDREN. Oh, yes, dear doctor. (*together.*) Strawberries, did you say?

DOCTOR. (*taking their hands.*) Yes, darlings, yes! No eye observes us—it is scarcely dawn. Come, children! (*apart.*) To your grave.

(*leads them out. Music, piano increasing to forte at end of act.*

OLIVER. I like not that fellow's looks. In my mind he's going to visit a death-bed. They called him *doctor*—he's a *cut-throat*.

LORD W. (*hurriedly.*) My children are in peril—I feel they are. Come with me, Oliver.

OLIVER. To the world's end, master.

LORD W. Quick, then, follow.

(*Music.*—They rush out, R. C., as the drop descends.

END OF ACT I.

A C T I I .

SCENE I.—*The Forest.*

GOLTZ is discovered digging a grave, in centre—on the ground is a fallen tree, L.

GOLTZ, in the grave digging and singing.—GERMAN AIR.

Der grabe is deep,
Ver der baby sleep,
The earth lie heavy on his shroud,
But der babie wake not—
He sleep dere forgot,
Tho' der cock crow never so loud. (*gets out.*)

Enter SIR ALIF, R., observing him through the underwood.

SIR A. Good Mynheer Goltz, how deep may be this grave?

GOLTZ. Four of der foot, mein lor, deep enow to cubber up vat you sal put in him, till, wot you calls him, doomes day. Ha, ha, ha! (*taking out a pipe.*)

SIR A. (*writhing.*) Doomsday! Bah!—is all now ready?

GOLTZ. (*lighting his pipe and seated on the tree.*) Pouff! pouff! All beautiful! Ugh, confounder mine pipe, 'm burn mine finger! Ugh, but vots dat to der torment o' perdition. Ha, ha, ha! (*smoking.*) Pouff!

SIR A. Perdition, fool!

GOLTZ. Fool! Ha, ha, ha!

I axes bardon! Hell fire, den. Your

Lordship understands 'm better den I. Pouff!

SIR A. What hour do you expect your employer, sir?

The worthy doctor, with the sickly imps—

Here to be buried—since 'tis like they'll die?

GOLTZ. Dat dey will soon. Der doctor's been call'd in—
I hear a rustling in der leafs, dere now;

It's eider he, or some oder serpent. Ugh ! oh, oh !

SIR A. Jest not with me, fellow—I like not thy jokes ;
And remember, serve me well this business,
Or, by the hag that bore thee,
I'll have thee flay'd alive, and have thy skin
Nail'd 'gainst the chapel door for crows to peck at.

GOLTZ. Flay'd alive !

Oh, good gracious ! Dat ish horrible !

Mein modther wouldn't know me vidout my skin. Oh, oh !
Here ish der pious doctor ! (*smoking.*)

Enter MORVEN, L. cautiously.

MORVEN. You here, Sir Alif ?

SIR A. Yes ; where are your victims ?

MORVEN. Plucking strawberries for their mother. (*pointing L.*)

GOLTZ. (*sitting on the tree.*) Ho, ho ! how droll !

Strawberrys ! pouff ! (*smoking.*)

SIR A. (*alarmed, L. C.*) Is that idiot to be trusted ?

MORVEN. Fear nothing ; I've provided for him. (*whispers.*)
Slow poison.

SIR A. Good. There is the gold I promised thee,
And when the deed is done, blow on the horn ;
I shall be enjoying the chase,
The sound will reach me as I gallop on—
And then, these brats, whose title 'gainst my own
Might be disputed by the crown, will cease
To harass me.

Exit, R. U. E.

MORVEN. (*to GOLTZ.*) Now is all prepared ?

GOLTZ. Yes ; here's my shovel.

MORVEN. And here's my knife. (*whets it.*)

*Enter the Two CHILDREN, L., running joyfully towards him,
and leaning playfully on his shoulder as he kneels.*

ALICE. (*playfully, R. of MORVEN.*) There's a beautiful strawberry for you, dear doctor. (*thrusts it into his mouth.*) Why, what are you doing with that sharp knife, doctor ? Are you going to cut a bough of sweetbriar ?

CHRIS. (*R. of GOLTZ.*) And see, sister, here's Goltz—poor Goltz, nobody understands what he says. Shall I give him a strawberry, also ?

ALICE. Do, sister—and this flower. (*turning, R., sees the grave.*) But oh, what's here ?

GOLTZ. (*hoarsely.*) A grave.

ALICE. A grave ! No, that can't be, for I've often heard mamma say, she wished herself in the grave with dear papa, and if papa was so good as she said, who could have thrust him in a deep cold pit like that ? (*they come ferociously behind the CHILDREN.*) Why, doctor, how you are changed, and you too—Oh, how fierce you look—you frighten me. Come, sister, come, let us run home. (*attempts to lead the other, L.*)

MORVEN. (*detaining her.*) No, stay I say—you must remain with us, for here you die. (*holding her—looking about, R. and L.*)

ALICE. Oh, doctor, don't, don't ! see how you frightened poor little Christiline. What means that knife ? You'll not kill her, will you ? No ; if you must kill one of us, kill me. She's so good, and I'm so wicked—better kill me than her. Run, Christiline, run.

MORVEN. Remain, I say ; you both must die.

GOLTZ. Quick, quick, der day runs on, and I'm gettin' tendher hearted.

ALICE. Mercy—mercy ! Run, sister, run. Stand back, I say—you shall not follow her. (*snatching MORVEN's knife from his belt and assuming an attitude of defence, R.*)

MORVEN. Curses ! thus to be tricked—and by a child ! Goltz, seize that young imp while I despatch the other. Come, no resistance, to your grave, I say.

(he wrests the knife out of her hand, passing her over to GOLTZ, and rushing to the R. wing, he seizes the other CHILD, and is about to drag her up the stage; a deep groan arrests his steps, and a FIGURE, hooded, steps from behind the foliage—as the FIGURE appears, a loud clap of thunder, lightning, and rain.

MORVEN. The devil !

(the CHILDREN crawl to the feet of the FIGURE, C., which waves MORVEN and GOLTZ away.

What mummary is this ? What meddling fool art thou ?
(draw on him.)

GOLTZ. Together let us smite him !

He pays for his audacity, with blood.

(a chord—they draw their swords, and prepare to rush upon the FIGURE, when another (OLIVER,) presents itself. (terrified.) Another !

1st FIGURE. Tremble, accursed assassins ! Bless yourselves, Since no one else, will bless you. On your lips Let hang a dying prayer, where, never yet Did prayer articulate. This moment is your last. I know you well.

The being you were brib'd to sell to slavery, Hath, from his foreign grave sent back this sword,

Sharpened in vengeance for your sure destruction. *Music.*
Perish!

(*the two hooded FIGURES furiously attack the ASSASSINS.*
GOLTZ is first killed, and pitched headlong, into the open grave
—then MORVEN—the 2nd FIGURE hurls over them the
fallen tree, while the first blows a horn, which he tears from
MORVEN's side. The sound is answered from a distance,
as if by SIR ALIF, in the chase. The two FIGURES then,
snatch up the CHILDREN, separately, more dead than alive,
and hurry out with them, r. The music of the chase all
through.)

Enter SIR ALIF, cautiously, l.

SIR A. 'Tis done; they sleep, where she shall follow, soon;
And so to bury up each obstacle
That steps 'twixt Alif and his soul's ambition.
The dead build up no barriers. What was that?
A groan? No, no! 'twas yon accursed raven
Which all the way I've ridden through the forest,
Hath hover'd over me like a croaking vampire,
Thirsting for blood. (*thunder and lightning.*) It awes not
me;
I am now undisputed heir of Wharley,
And soon, from out my battlements,
Such carrion kites, as grey-beards call prophetic,
I'll drive with fire, to croak their ills elsewhere.

Music.—thunder and lightning

Enter HUNTERS R. F.

Who's there?

HUNTER. We thought your lordship lost.

SIR A. Why so I was, but now I see my way
All clear and wide before me.

(*thunder and lightning—lightnings thick and fast.*

The tempest grows oppressive—

The lightnings thick and fast; the thunder rolls,
Well, let it roll.

I'm heir of Wharley still. (*lightning.*)

HUNTER. Come, come, my lord, let's hasten home. (*they are*
all going up to the grave.)

SIR A. No, no, not that way, for your lives. This—this is
the path. (*going l. 1 E.—turning from the grave.*)

There's nothing, now, can cross me: let us home!

We'll all drink deep to-night—Rage on—rage on—

Ye furious elements! you fright not me, for I am heir of
Wharley.

(*thunder and lightning—Exuent l. Hunting music till all off.*

SCENE II.—*Back of Wharley Castle—a door, L., open in scene.*

Enter OLIVER, L. disguised as a mendicant minstrel playing on a lute, and singing. He walks lame, as if he had only one leg—a patch over one eye.

AIR.

"Tis morn, the sun is shining !
Dewy daisies deck the dell,
I'm 'neath thy lattice waiting,
Look forth, my Merrybelle.
Look forth, &c.

MERRY. (*looking out from a door, L. C.*) Why, what mummer and twangler of catgut art thou? do you want to frighten the rats out of the castle, eh? away with you!

OLIVER. 'Tis she; and by the plumpness of those round rosy cheeks, little hath she mourned my seven year's absence. But bless the stars, I'm not jealous, like master. Good morrow, sweetheart!

MERRY. Sweetheart, indeed, thou ragged varlet! get thee gone, or marry will I call up the swineherds to give thee a good drubbing, or toss thee in a blanket.

OLIVER. Blanket! that's a warm reception. I crave pardon in calling thee sweetheart, I took thee for a single maiden.

MERRY. Well, and if I'm not wedded, that's no fault of mine.

OLIVER. I do believe it; let me sing thee another song. Heard'st thou never such words as these?

Oh, bide the day till my return,
A faithful heart I'll bring;
Or hast thou broke the vow we made?
Then give me back the ring.
Then give me back the ring.

(she comes creeping towards him, listening.

MERRY. Why, who art thou? speak! speak! I'm all in a twitter! (*staring.*) with one eye, and a lame leg! surely thou art not Oliver.

OLIVER. Yes, Merrybelle, I am that poor Oliver who left thee, seven long years ago, a boy, in love, and in love with you. My leg may be gone, and my eye may be gone; but my heart is yet in its right place, and as true to thee as ever.

MERRY. Oh, dear—oh, dear! Is your eye gone, and your leg gone? Is there anything else gone. (*sobbing.*)

OLIVER. You reject me?

MERRY. Reject thee, Oliver? no, never! 'tis true I might

have been married over and over again. There was club-footed Syntax the Schoolmaster, and Grist the rich Miller ; he's a little humpy, to be sure, but that's no matter, and there was Corporal Strap, with long straight legs, like a pair of tongs ; he promised to shoot himself for me, but he didn't. I rejected all of them, to wait for thee. To be sure, you are taller, and stronger, and more like a real man than any of them ; but then to come home with only one eye and one leg—oh, it's shocking !

OLIVER. Yes, I've only one eye and one leg ! so good bye, Merrybelle. (*turning and hobbling.*)

MERRY. (*holding him.*) Oh ! stay a moment ! a man with one eye and one leg is better than no man at all. Besides, if you are lame, and blind, what is to become of you ? I've saved money enough to buy a cottage, and a cow. So, I'll take you for better or for worse ; and if you're lame, I'll work for you ; and if you are sick, I'll nurse you—dear, dear Oliver.

(*throwing herself into his arms.*)

OLIVER. Dear, faithful creature ! I declare I can't help blubbering. After all, women are not to be sneezed at.

MERRY. Why, you are wiping your blind eye.

OLIVER. Am I ! well, only look. (*winking at her.*) Eh ? eh ? eh ?

MERRY. Well, for a blind eye, it's the brightest I ever saw.

OLIVER. Neither is my handsome leg so lame, but I shall be able to put my best foot foremost.

(*putting down his other leg, at the same time throwing off his old coat—he dances with joy.*)

MERRY. Eh ? why you are not lame at all ?

OLIVER. No !

MERRY. Nor blind either !

OLIVER. No !

MERRY. Oh, come to my arms, my Oliver—my dear, dear Oliver. (*they embrace.*)

OLIVER. Dear, constant Merrybelle ; only that my face is somewhat sunburnt, I am all the same fond faithful Oliver, who loved you since he can recollect ; I have, also, saved something—a rich purse ; and you shall wear a silk gown, and a gold chain on your wedding-day. Give me a kiss, and tell me, art thou now content ?

MERRY. Content ! I'm so happy, I declare I could almost turn head over heels for joy How handsome you look ; why, your face is exactly like our Spanish mahogany table, in my lady's parlour.

OLIVER. Talking of your lady—I have a letter for her.

MERRY. What, from her dead husband ?

OLIVER. Oh, you'll know soon enough ; but I'm confounded hungry, and—

MERRY. Come with me into the buttery, then—there's a stuffed bustard, a boiled chine, a haunch of venison, and such a pair of sparkling eyes—sparkling tankard of ale, I mean ; Come in—oh, I've such tales to tell you—how my lady is going to be married against her will—how she cries when she is alone—How I—oh, kiss me again, dear Oliver—I'm so happy. (*admiringly.*) Isn't that a leg—

OLIVER. To dance on our wedding-day with. (*kisses her.*)

MERRY. Oh, let me see you march as you did when you went away for a soldier.

OLIVER. With all my heart—so, right foot forward ! march !

(*they march into house, L. C.*)

SCENE III.—*The Lady's Oratory.* At the back a painted window, illuminated by the sun. On the R. a small prie dieu, above which hangs a black curtain—a low door, L. C.—chairs, and a table of ebony, &c. &c.

Slow Music.—LADY MABEL enters by the door, L. C., cautiously, listening to the distant sound of a horn, which resounds in the forest.

MABEL. Further and further sounds the dying horn ;

At length the forest buries up the echo.

The cruel tyrant revelling in the chase,

Leaves me to my tears, unseen, unwatched.

(*taking out a crucifix.*)

And now to pray for him, and his repose,

Who only loved me—whom I only lov'd.

(A chord.—Draws back the black curtain, and discovers a FIGURE, in a complete suit of armour, holding in one hand a battle-axe, and leaning on a shield. Falling on her knees at the prie dieu and lifting up the rosary.)

Just so he looked when last he from me parted,
And such the armoured suit enveloped him.

William—dear William, if it be permitted,

Look down from heaven upon thy hapless wife,

The victim for thy guileless children's welfare—

For their dear sakes the veriest wretch

That ever bowed her neck to misery's yoke.

Doomed to become the wife of one she loathes—

Pity me ! save me ! save me !

(*a knock is heard at L. D.—she hastily springs up, dries her eyes, puts away the crucifix, and draws the curtain.*)

Who's there? come in!

Enter MERRYBELLE, timidly, L. D.

MERRY. Here's a stranger, my lady.

MABEL.

A stranger!

Is this a place, and I at my devotions?

Besides, thou know'st I see no strangers, foe

Nor friend nor any one, except my children,

My poor fatherless children. Heaven help them!

(*wipes away a tear.*)

MERRY. But this is one, my lady, brings a message—

That is tidings.

MABEL. Tidings of whom?

MERRY. My lord.

MABEL. What, from the forest?

MERRY. (*whispers.*) No, no, lady, from the sea,

My real lord—Lord William.

MABEL. (*sinking into the chair.*) Is he not dead?

My children! Is there a hope? Speak, speak!

MERRY.

You remember

Oliver, my lady? The waggish knave,

To tell me he had but one eye!

MABEL. (*impatiently.*) Well, well!

MERRY. No, that would not have been well, my lady,

Anything but well; but here he is, my lady. Come in,

Oliver, come in.

Enter OLIVER, L. D.

MABEL. Ah, is it you, indeed? And—and—

OLIVER. To questions, lady, I'm forbid reply;

This paper from the Hermit of the Chapel,

A godly man, made up of sanctity,

Is to yourself. His pious lips alone

Must tell the story of my master's fate—

His voice alone may best console thee, lady.

MABEL. (*reads.*) "Seek alone the Hermit of the Chapel,

From the crusade he bringeth secret news;

Alone must be thy visit, when the moon

Looks down upon the moat. And fear not harm,

Thy husband's signet ring bespeaks my trust."

(*OLIVER gives the ring.*)

'Tis—'tis his! (*kissing it.*) Oh, dearest—dearest William!

(*in a burst of tears.*)

He bids me from the grave. Yes, if I've life I'll come.

Enter SIR ALIF, L. D., lightly on tiptoe, observing.

Ah, Alif! (*thrusting the ring and paper into her bosom.*)

SIR A. (*observes her, sternly.*) Who's this?

(*looking at OLIVER and coming c.*)

OLIVER (*confused.*) I—I'm—

MABEL. (*interrupting, r.*) A stranger,
Demanding aid to help him on his way
To the next monastery. It seems, his father,
Now old and blind, was once our house's tenant,
Which gives him, as it were, the privilege
To enter thus. Retire, and tell thy father
I'll see him soon.

OLIVER. (*bowing.*) I will, sweet lady. Thanks. (*going, l.*)

SIR A. (*maliciously.*) Stay; coming through the forest,
hearest thou
Of gipsies?

OLIVER. What gipsies, noble sir?

SIR A. The thieves that stole away this lady's children!

MABEL. (*starting.*) My children stolen? Oh, Heaven!

MERRY. The children!

MABEL. (*looking wildly about.*) Where be they?

MERRY. This morning lady, with their kind preceptor,
The pious Doctor Morven, went they forth,
Into the wood.

MABEL. Treacherous girl, you went not with them?

MERRY. Madam, my lord commanded me to stay
Here in the castle.

SIR A. (*sternly.*) What she says is true.

The goodly doctor's care was sure enough;
The children being seized on by the vagrants,
That worthy man, no doubt, *defending* them,
Hath paid the forfeit with his life.
His broken sword was found, and on the herbage,
His glove, with blood enstained.

MABEL. (*wildly.*) How know'st thou this?

SIR A. From a gipsey boy, who saw the children
Hurried along towards a neighbouring bark,
Which bore them swift away.

MABEL. (*fiercely.*) 'Tis false!

There is no word of this but is a *lie*,
An odious, wicked lie, to rob a mother
Of her children, Alif! Oh, beware, beware!

The lioness, so tame, to lick thy hand,
 And fawn upon thee for her children's weal,
 Deprived of them, will gnash her angry teeth,
 And spread her furious fangs to tear thee piecemeal.

SIR A. Why, how now, woman!—what fell words are these—
 Of dark suspicion?

Would'st arraign the honour
 Of me, the Lord of Wharley.

MABEL. (*wildly.*) My children, are they murdered?

SIR A. I neither know, nor care, since thus assailed,
 Nor shall a single step go in pursuit,
 Since thou, my wife, betrothed—
 Would blot me an assassin.

MABEL. (*wringing her hands.*) My children!
 No step pursue them? Yes, their wretched mother—
 That guilty mother, who, for one brief instant
 Did turn from them her eyes, when, like a tigress
 She should have darted on their fell destroyer,
 And mangled him in the attempt. Oh, Alif!
 Have pity! have mercy! (*falling at his feet.*)
 Restore my little ones, or lead me where
 They sleep, unconscious of their mother's misery,
 That I may curse myself, and curse the hour
 That I was born! (*wringing her hands.*) My children! Oh!
 my children! (*tearing her hair.*)

Where are you? where are you? (*springing up, and searching about.*)

SIR A. Silence, this frenzy! or, I will,
 In some dark tower of the castle, lodge thee,
 Till thou art sane.

MABEL. Oh! would that I were mad!
 Or, had been, ere this hour. Oh! my children,
 When shall I see again your antic forms,
 Sporting around me—hear your joyous laugh,
 The only music of my broken heart,
 Or trace, in your innocent looks the dearest features
 That ever that heart lov'd

SIR A. Woman! (*grasping her arm.*)

MABEL. Monster!

Oh! take thy venomous coil from off my arm—
 It's loathsome fold freezes me. Let me pass (*breaking away.*)
 My children! where shall I find them?

OLIVER. (*whispering to her softly.*) The hermit!

MABEL. Ah!

SIR A. (*seizing her.*) Think'st thou that I will let thee loose

With frantic lips, to blazon through the land
 Thy husband is a murderer? And you,
 Intruding spies. Both of you, leave this castle;
 And thou, especially, sir vagrant, fly,
 Nor more beneath the shadows of these walls
 Thine arrogant steps let fall; or, by my soul,
 I'll have thee treated as the common vermin,
 Which stealeth thro' the crannies of the building,
 To rob, or plunder. And of this event,
 Speak thou but one word, 'twill be your last.
 Begone! *They hurry off L. D., which he bolts.*
 And now, for thee! (returning.)

MABEL. Wilt murder me!

I fear thee not! Strike! 'twere mercy!

SIR A. (coldly.)

That paper!

MABEL.

What paper?

SIR A. That which he gave thee, in thy bosom hid,
 Some token, too, some ring, or other bauble.
 Give me them both.

MABEL. No, no, never!

Tear out my heart first.

SIR A. If hid within thy heart, I'd pluck them out.

(seizing her with his gauntlet hand.)

Lock'd in my gauntlet grasp, in vain thou strugglest.

(MABEL, struggling, and running to the curtain, snatching it back, falls at the feet of the FIGURE imploringly.)

MABEL (struggling.) Help, help! oh, agony! Spirit of mercy hear!

SIR A. That letter!

Is't fit my future wife should secrets hold?

MABEL. Thy wife! pollute not name so sacred.

Wife to thee! I'd sooner crawl the earth,

And beg my wretched bread from door to door,

Steeped in my own tears only—sleep at night

In the dark forest, by the famished wolf,

Rather than by thy side, thou demon!

Coming to woo me, with thy gory hands,

Wet with my children's blood!

Pour on him, heaven, from thy vial of wrath,

All the deep vengeance of a widow's curse—

All the despair of a heart-broken mother!

SIR A. (drawing his dagger.) Hag! I'll strike thee!

MABEL. Oh, spirit of my lord! if in this armour

Thou art permitted to enshrine thyself,

Listen to thy widow's malediction on this monster.

SIR A. (drawing his dagger.) I'll hear no more. Die!

(chord and music till end of act—SIR ALIF throws her round to L., and is about to rush to stab her, the ARMED FIGURE turns and smites him to the ground with the battle-axe, then standing menacingly over him, points to the door, which MABEL unbolts with great difficulty, and is going out, as the drop falls.

END OF ACT II.

A C T I I I.

SCENE I.—*Interior of the Hermit's Chapel—across the back of which runs a tattered curtain. On the L., is a stone cross on the R. is the entrance to the Hermitage, through which is seen forest trees shading an ascent—half dark.*

The CHILDREN are discovered playing with some flowers, near the entrance, the HERMIT seated, gazing at them affectionately.
—Music.

HERMIT. Twilight, o'er the forest, throws her mantle,
The tir'd rook, home from her daily toil,
Wings to her leafy bed. The setting sun
Sinks down calmly to his ocean couch,
As the tir'd traveller, worn with his pilgrimage.

(gazing at CHILDREN—they run to him, he kisses them and places them between his knees.)

Beautiful images

Of her I love—still love—
You with young endearment,
You twine about my soul.
Mabel hath spurned her tyrant's hand,
Will she not then, when anguish for her children
Fades into grief, believe him innocent?

I'll try her—

Yes ; for her little ones, I'll try her truth
To prove the wife still worthy of her husband,
To prove the mother worthy of her children ;
Like stirring gold, I'll pass her thro' the crucible
Till she comes forth in dazzling purity,
Blinding the eagle eye of love's suspicion. (moon rises.)

ALICE. (rising and coming to him.) I see the moon.
Mamma, 'ere this, I'm sure is at the lattice,

And so unhappy that we stay away.
Good Hermit, let us home, ere it be dark,
And you shall dwell there in the castle, with us.

HERMIT. With Alif?

ALICE. No; couldn't you send him away?

HERMIT. I will; but not to-night, nor must you hence,

Before to-morrow noon—then he'll begone;
Unless good angels turn no more aside
The deeds of evil men. So now to rest;
Within here I've a couch, all made of leaves,
And overstrewn with fresh and balmy flowers,
Such as they say good fairies sleep upon.
There shalt thou rest, lock'd in thy sister's arms;
I'll watch you thro' the live-long night, and when the birds
Sing their first matin, wake you both.

ALICE. Shall we, then, go home and see mamma?

HERMIT. You shall. (*he kisses them.*)

Bless you, my children, bless you.
But soft, before we go, I have some friends at hand,
Whom you both long to see. What ho, there!
Merrybelle and Oliver, advance.

Enter MERRYBELLE and OLIVER, R.—the CHILDREN, with a cry of joy rush to them both.

MERRY. (*snatching up and kissing them, L.*) Oh, the dear, sweet children. Both alive!

Oh, you little darling *naughty* things,
You must go strawberrying, must ye, and without me?
But I have found you now, and never more we'll part.
Pinch my ear, Oliver, and make me feel.

(*he pinches her ear, she screams.*)

Ugh! I'm in no dream! 'Tis they—'tis they!

Come, kiss me.

(*to OLIVER, who would kiss her.*) No, no, not you.

Kiss me my little darlings!

Oh, I am so happy—so very, very happy. (*kissing them.*)

MABEL. (*outside, R.*) Hermit! Holy Hermit!

OLIVER. (*looking R., whispers.*) It is the lady.

HERMIT. Go then in, and shew the maid the couch.

Where the children sleep; and caution her

To utter not a word.

OLIVER. This way, Merrybelle. Come, my little darlings.

(*to MERRYBELLE.*) When shall we have two such little beauties?

MERRY. Oh, fie, for shame! Hold thou thy saucy tongue.

Yet, now I love thee so, methinks I'd wed thee.

Had'st thou no eyes, nor legs, nor arms, nor—

HERMIT. (*looking, R.*) Quick, get ye gone.

Exeunt MERRYBELLE and OLIVER, with the CHILDREN, L. C., behind curtain.

She comes—my Mabel comes—my wife.

Enter MABEL, R., her look pale, her hair dishevelled.

MABEL.

Holy Hermit!

By this ring thou sent'st me, I am Mabel. (*gives ring.*)

They told me thou had'st council for the wretched,
And words of comfort. Know'st thou of my children?

HERMIT. Therein be comforted. They live.

MABEL. (*falls at his feet.*) Oh, bless thee!

Bless thee! Oh, bless thee for that word! for I had dark
misgivings!

And I did fear to trust in heaven's grace.

(*he attempts to raise her.*)

I'll tell thee how—oh, listen to my story

Thus on my knees, and give me absolution.

I had a husband—Heaven can only tell

How my heart worshipped him. On the battle field

He perished for his country, leaving me

With two poor little orphans, desolate.

For lo, my husband's heir, a cruel man,

Possession took of all—

Gold, castle, jewels, land, and we were beggars;

The proud Lady of Wharley a houseless widow,

With her two children in her arms to beg.

And who would shelter us—by him forbid?

Whose very name was like a sudden blight,

Which turns the golden harvest into ashes.

Thou'l't say, I know thou wilt—and I am punished,

I should have lean'd on heaven and wander'd forth.

And so I should, but when I gaz'd upon

The faces of my innocent babes, I had no courage.

And what think'st thou I did? I vowed

To wed with him I loathed.

A wretched creature!

Detested of myself—my very garments

Seem'd poison'd with the sin I meditated.

My children would be affluent. But purgatory

Is an angel's song to what I suffer'd—

That fear'd to fly and trust. The blow hath fail'd;

But tho' averted now, will fall ére long,

First on my children. Would 'twere first on me.

Cans't thou not save them by some holy means?

Conceal them in the centre of deep earth—anywhere

From his pursuing rage. I'll kiss thy feet,

I'll bathe them in my tears—oh, leave thou me
To perish! but save, oh save, my children!

(with a burst of tears.)

HERMIT. (raising her.) I swear it, Mabel. Oh, what a gem is

That he has pluck'd from out my heart, to tarnish.

Woman, I bless thee—and thou, all seeing power!

Look down, while thus her hand lies link'd in mine,

And send avenging angels from thy throne

To wither and destroy this foul and brutal fiend,

And in a husband's vengeance, justify the hate,

That with thy power shall crush the deadly serpent.

MABEL. (drying her eyes.) Speak'st thou of my husband?

HERMIT. Even he; but tell me, ere he parted,

Left he no will?—was no provision made

For thee?

MABEL. Alas! I heard of none.

HERMIT. There was; and left

With Alif.

MABEL. Oh, fatal confidence!

This but augments my anguish! Tell me not

Of my poor husband's bounty. Tell me rather,

He cared not for me—lost in glory tell me,

He died without a thought or prayer for Mabel;

Give me some wrong to justify myself,

Even beyond my children; some excuse,

That I one instant ever could assent,

Despite all suffering for myself, or *them*

To wed another, or forego his name.

HERMIT. I cannot,

For if man ever dearer lov'd than life,

So did that man love thee—I know it,

For he had not a thought from me;

Quickly thou shalt know all—

I've sworn it—but first, I will avenge thee.

MABEL. Avenge me!—thou? It is impossible!

Now—now I feel there's ice within my heart!

And when I'm gone—(wringing her hands.) My children—

my poor children—

Do—do not mock me! speak! are they in safety?

Wilt not let me see them? Pity, oh, pity me!

Wert thou a father, thou'dst not turn aside

From a lone broken mother's supplications. (noise heard, R.

Haply, for the last time. Ah! my pursuers

Are in the forest. Here, upon this floor,

Since nought is sacred from a hand like his,

The mother's blood may flow. My children!—oh,
In mercy but one glance!

HERMIT. On one condition.

MABEL. Name it—quickly?

HERMIT. 'Tis, that thou speak'st not to them.
A single word betrays them; the assassin's steel is raised,
Even at their throats.

MABEL. I am their mother—trust me.

HERMIT. I will.

(*Music.*—He draws back curtain, and discovers the CHILDREN asleep in each other's arms, upon a couch of flowers—she sinks upon her knees, clasps her hands towards them, and utters an involuntary cry of joy—he draws the curtain.)

HERMIT. Silence? But still have faith, and I
Will do thee right, and well avenge thy wrongs.

The figure cased in armour, which shielded thee this day,
Will still be near thee in thy hour of need. (*noise.*)

Hark, the destroyer comes, but fear not,
There is an hour for vengeance—

A husband's arm to crush.

(*Music.*—Disappears behind curtain—the stage becomes quite dark; lights are seen ascending from the forest, R. and L.)

MABEL. (looking, R.) What could he mean?

An hour for vengeance! Oh, heavens! I am alone—alone with Alif—yes!

Defenceless, too! Oh, my protector has forsaken me!

Yet, is he gone—oh blessed be the thought!
Perhaps to save my children.

(running and tearing away the curtain.)

The children gone!

Yes; heaven be praised! Her children saved; a mother hath no fear.

(falls on her knees, c.)

Enter SIR ALIF and RETAINERS, with torches, R., up the ascent.

Ah, thou here, monster?

SIR A. Yes; despite thy spectre,

Whom soon I'll lay within a sea, so gory,
That blood shall seem a blush upon its crimson.

Come thou with us, I'll have thee as a maniac,
Lock'd and bound—

Telling of deeds thou know'st not. (seizing her.)

MABEL. Let loose my hand, and I will, thro' those woods
Go find some distant home, and never more

With step or word, come near thy hated presence;

Release thy grasp, or I have yet a curse
To call down retribution on thy head.

SIR A. I care not if thou curse, or if thou bless,
I'll give thee space enough to do them both ;
Not *only* space enough, but *time* enough,
I'll give thee ; with cold straw and solitude,
Where no intruding ghost shall rescue thee—
Come !

MABEL. I fear not death, and therefore fear not thee !

SIR A. Lead on !

(*Music.*—He forces her out, R.—VASSALS follow.)

SCENE II.—A Portrait Gallery in the Castle.

(*Music.*—Enter the HERMIT, cautiously, through a panel, L. C.

HERMIT. Thanks to the secret entrance, known to few,

I'm in the castle first. She comes, a captive,

The Lady of Wharley prisoner in her castle,

Her children exiles, or no doubt thought dead ;

And this man whom I lov'd, as 'twere a brother—

This is his fidelity !

Oh ! world ! world ! world ! in whom shall we confide ?

When those of our own kindred blood

Assume the traitor's mask to plunder us,

Even of our lives. For what ? a bit of earth

Fools call Inheritance ! a scanty space

Which only lasts from life to death ;

Forgetting th' inheritance of Heaven ;

And which they'll forfeit for the dross, which man

Calls power ; and throw into the scale a mass

Of leaden crimes, to sink them deeper down

Into perdition. Ah ! 'tis he !

(Enter SIR ALIF, moodily, R.)

SIR A. Of her I'll rid me ! wed another bride—

One far more suited to my reckless humour ;

My course is now quite clear ;

Boldly I've swept away my whole annoyance ;

Come, then, my recompense.

Land, castle, gold, and title—all are mine—mine—my own !

HERMIT. (*meeting.*) Give thee good grace, fair sir.

SIR A. Why, who art thou,

Crossing my solitary path unbid ?

How gainedst thou here admittance ? Speak, intruder.

HERMIT. I come from Palestine—the Holy Land,
Where this day seven years, St. Michael's Eve, ~~the o't~~
Thy cousin William by thy crew was seized—
Forced to a ship, and bartered into slavery.

SIR A. Thou art no hermit, then, but bring'st me news.
He's dead! ~~smiles his words like a soft sun~~
Thou shalt have gold—this for thine honest pains.

HERMIT. (putting back a gold chain which SIR ALIF offers from his neck.) Honest! Such words on thy false lips but hang,
Like dewdrops glittering on the poison flower—
I come to question, of thy cousin's will,
How fares his widow? How his orphan babes?
Their natural guardian, thou, may'st best explain.

SIR A. (doggedly.) They are provided for.

HERMIT. Such was thy duty! so far, speak'st thou well;

And like a cousin, and a Christian knight,
Who on the solemn crucifix did swear
To see thy kinsman's will most righteously
Perform'd; And they are well and happy all?
The mother, and her children!

Well, having done thy duty, happy must be thy conscience!

SIR A. Conscience?

HERMIT. Ay, conscience! come, let me see the little ones,
Whose guardianship thou hast so faithfully fulfilled.

SIR A. See them? thou? And by what token?

HERMIT. This signet ring—
Thou know'st it—'twas thy cousin's.

SIR A. How came it thine?

HERMIT. From his own hand!

SIR A. (eagerly.) In his last moment?

HERMIT. First must I see the widow and her babes.

SIR A. Presum'st thou—

HERMIT. (calmly.) First, I will see the widow and her babes.

SIR A. Will?

HERMIT. Ay! will, Sir Alif; shew me where they are!

And that they're well, or better hadst thou never! ~~A red~~
Been born!

SIR A. Insolent cur! what mean'st thou, barking thus in great
men's teeth?

Begone!

And quit the castle, else despite thy holiness,
I'll have thee scourged from hence.

HERMIT. Thou wilt not have me scourged,
Nor shall I quit this castle,

Until I bring thee face to face with truth, ~~bending wolf~~

And make thee tremble, like an arrant coward
That dares not look brave honesty in the face.

SIR A. Tremble, vile caitiff!

Who art thou? speak!

HERMIT. (throwing off his disguise.) Behold! thy cousin!

SIR A. (trembling.) Alive!

HERMIT. Alive, to doom thee dead!

SIR A. The spectre of the oratory?

HERMIT. Ay! the same, returned to blast thee in thy pride of guilt. (assuming an attitude of fury.)

SIR A. Words have I none,

I'll answer with my sword! (drawing his sword.)

HERMIT. Thine hour is come—

Thou shalt have chastisement,

If heaven has justice. (drawing his sword.)

SIR A. Here's my reply! (standing on the defence.)

HERMIT. This to thy heart, then. (Music.—*Exeunt fighting*, R.)

SCENE III.—A Gothic Room in a Turret, hung with decayed tapestry. A window, R. in F., through which the half moon shines. A lamp burning, &c.

Slow Music.—MABEL is discovered, lying on some straw, R.

MABEL. Bewildering thoughts come o'er my early dreams; Dreams of the past, when I, a peasant maid, With no more fortune than mine innocence, First won Lord William's love, believing him, Like myself, a peasant. Oh, that bridal— That happy bridal; and that happy wedding, How soon 'twas blighted; cruel, cruel war, That men should wage thee to their own destruction; And leave their widow's and their children's hearths, Down to be crushed by every ruffian foot That wills to tread on them. Can this be glory? A captive! a bed of straw! but, alas, The golden hope that held my heart, awhile This night which darkens to a cruel close; The widow and her tears will end. Ah, me! And shall I never see my children more! The cause of all my joy, and all my sorrow? Yes, yes! there! there we shall meet again. Hear me, oh, thou Mighty One! this weakness; If I forget thy bounty, pardon!

(Music.—She prays—the clashing of swords is heard, R.)

Ah! that clash of swords, said old man with silent tears
(rising, and gazing through window, R.) Ah! by the moon's
pale light,

Tis Alif! Surely I should know the other—
The armoured phantom of the oratory.
Is this delusion? are my senses real?
The mailed figure falls 'neath Alif's sword.
He's killed! no; now with superhuman force,
He's up and thrusts at Alif—Alif falls—
He's motionless—he's dead!
Forgive him, Heaven!

Music.—Falls on her knees—the tapestry is hurriedly opened and, the ARMOURED FIGURE enters through the centre of the tapestry, a bloody sword in its hand.

FIGURE. Mabel!

MABEL. Heavens! that voice! who calls?

FIGURE. Thine avenger!

MABEL. And Alif?

FIGURE. His death-blood dyes this sword. The hermit hath fulfilled his oath!

MABEL. But my children?

FIGURE. They are here!

(beckons forward OLIVER and MERRYBELLE, leading the CHILDREN through tapestry—MABEL, still on her knees, enfolds them as they rush into her arms.

CHILDREN Mamma! mamma!

MABEL. Oh! they are alive! again I enfold them to my heart. My precious ones—my darlings—*(kissing them.)* You'll not leave me again! no, never! never! never! And thou! preserver! benefactor! Let me bedew thy knees with tears—a widow's—a mother's tears! kneel too, my children—bless him! worship him! oh, speak thy name, that we may breath it in our prayers to Heaven. The name! thy name!!

FIGURE. *(lifting up his visor.)* William de Wharley!!

MABEL. *(screams.)* Heaven! he lives! my husband!

FIGURE. Thy husband, Mabel—yes, thy husband!

(Music.—He stands over her, lifting up the sword, as if appealing to Heaven. The CHILDREN kneel over their mother—

OLIVER, L., MERRYBELLE, R. *Tableau.*

LORD WILLIAM.

CHILD. **MABEL.** **CHILD.**

MERRYBELLE. **OLIVER.**

CURTAIN.