

CIVILIZATION.

A Play.

IN FIVE ACTS.

BY

JOHN H. WILKINS.

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THOMAS HAILES LACY,

WELLINGTON STREET, STRAND,

LONDON.

P R E F A C E.

THERE needs but a brief preface to a work which owes everything to the exertions of the parties concerned in its representation. Sent forth with many hopes and fears, it has earned for its poor author friends in quarters where his highest ambition never aspired, and "golden opinions from all kinds of people," which he fears to wear with "their newest gloss," feeling that to their kind wishes and good natures he owes them, not to the work's own merit.

To MR. JAMES ANDERSON, for the representation of the hero, he owes, and is proud to acknowledge, obligations which ever paying, ever will be to pay. He gave creation and vitality to a mere sketch and outline, and what memory or fame may attach to 'CIVILIZATION,' will, of necessity link itself with *his* efforts, who so ably realized so faint an ideality.

He also hastens to avow his debt to MESSRS. JOHNSON and NELSON LEE, for their unsparing liberality in the production of the play; and, more than all, for their confidence in him, which induced them to commission him to execute the work; and friendly encouragement during its progress—Memories too precious to be easily forgotten.

He also thanks the ladies and gentlemen, one and all, concerned in its representation: not singly, for it would be impossible to specify where everything was complete. He begs, therefore, that they will individually receive his acknowledgments for services, which demand his heart's gratitude.

The play is founded upon Voltaire's *Le Huron*, but the author has availed himself most liberally of the poet's license in the construction.

LONDON,

March 15th, 1853.

J. H. W.

*First performed at the City of London Theatre,
On Wednesday, November 10th, 1852.*

CHARACTERS.

LOUIS THE XIV. (<i>King of France</i>)	MR. H. RIGNOLD.
MONSIEUR DE LOUVOIS (<i>his First Minister</i>)	MR. WORRELL.
MARQUIS DE VILLARCEAUX	MR. W. H. DIBBIN.
MONSIEUR DE BRISSAC	MR. ROWBOTHAM.
MONS. DE CHATEAUVILLAIN	MR. LACY.
COLONEL LATREAMONT	MR. COLWELL.
MONSIEUR LASCELLES (<i>a Secret Agent of the Ministry</i>).....	MR. N. T. HICKS.
THE ABBE GABRIEL (<i>Prior of St. Malo</i>)...	MR. W. SEARLE.
VICTOR LE BEL (<i>his Secretary</i>)	MR. W. TRAVERS.
HERCULE (<i>a Huron</i>)	MR. JAMES ANDERSON.
MONSIEUR FRACAS (<i>High Bailiff of St. Malo</i>)	MR. A. SAVILLE.
TOBIE (<i>his Son</i>)	MR. CORENO.
GREGOIRE	MR. G. HOWARD.
AN EQUERRY	MR. CHARLES.
CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD	MR. W. STEVENS.
PAGE IN WAITING	MISS A. DOWNING.
MADAME KERKABON (<i>Sister of Abbé Gabriel</i>)	MRS. HUGH CAMPBELL.
HORTENSE } (<i>Orphans under the care of</i> } THERESE } <i>the Prior</i>)	{ MISS MARIAN LACY. MISS FANNY MORANT.

Costumes.

(Period about 1680.)

Louis.—Square cut coat, short in sleeves, large cuff; ruffles, ribbon aiguillettes on shoulder; cravat; white shirt, full at waist; ribbons round top of trunk breeches; ribbons at knees; long stockings; shoes; full flowing wig; circular hat, with coloured feather; sword and cane.

Louvois.—Same shape, but black velvet, &c.; hat and black feathers.

LASCELLES AND COURTIERS.—The same style, but of different colours and material.

ABBE GABRIEL.—Black cloth suit, as above; short black circular cloak; black satin bib, edged with white; broad-brimmed black hat, without feathers.

VICTOR.—Plain grey tunic coat, buttoned down front; brown trunk breeches; grey and brown ribbons round neck; at knees, in shoes and round hat; grey stockings; brown broad-brimmed hat; hair *au naturel*.

FRACAS AND TOBIE.—Same fashion as the King's, but of more provincial style and cut.

GUARDS.—Ibid, with breastplates and high boots; musketoons.

HERCULE.—Complete dress of a Canadian Indian; shirt of deer skin; leggings of the same; moccasins; wampum belts, the whole trimmed with beads, coloured worsted, and leaden or tin tags; hunting knife; long flint gun; straight black hair, fastened with circlet of beads; blanket. *Second Dress.*—Plain, but very neat dress of the time. *Third Dress.*—Same fashion, but richer; boots; broad sword belt; round hat and feathers.

MADAME.—High fan-shaped head-dress of time; damask robe, looped back from waist, showing lining of pink satin, short full sleeves; small farthingale; white satin under dress, trimmed with lace and ribbons, as is the body and sleeves; long gloves, fan, veil, &c. *Second Dress.*—Same fashion.

HORTENSE.—White silk open dress; hair short; ring-curls over forehead, full at side. (Time of Charles II.) *First Dress.*—Hat and feather; mantle.

THERESE.—The same, of pink or coloured silk

CIVILIZATION.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Prior's House, with a latticed window, looking out upon the sea, c. A Door in F. L.*

THERESE discovered upon a couch (c.) as if she had fallen asleep suddenly—music and a guitar at her feet. A half-trimmed head dress in her lap. Enter VICTOR (door in F.) with opened letters in his hand. Going to the table, (L.) he stops, observing THERESE.

VIC. Ah! Mam'selle Therese, reposing in my study? Poor girl! Sleep is a stern resistless tyrant, and will assert his Lethean prerogative in the very teeth of fashion! The poor girl, between her primitive patron and her fashionable mistress, has a hard time of it. Humph! I never noticed it before, but Therese is certainly pretty—that dimple is a dimple, and not a scar. (looks at letters) Here's artillery to take a homely man's fortalice by storm! Till the Huron came, we were beyond the ken of courtier observation—now, the aboriginal Prior is deluged by recollections of worthy cousins, loving friends, gentle, simple and designing, all eager to sacrifice to the god Novelty! Well, for the sake of good breeding, I must send them welcomes. (he sits at a table, L. and writes)

THE. (awaking with a start) Oh, dear, I beg your pardon, I've been asleep, I fear.

VIC. Sleep on: you don't disturb me.

THE. To think I should fall asleep, and in this room too, of all rooms! Your room! So strange.

VIC. Very strange. You've been playing, I see.

THE. No, I was only trying to remember something—I hate music.

VIC. (half turning in his chair) Hate music!

THE. I hate work—(rising and pettishly throwing it from her) I hate everything—I'm unhappy—and sleepy.

VIC. (rising and advancing, L.) Madame Kerkabon came home at daybreak, did she not?

THE. (r.) Yes, just at the hour that her worthy brother, the Prior, left his bed to pray, she came to hers to sleep, and dream of the night's fête. I wish I was a dog, a bird, a squirrel,

or a pet monkey—any animal but a poor relation. They're the nightmares of society—the antipathies or reptiles of nature's zoology—everybody shuns, nobody loves them.

VIC. (L.) Nobody? You're wrong.

THE. Why who loves me, then?

VIC. Every one that knows you.

THE. But I know nobody, and if it were so, one don't care to be loved by everybody.

VIC. The Prior's kind and fatherly.

THE. True, but a young woman wants more things than fathers. They're natural necessities, are fathers, but that's all—age pairs with its like.

VIC. You are a favourite with Madame Kerkabon.

THE. Yes, I share her affections with her parrot, but I've the monopoly of her ill humours.

VIC. And the sweet Mademoiselle Hortense—she loves you with a sister's calm and beautiful affection.

THE. There, again! A sister's! Men and women didn't come into the world to be brothers and sisters. A pretty world it would have been with such a state of things. There'd have been no Romancists—no Troubadours—no Pursuivant d'Amours—no Tournaments where the prize was Beauty and not Blood. We should have been nothing but a plain work-day, sober, jog-trot world, like a guitar with one string—or a starling with one song!—no shadow—no cloud—no discord! Women would be nothing without discord, and the world could not roll on without it.

VIC. And for the sake of discord, you are desirous of a lover.

THE. Yes, to jar with—to love, to tease, to plague, to torture, to pet—they're much about the same, as women use them. I wish I'd one for the sport's sake.

VIC. For the sport's sake? Take me!

THE. You!

Enter SERVANT, door in r.

SER. Monsieur Lascelles is in the garden, sir, to wait on Madame Kerkabon.

VIC. Usher him here.

Exit SERVANT.

That's a bad omen, Mam'selle. Monsieur Lascelles is a kind of human presentiment, foreshadowing coming evil. I'd rather face a pest-wind than that man—the sight of him brings trouble.

THE. Lord! I should like to see him.

VIC. He is a rejected suitor of the Prior's orphan ward, Hortense, but one who hopes still, in the face of hope! A man to be avoided, and not avoided only, but armed against. He is the minister, Louvois' prime friend and *protégé*. A man, who where he hates strikes, not at the face, but as he passes smilingly, *at the back*.

THE. The old wretch!

VIC. Old! Monsieur Lascelles is young, gay, brilliant—the star of the court—the oracle of Versailles—the painted skin without—

the snake within. I, for one, am forced to pander to his power, even while I despise him. I pray you leave us together.

Exit THERESE, R.

Enter SERVANT and LASCELLES, door in F.

VIC. (to SERVANT) Ask Mam'selle Therese to acquaint Madame Kerkabon of the arrival of Monsieur Lascelles.

SERVANT bows and exit R.

LAS. (L.) Your servant, Monsieur le Bel,—I think I'm right in the name. How goes on all at St. Malo?

VIC. (R.) Well, sir.

LAS. And your health? Well too: that's good! That's very pleasant. The Lady Hortense? still unchanged?

VIC. Still, sir. Ever the same in her gentleness, forbearance, charity, beauty,—still unchanged, in her likes and her *dislikes*. (*pointedly*)

LAS. Humph! I was among the latter (*crosses to R. and sits*) but she was younger then and a stranger even to herself. She knew not what she really liked or disliked: she will gain more wisdom as she grows,

VIC. Wisdom is not love!

LAS. Minerva is not Cupid. Love is an infant—Wisdom a grown woman. But quitting her! The news goes at Versailles, that a new and strange guest has joined your master's circle. An Indian, runs the rumour.

VIC. Reared among the Indians of Huronia, being found by a bereft mother of the tribe, upon the field of slaughter, that had bathed itself in the blood of his French parents. His father, as we learn, fought in the wars of the Fronde; and, on the defeat of his party, fled to America.

LAS. I see (*rising*)—the creature brings his pedigree with him!

VIC. Grown to manhood, he fought with his tribe against the British—was made prisoner, and brought to England. An invasion being planned, he was offered the choice of joining the expedition against these shores, or remaining prisoner. He preferred the former.

LAS. Then he was possibly mixed up with the descent made on St. Malo, scarce four days ago?

VIC. He was; but took an opportunity to escape—and, while wandering on the beach, the Prior encountered him, and struck by his appearance and bearing offered him a home. This is his history!

LAS. A romantic savage! Such a novelty would please the king—he must be induced, at all risks, to visit Versailles—we shall civilize him there!

VIC. Civilize!

LAS. Yes! we must teach him to play, to flirt, to speak in the court language, lie in the court fashion, mix in the court intrigues—we'll make a courtier of him!

VIC. (*aside*) Or a villain.

LAS. But I see him not—nor the Prior—nor the fair Hortense. Have they adopted court hours at St. Malo, and live by twilight?

VIC. The Huron is already on the hills in search of game; for all his tribe are fond of hunting. Mademoiselle has gone upon a charitable errand to the village close by. The worthy father will be here anon.

Re-enter THERESE, R.

THE. Madame Kerkabon is ready to receive Monsieur. (*goes up*)

LAS. I am her servant. On his return, tell the reverend father, I shall claim his hospitality for some few days. I must see this wonderful barbarian—and the king is already palled with love, tourneys, and journeyings. Who knows but this savage may amuse his royalty in the absence of the more rational entertainments of the bears and monkeys!—'Tis worth the trial—Why are kings but men?

Exit R.

VIC. Amuse the King! A man whose rude, rough mind—

Unused to the soft arts and wiles of courts,
Pushes aside convention, and its tricks, (*crosses to R.*)
That man's free soul and will enchains and fetters!

And shall he

Who spurns at these disgraces, be a toy—
A plaything for a king?

THE. (L.) I have learned such wonders!

VIC. And I! A rogue can't be an honest man, that's sure as Doomsday!

THE. What brings Monsieur Lascelles here to St. Malo? A kiss to a curtsey you can't guess that?

VIC. The Huron!

THE. That's half—the other half holds the secret. For sport's sake guess, and win the wager!

VIC. Not Hortense!

THE. I've lost—take my hand—(*he kisses her hand*)—Madame has promised him the lady's hand—and he has come to win it!

VIC. Never! she hates him—

THE. She's an orphan—a dependant! What can she do against the formidable batteries of Madame, and the resolute charges of Monsieur—surrender with the honours of war—and that's being beaten—call it what you will!

VIC. The Prior never will consent—

THE. He!—good easy man—Madame Kerkabon is the father's father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and everything else to the end of the line. Besides—what's the Father? A man! What's she? A woman! He might just as well be a squirrel in a cage—he may kick and run as hard as he will, but the cage will only go one way, and he must go with it. A man, indeed!—he's a poor man that gets into the clutches of such a dragon as Madame Kerkabon!

VIC. But it is believed that the son of Monsieur Fracas, the high bailiff, was intended to espouse Hortense—

THE. Yes, so the burly and important Monsieur Fracas believes and desires, for the sake of the wealth with which the Prior on his death has promised to endow her—but his loutish son has no love for her—I can tell where his affections are set, but they'll never take root to flower!

VIC. And the object of his admiration—

THE. I can't help it—me!

VIC. You!—does he dare—I mean, does he hope—

THE. Why shouldn't he? Every man has a right to like where he likes—and if he likes me, let him—

VIC. And you'll return it?

THE. Yes!

VIC. Therese!

THE. For something not worth the having, when he gives it me. Melancholy slaves we women are! You men adopt universality with women—but you expect us to practice particularity with you.

Exit R.

VIC. I can see the end of this—I shall fall madly in love with that girl, out of that instinctive obstinacy of the human race that will persist in judging by the heart, and not the pocket. We cannot help accident and destiny—so I'll e'en fall in love with her out of sheer obstinacy!

Exit L.

SCENE II.—*Exterior of the Prior's House; a lawn and distant view of the sea.*

Enter MADAME KERKABON and LASCELLES from the house, R. U. E.

LAS. (r.) The fair Hortense inclines less than ever to the suit of her admirer.

MAD. K. (c.) Country prejudices, my dear Monsieur, are ruining that girl—she's hopeless!

LAS. Ah, Madame—I fear you have pleaded my cause but faintly!

MAD. K. My dear Lascelles!—Not pleaded for you?—I've got up at three o'clock in the afternoon, and deprived myself of my natural rest, to be your advocate! I've threatened, and she laughed—entreathed, and she frowned—she's somehow got hold of some primeval doctrine of a mystical union between love and matrimony—and engines can't drive the dogma out of her!

LAS. Does she know this Huron?

MAD. K. Psha!—she's never seen him, though she's to officiate to-day at the ceremony that receives him into the bosom of the church—he's to be christened this morning—and she's to be his godmother!

LAS. The country's beauties seem to hold her captive to its charms, to the total discomfiture of town: and truth to tell, this is a lovely spot.

MAD. K. Yes; the grass isn't a bad colour for the country, and the trees grow very decently for nature; but for the perfection of these things, give me Paris. Hortense would be an apt scholar, could she be got to town. She faints very naturally already, and cries divinely. One would hardly have thought those fashions would have crept so far from town—

Enter the ABRE GABRIEL, FRACAS, and TOBIE, L. U. E.

But here comes my brother.

GAB. Monsieur, I have had notice of your arrival, and made all speed to see you. So—so, at last you have grown tired of the vapid emptiness and fripperies of Paris. You have come to ruralize at St. Malo? Well, well—we'll have fêtes for you, and games. We'll drive out the devil dullness, and put new breath and blood into you, Monsieur. Madame shall be your hostess, and my new *protégé* your pupil and companion.

LAS. That's my dear old uncle still!

MAD. K. Monsieur Lascelles is unknown to Monsieur Fracas and his son, brother! Bless me, you never will go hand-in-hand with the times—you're always a century in the rear.

GAB. Right! Wonderful head that sister of mine has; it's brimful of something. Monsieur Lascelles—the worthy high-bailiff and his son—Monsieur Fracas—a promising lad, nephew!

LAS. He seems so, sir—all *promise*—

FRA. And performance, sir—and performance. He's an astonishing young man, full of suggestion. He's all idea—all soul—all expansion. He's the man for the ministers; if they had him at their elbow he'd soon alter the state of affairs in Paris. He'd put the king into a proper training.

TOB. It's not for me to say, sir; but if I might offer a suggestion, or put in an idea, the state might be better governed.

LAS. You think so?

TOB. (L.) Think so! Some day, perhaps—well, time will show. Mind, I do not say the king's a fool, nor that the ministers are fools, nor that the people are fools—I say nothing.

LAS. Certainly!

TOB. But it may fall out—time will declare,—when the kingdom's turned topsy-turvy—whenever you meditate on fools, you'll think of me!

LAS. (c.) Doubtless.

FRA. (L.c.) Isn't he a suggestive youth? Full of ideas. Sir, you're a man of sound sense, and will understand me. What's your opinion of bulls?

LAS. Really, I have never given the subject serious attention!

FRA. Have you never looked a bull in the face? Sir, it is wisdom—sound, solid, substantial, sapient, beef-grained wisdom! We have a bull on our estate, sir—an interesting savage, with horns suggestive of mind and matter. I daren't look him in the face, or over the hedge I'd go; but Tobie can, and the bull's cowed! There's a sympathy between their natures—a reciprocity of senti-

ment. It's in his left eye, sir. If the soul's anywhere, it's in his left eye.

GAB. Why, Fracas, sister Cecile tells me that Hortense intended to make a call on you this morning on her return from a charitable mission, and crave your son's escort across the field haunted by your formidable bull. Fracas, you ought to kill that bull—it's the terror of the commune!

FRA. Kill my bull! Is the Father mad?

LAS. But the Huron! I am impatient to see him.

FRA. And I!

TOB. And I!

LAS. What is his name?

GAB. As yet he owns none but that of his tribe.

FRA. I should have liked to have brought my bull and him face to face before I offered him friendship. I've great faith in the bull's power of perception.

TOB. But is he a real Indian, or only a half-bred?

FRA. Has he a soul, and does it look out of his left eye?

LAS. Is he, in truth, the romantic hero your secretary paints in such glowing colours?

GAB. Judge for yourselves—he's here!

Enter the HURON, L. U. E., dressed in the hunting dress of his tribe; a hare and some birds slung over his shoulder; a hunting knife in his girdle, his rifle in his hand; entering, he kisses the PASTOR'S hand; and looking round, lays the game at MADAME KERKABON'S feet.

TOB. He's very like our bull.

FRA. He's got souls in both eyes.

LAS. A modell'd Hercules! Mien, stature, glance,
That are the blazons of the inner man,
And voice it to the stars! A hero born,
Whose air commands respect above a king's;
Bearing the stamp from the great mint of heaven,
And current to the world! The king must see him.

GAB. Friends!—my noble Huron—worthy friends! And this a kinsman—

A great man—high in power at the court,
And favoured by the king. He comes from Paris—
Paris, the mart of civilization.

HERCULE (*the Huron*) Paris! (*crosses, c.*)

Civilization! King! Court! Is he rich? (*pointing to LAS-CELLES*)

GAB. Aye!

And with a voice that's like a helm at sea,
And guides the bark to haven.

HER. Riches! Power!

Yet not content.

What means he?

LAS. Not content?

HER. What does he out of Paris, holding there

The substances of shadow-built ambition,
Riches and power, royal smiles and rank ?
He hath all these things in Paris, and comes here
To live without.

GAB. He comes to visit me.

HER. From love ?

GAB. Perhaps not that alone. The fashions
And customs of society demand
These petty courtesies.

HER. Is he then civilized ?

MAD. K. Civilized ! I'm choked ! The minister's own friend,
You bear !

HER. You chide me ! Is this just ? There is a thing
I came to learn of you, as boys to school.
Civilization ! what is that ? "The art
Rubbing the rust of savageness away."
'Tis thus you taught me ; judge if I repeat
The lesson perfectly. (*to Prior*) "The art that lifts
Man high above the level of the beasts ;
To the rough, undeveloped mind gives polish,
And teaches it to think ; by thought, instructs it
To be just, generous, forgiving, true,
Patient, and faithful, both to God and man :
And brave enough to combat for the right,
And tell the truth ! 'Tis this that mankind calls
Civilization ! Say—is he all this ? (*points to LASCELLES*)

MAD. K. Pre-Adamite tenets ! Older than the hills !

Civilization, as the world goes now,
Is to sing well, play, drink, dance, and fight.
Learned in the ways of men, not to do well
By them, but over-reach them by our arts,
Changing opinions as opinions change,
And saying not our thoughts, but their reverse.

What says Monsieur ? (*to LASCELLES*)

LAS. (c.) Most excellent definition.
You teach the court code ; yet the other holds
Good among sundries like the populace.

HER. It seems there are two Civilizations : one
The jewel, and the other but cut glass.
You (*to LASCELLES and MADAME K.*) worship the external
glittering,
And hold it up to dazzle my rude eyes,
As gilded baits for fish. He holds a stone (*points to Prior*)
That glitters through the darkness, like a deed
Of virtue through the gloom antiquity.
The price is higher, but I'll take the stone.

(*LASCELLES and GABRIEL, with MADAME K., go up; she enters the house*)

FRA. I acknowledge your idea, Tobie. He is very like the bull.
TOB. I have another. (*crosses to the HURON*)

FRA. What, another idea? Wonderful young man!

TOB. Yes; I don't believe he's an Indian at all. Pray, Monsieur Huron, how is it that you wear hair upon your chin? Your real Indian never does. Hum?

HER. Right! At home he never does. When abroad he returns to first principles—lets it grow and bristle up, that it may fitly answer bare-faced and civilized impertinence.

TOB. Humph! (*crosses, L.*)

FRA. The very image of our bull! And pray, sir, making so bold, what is your idea of bailiffs? I am high-bailiff of St. Malo, and my son is under-bailiff. Do you believe that society could go on without bailiffs?

HER. Why do you set up an effigy in your field yonder, that looks angrily and warlike, yet is but straw and rags in honest truth?

FRA. To scare away purloining and evil-doing crows from the corn.

HER. Right! The villagers are the corn, the thieves are the crows, and you are the effigy!

FRA. Zounds and thunder! If he wasn't the friend of the Prior, whose ward you are to marry—(*a distant scream heard, L.*)

Enter from the house, SERVANTS armed.

GAB. (*looking out*) 'Tis Hortense, and pursued by that furious beast that all the village dreads! Heavens! It gains on her! She will perish!

LAS. She's lost! A weapon—yours! (*taking one*)

HER. Your hand trembles! Is this a time for fear?

GAB. She falls!

HER. As he bends his neck. Now! (*LASCELLES' gun flashes in the pan—HERCULE fires, and hurries out followed by GABRIEL; a shout without*)

ALL. He is hit!

FRA. Dam'me, if he hasn't shot my bull!

TOB. I shall never look him in the face again!

LAS. (*solus*) She's saved—Hortense! My dream—

Exit, L.

Exit, L.

Devotion—beacon—light, and guiding star—

Not for myself my toils, but to win thee!

To dazzle with my splendour and my power

Those eyes on which I gazed from my content,

And felt a vital power and a fire

Spring up within that would not let me rest,

Until I won thee! I have made the leap—

Have cleared the bank—the future knows the rest.

Enter the HURON, bearing HORTENSE in his arms, followed by GABRIEL and SERVANTS, who exeunt, R.

LAS. (*rushing to her*) She is not hurt?

HER. (*interposing*)

What matters it to thee?

LAS. Sirrah !

GAB. My friend ! He is the lady's relative
And loves her !

HER. Well, can he not love her at a distance ?

She'll be herself again, and soon ! (*aside*) Her hand
Is very soft—her hair is glossy rich ;
And as I raised her fainting from the earth,
There was a lustre in her gentle eyes that sent
The life-blood back upon my heart, each nerve
As with a separate pulse endowed. Her voice,
Half piteous, had a tone that struck within
An echoing music. She is very fair !

GAB. Hortense, my child ! That's brave : smile at your fears,—
You made an old man's heart leap high for thee.
Thank your protector !

HOR. With a flowing heart !

We shall be better friends I hope in time,
And you shall teach me how to pay a debt
Which grows with every payment. I have brought
Good news—(*turning to PRIOR*)

GAB. Have you forgot Monsieur Lascelles ?

HOR. He cannot but be welcome in a house
Where he has a right of kin to enter,—I,
Lacking a right, yet finding it a home :
And such a dear one ! But my news :—the dame
Down in the glade is better—and the fever
Has taken a good turn : I know those news
Will strike like joy-bells on your ear, my father,
To whom the law of doing good is breath,
Blood, life of life ! (*they go up, r. c.*)

HER. What pain is this ?—what heart-ache ?—pang of joy—
Half maddening with agony and bliss !
It can't be sickness—No.—I have it, now :—
'Tis civilization ! Yes—that's it—I'll have more on't !

HOR. I will rejoin you presently, my father.

Exeunt LASCELLES and GABRIEL into house.

HER. Is yon old man your father ?

HOR. What is he
Who finds a home and welcome in his heart,
And gives them to the orphan ?

HER. Father ! True !
And I, like you, am parentless ! And yet
This good old man would seem to fill the place
They should have filled within. The pain again !
This Civilization hurts me very much !
And yet I like it too. What can it be,
This Civilization ?

HOR. It is a key
Which opens upon Nature the high gates
Of learning, taste, refinement,—lacking which

Life drags a ponderous chain and bar along,
Clogging its heels with its own manacles!
First you must learn—

HER.

What ?

HOR.

To be gentle tongued,
Or to speak only fresh and fervid words
That from the soul come coined in sentences
Full of rich meaning. Words that herald hearts—
Falsehood and guilt defying !

HER.

Yes—what more ?

HOR. That where you set your heart, virtue your guide,
To halt not for resistance, nor the lets
That difficulty casts before your path :—
But overleap them—or so persevere
Till the high obstacle is trodden down
As flat as fallow land !

HER.

Speak on again !

All senses are combined and thrall'd in one
That listens to thee !

HOR.

Of all things, love honor !

Let it encourage thee to noble deeds.
Push on thy heart to tread conventions down,
And on the crush'd and batter'd ruins rear
Fresh rules and nobler motives. Lastly, love—

HER. That's civilization too ?

HOR.

The flower—fruit—

The music—and the star. What of the world
Is worthy in its homeliness, and sweet,
(Although it wears no glittering blazonment,
As showier virtues, or more public graces;) Yet, love uplifts its lowliness as high
As its own heaven-crown'd self. For love, then, brave
Men's anger and men's scorn ! Let it inspire
Thy soul with thoughts that will etherealize
And lift it to companionship with saints,
E'en while it bends thy knee before the foot
Of her thy true heart worships !

HER.

It shall do so !

It shall uplift me—fashion me—refine me—
To mate my speech with music-whispering birds ;
In tones heart-spoken, gushing, like sweet waters
That flow in softened murmurs—

HOR.

What is this ?

HER. Thy teaching. “ To be gentle tongued, but yet
Only to speak words where the soul hath part,
Falsehood and guile defying.” Shall I pause
To speak a theme that fires me within,
And over-fills my heart ? I love thee, Hortense !

HOR. A dream—a phantasy, before which grows
A mighty forest of impediments ! —

HER. I'll crush them down—you bade me persevere

"Till the high obstacle be trodden down
 As flat as fallow land!" Love fires me,
 And gazeth upon huge impediments
 With eyes like those of men at children's fears,
 To be despised and mocked. I love thee, Hortense!
 We are orphan'd—free!
 Our hearts our own, and in each other's gift.
 I'll win for thee a name beyond the power
 O'the rusty, cankering finger of old Time
 To break, or waste, and thine the glory all!

Enter LASCELLES from the house observing.

Yes, Hortense, I will win for thee
 Splendour, and wealth, and honor, to set forth
 Thy beauty, like rich jewels—

LAS. (advancing) You are staid for,
 Sweet Mistress Hortense. The procession waits
 To lead the Huron to the church.

HOR. I come!

You'll follow! (to the HURON)

HER. As the day-light doth the sun.

Exeunt LASCELLES and HORTENSE into house.

I catch the lesson now: it is to feel
 And think: and what we think, to do—to Love—
 That's Civilization. Why do I hate this man?
 Is he not civilized—perhaps—(I watch'd his eyes)—
 He loves her! By what right? Except to love
 As all men love the beautiful and pure,
 Because it is their nature! If this be,
 All nature must *love her*—Mankind must *love her*.
 Creation—all around—above—below—
 Must love her. I'd have none love her but I—
 That smacks of Selfishness, which as I think
 Hath a large share in civilization. Love!
 I'll win her—if he loves her, let him strive
 With me to nobly earn her—if she smiles
 Summer on him, and winter-chills my hope,
 I'll give her up, though not without a pang,
 And bid "God bless her." Yes, that's Civilization!

*Enter FRACAS, TOBIE, and PEASANTRY, L. U E. GABRIEL, VICTOR,
 LASCELLES, HORTENSE, THERESE, and MADAME KERKABON, followed
 by SERVANTS, from House.—Procession formed.—Music and Church
 Bells heard in the distance.*

END OF ACT I.

(A few months have elapsed.)

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Chamber in the Prior's House.*

LASCELLES discovered reading. THERESE stands near as if in conversation.

LAS. Then, you are sure they love each other?

THE. Sure! Are they not made for each other, as naturally as the hook of my bracelet's made for the snap? And why shouldn't they?

LAS. Ay, surely, why shouldn't they?

THE. The bailiff sees it, and bites his lip—Madame Kerkabon sees it, and cracks her lace—young Monsieur Tobie sees it, and tears what little hair he has into a tangle: not that he cares at his heart about Hortense.—It's a marriage of pockets, not persons. Hang all such marriages, say I.

LAS. Hortense is an orphan, and adopted by the Prior. Whence comes the wealth to tempt the cupidity of the bailiff and his son?

THE. From the Prior. He loves her as his own child, and has endowed her as such.

Enter TOBIE, door in F.

TOB. Here she is alone—no, curse it, here's Monsieur Lascelles with her! Your servant, monsieur.

LAS. Sir, you do me too much honour!

TOB. I almost think he's sneering at me—I wish he'd go. (*aside*)

THE. They'll keep each other excellent company—as good a partnership as a porcupine and pigeon. Having no liking for either, I'll rid them of *my* company.

Exit L.

TOB. It's plain enough, she can't resist my eye, and shuns its powerful glance. Monsieur, are you a believer in metemphyschosis?

LAS. Sir, I believe nothing I do not understand.

TOB. Now, that's where we differ—I always make it a rule to believe everything I don't understand.

LAS. Then your creed must be the largest one I know!

TOB. And this is my ground. The bull lately deceased never could stand my eye—now he's dead, neither can Therese. Now, what should you call that?

LAS. A mere matter of taste!

TOB. Taste! It's soul, sir—solid soul! Therese has inherited the bull's soul, and there's a secret connexion between the soul and the eye. Now it's a different matter with Hortense; she's either got no soul at all, or I can't get her in the right focus.

LAS. And yet you are her accepted lover—her affianced husband. Is it not so?

TOB. Well, you see, father hath settled it all with the Prior, when we were at school—and it all went on amicably enough till the Huron came—

LAS. (*putting aside his book*) And he loves her, you think?

TOB. Loves her! It must be a very sublime of love to make him plunge into study as he has done. His lamp burns day and night. He has leapt through arithmetic—flown over geography—galloped over grammar—languages known and unknown, dead, living, and notable, he has snapt up rather than swallowed.—He has nearly killed his fencing master with his own foil.—Music he has fished up, and gulped like an oyster; and for swimming, there isn't a salmon in the Seine can wag a fin at him. He's a wonderful man, but he'll never be a gentleman.

LAS. And why not, may one ask?

TOB. There's no getting him to tell a falsehood. Now, that's one of the first attributes of gentlemen! Truth is a Pagan idea, and ought to be kept as a national curiosity when found.

LAS. Exactly so, when found!

Enter the PRIOR, MADAME KERKABON, MONSIEUR FRACAS, and and VICTOR, from D. F. L. LASCELLES places a chair for MADAME KERKABON, who sits, R.

FRA. But a bull, Monsieur l'Abbé, and such a bull! I demand full, legal, ample, and compensatory indemnification for such a loss. If not a national loss, certainly a suburban one! and I'll have it.

GAB. Monsieur Fracas, I cannot see the justice of your request. It was to save my ward's life!

FRA. Pshaw! I'll not hear it. I'll not hear anything but reparation, indemnification, compensation! I looked upon that bull as my own flesh and blood, and Hercule shan't carry it off so bravely, and so I'd tell him.

GAB. But Hortense—your son's destined bride—

FRA. Don't tell me: what's a woman to a bull?

GAB. Well, if you must then—Victor, take Monsieur Fracas to Hercule, and tell him—

FRA. Not for the world! I face the fierce barbarian!—besides, I've an agent that transacts all business for me with any danger in it. I'll send him in the evening. And as for my son's destined bride, it's all moonshine. Tobie says it's all moonshine, and moonshine it therefore must be.

GAB. What do you mean? Hortense is as obedient and as charming as ever.

FRA. So Hercule thinks. She's his food, drink, sleep, existence. Any one can see it with half an eye—and Tobie, with such an eye as his, could see it with a quarter. Come, Tobie, here'll be work for Monsieur Litigant; here'll be scope for—

VIC. (at window) Is not yonder Hercule coming through the trees?

TOB. Father, it's no use saying any more at present; don't you think we'd better go, and come when he's out?

FRA. An original idea; I'll take it. Madame—Gentlemen—your very humble servants.

Exeunt FRACAS and TOBIE, D. F. L.

MAD. K. There, you hear, brother: it's the talk of the whole village.

LAS. He must be a happy man to find so sweet a home—so worthy a friend—so all-absorbing an interest which has already extended as far as Paris!

GAB. What! has the king heard of him?

LAS. And wherefore should he not, good father? It is in our natures to love monstrosities, either as giants, dwarfs, wild men of the woods, or double-headed mongers of distortion. The example being set by the most civilized courts of Europe, no wonder our good king Louis is not miracle-proof.

GAB. But Hercule is as intelligent as he's interesting. Already has he read beyond many of our famed *literati*, and grappled with difficulties beneath which other men have sunk repulsed. He'll be a great man yet!

MAD. K. Yes, in a travelling menagerie, as the link between men and brutes, or among the mountebanks that swarm Paris.

LAS. Or as the hero of a novel, to be seen alive!

VIC. (*aside*) This is beyond endurance.

LAS. He'd make an excellent gaoler for the Bastille. I must bear his insolence in mind; he deserves something at my hands, and he shall have it!

MAD. K. And at mine, too! He should have been my page to sprinkle odours on my handkerchief and gloves: it's a pity I didn't bring a little more from Paris.

GAB. Oh! shame, sister, shame!

VIC. 'Tis infamous. The insolence of which Monsieur Lascelles speaks is simply the fact that Hercule, in their late quarrel, disarmed and beat him to the ground. He might then have slain him, but his noble nature triumphing, he gave him back his life. He does deserve something at his hands. Respect, and let him have it.

LAS. These impudent upstarts! (*goes up*)

MAD. K. (*with dignity*) Monsieur Victor le Bel, do you know with whom you converse so familiarly?

VIC. Perfectly, madame; and I remember too, that when you lay a few weeks back prostrated by fever, in its most deadly crisis, it was Hercule's exertion in riding post to Dinan, and equally miraculous return with medical help, that preserved you from death. You owe him something—gratitude! 'Tis pity you didn't bring a little more of *that* from Paris.

MAD. K. Brother, do you hear this? Ring for Therese and aromatic vinegar! but either he or I quit your house this day, brother.

GAB. With all my heart. Shall I tell the domestics to pack up your wardrobe?

MAD. K. Brother! you're an unfashionable brute, half an hour behind Parisian time, and I leave you in disgust. But go on—be wilfully blind—let your ward and your wild man marry. Let them love—let them embrace—let them kiss, as I caught them last night. Ah! you may stare: so did I. Kissing! kissing! Who'd have dreamed that that art would have been found flourishing so far out of town.

Exit, R.

GAB. You are to blame, Victor; much to blame.

LAS. Monsieur Victor's enthusiasm is excusable, when we remember that his idol, the Huron, saved his life but lately, when the skiff was overset upon the waters.

VIC. And I am not too proud to feel my obligations, and to acknowledge them.

LAS. A highly proper sense of the benefits conferred. And when Hercule wins for himself a name—

GAB. I purpose a noble destiny for him, Monsieur Lascelles—the church!

LAS. The church! a churchman—he will not take the oath of celibacy, while Hortense is by.

GAB. Again I hear it!

LAS. Walk round the village, and you'll hear it twenty times again. I tell you, father, their hearts are kernelled in each other's breasts; love links them like a chain.

GAB. Sacrilege! Oh, mercy! Sacrilege! The church's code—the ecclesiastic law.

LAS. What then, my father?

GAB. Hath she not answered for him at the font?

LAS. And cannot marry him?

GAB. Except by intercession of the Pope.

LAS. I have them now! O, providential law!

Time-reverend ecclesiastic law!

Hortense, I have thee now. (*crosses L.*)

Oh, reverend father—worthy of thy place!

That through each nook'd-interstice of the law

Hath peer'd to know its windings. Hercule! yes!

Thou didst stand victor o'er me but awhile—

Death at thy gift—I come to give it thee!

I come to pay thee back, with interest,

The mortifying pain of my defeat.

Exit L.

GAB. And you have seen this?—must have look'd upon it—

Seen it through dawn grow sparkling into day,

And never pointed at it as a thing

To be detested—shunn'd!

VIC. I knew it not!

I never knew the church forbade their love,

Believe me, sir.

GAB. My poor Hortense!

VIC. And he as noble too,

As any head that bows before a king.

GAB. It will be hard to tell her this—as hard

As to tell motherhood that it is childless,

And what surpasses that? Why *this*—for age

Hath hope, and strength of mind to lift it up:—

While this may break the tender flower-stem

Which may bear leaves, but never flower again.

VIC. What shall be done?

GAB. Our duty, boy ! Prevent
 This love at every risk. To do aright
 We must be sternly grand, and proudly honest,
 For we are agents, only, upon earth,
 To do His will above—His will be done !

Exeunt n.

SCENE II.—*A handsome Apartment in the Prior's House, with large French windows that look out upon the lawn.*

HORTENSE seated at a table, painting, THERESE looking over her.

HOR. And so, the worthy gossips of St. Malo cannot, for their lives, find better themes for gossip than Hercule and myself?

THE. Bless your heart, it's all set down and settled. One knot of them foretells that you will turn out some grand lady, marry Hercule, and endow posterity with a perspective line of rattling cherubs. Another declares he'll carry you off to his native woods, where you'll paint yourself and live in splendour as his squaw. A third, insists that where love will unite, diet will divide you: as they know, that Hercule kills his own meat and devours it raw. And a fourth, more credibly informed than either, has private information that he is no Indian at all, but a love emissary from the King, despatched to purchase your heart and person for his master—he, to aid the scheme, drawn from life and coloured after nature.

HOR. A rare diversity of choice !

THE. Own it, Hortense—you love him.

HOR. I, Therese ! What folly !

THE. It may be, and yet true. Heigho ! I'm very ill.

THE. (fondly) What ails thee ?

THE. An affection of the heart !

HOR. And what's the best remedy ?

THE. A husband.

HOR. Therese ! You jest !

THE. I mean it—nor do I jest. A husband's no jesting matter ! I've been thinking—you know a maid can't help her thoughts—not am I grieved to hear you disavow your love for Hercule—

HOR. And wherefore, Therese ?

THE. I think I'll fall in love with him myself ! Why, what has flushed you so ?

HOR. The heat—the room is warm—the sun is strong—

THE. The window's open, and the sun's outside. Well, as I was saying, I'll try the experiment on Hercule, and boldly make love to him. (*fans HORTENSE with her handkerchief*) Poor girl, how you are suffering with the heat to-day !

HOR. Bah, mad-cap ! Remember what the good old father says—that, orphaned and world-deserted, he looks on us as rich treasures by heaven confided to his care, to be well guarded and well husbanded.

THE. That's it, precisely ! Husband me well—I've got the lover ready !

HOR. And who is he ?

THE. Not Hercule, trust me !

HOR. Out upon thee ! What's Hercule to me ?

THE. Oh, nothing ! What's a draught of water to a parched Arab in the desert ? Nothing ! Food to a starving man ? Nothing ! Gold to a miser ? Nothing ! Sweets to a child ?—water to a fish ?—dress to a fop ?—music to a dance ? Nothing ! Nothing ! Nothing ! And yet, out of this retort full of nothings may be sublimated an essential everything, called Existence—and that's something near what Hercule is to you.

HOR. You will have your way, you wicked girl ! You have learned too cunning a lesson.

THE. It's part of my school teaching—the first word they taught me was "Love"—I then reached two syllables, "Courtship"—and through three syllables, "Wedding-day"—I must look to four syllables, "Matrimony."

HOR. And who has essayed the conquest of your heart ?

THE. A Victor, Madame—Victor le Bel, and the Belle's me. (*bell rings*) There's another—Oh, mercy ! It is Madame Kerkabon in a perturbation ! She's been in a bad temper all the morning, probably through getting up before six in the afternoon. (*crosses, R.*)

HOR. And as you pass, give this book to the gardener, I borrowed it, to paint a flower from its description.

THE. (*opening it listlessly*) "Give lilies and roses their own way as much as possible." That'll do for us, Hortense. "Clip your forward shoots, and keep them in subjection." That'll do for our lovers. "Let exotics remain in their beds till the last moment." That'll do for Madame Kerkabon.

Exit R.

HOR. Why should I play the shame-faced hypocrite,

Denying that which is my loftiest pride ?

Yes—I fondly love !

And is it not existence, this word Love ?

Earth, air, spring, day-light seem to me, but form'd

To give to Love existence, and surround it

With glories that become its attributes,

And for its sake are dear, or beautiful,

Losing their lustre as its light declines.

Enter HERCULE through c. window, in a plain but tasteful dress.

HER. Is truth a principal, or parasite ?

Are words our foes or friends ? Or do we live

Where war's declared 'twixt sounds and substances ?

For they're ill friends enough, and ever wrangle !

This Civilization is a mighty maze

Where he who steps, confounds himself and strangles

The little common sense he had about him.

HOR. What means this wonder ?

HER. I have seen within

Three messengers for our guest, Monsieur Lascelles :

The first came from a friend—sent up his name—

Down came his valet with "his master's compliments,"
 "His master's not at home!" Now he was at home;
 At least so much at home, as in the house
 Of him who bade him make the house his home.
 So, not at home's a—lie!

HOR. A subterfuge!
 Monsieur Lascelles, not wishing to be seen
 Denied his presence: that was all.

HER. To whom?
 The man's his friend—

HOR. It is the fashion, Hercule.
 HER. And fashion's civilization—to shun your friend,
 Avoid his messenger, and send him hence
 With a false tale, is Civilization:—So,
 An excellent lesson! Another one within
 Told me he brought the tidings of a suit
 At law. Now law is to be reverenced—
 The very main, source, branch, and sentinel
 Of civilization. I read it yesterday.

HOR. What comes of this?
 HER. A certain rogue at Paris

Laid claim to lands that where another's right,
 And held them 'gainst him—it was brought to trial—
 The good man's proof made clear, his right allowed
 By jury, judge, spectators, all!—when, lo!
 Up starts a learned gentleman, and shews
 By ponderous books and statutes out of count,
 He could not claim them—and for why?—because
 His lawyer had not spelt the rogue's name right!
 And so he lost the day!

HOR. It was the law!
 HER. But Law's to do the right, and not perpetuate

The wrong!

HOR. It was a quibble of the law.
 The law would grieve, while it condemn'd the loser;
 But of its majesty it could not swerve,
 Though it might melt to tears—

HER. Tears! crocodiles! (*places chairs, they sit*)
 So mischief-making Quibble, like a rogue,
 Sets law and justice by the ears—the Right
 Slinks rapidly away—Wrong swaggers off—
 Justice despairs—whilst Law fills all her pockets
 Out of the savings of the luckless wight;
 Who may go hang, or drown, or starve, or beg;
 And that's civilization! It is well
 Justice is painted blind, lest she should blush
 To see the misdeeds that her sister, Law,
 Commits in cover of her sacred name!

HOR. In what rare garden grows not noxious weeds?
 These are the weeds of life!

HER. Then root them up!

We root up weeds in garden ground, as pests
 That would in time destroy the whole. So these
 Will one day grow to strength that shall o'erthrow
 The fabric of the city. Well, the third
 Came from the Minister Louvois, whose will
 Imperatively orders our good guest
 To join him on the morrow.

HOR. He departs then ?
 How I shall bless the steed that carries him !
 Is there some stir at court ?

HER. A flagrant wrong !
 The libertine king—

HOR. Hush ! such a word, if heard
 Of other ears, might place your life in peril.
 The king's a good king—loves his subjects all !

HER. The female part especially—they say so.
 The court is all as dissolute as he.
 And one base nobleman, who strove to rob
 An honest citizen of his loving wife,
 Felt the wrong'd husband's staff across his back.
 (I would *I'd* had the laying of it on !)

HOR. What did the nobleman ?

HER. A coward's deed !
 Shunning the good man's sight, he flew to court,
 Procured the king's sign-manual, and straight,
 Filling the blank up with the husband's name,
 Dragged him to prison !

HOR. 'Tis a terrible truth,
 And yet it is the custom—

HER. The custom !
 A husband's hearth defiled—a widow'd wife—
 A childless mother—and a sireless son—
 A king the aggressor—and a ruin'd home—
 And that's court custom !—humph !—there is something
 wrong

About the king and palace ! Men must learn
 Trades by apprenticeship,—and boys are sent
 To study letters in academies ;
 But we've no school for kings ! (*rises and crosses to R.*)

HOR. Yet there's a charm
 About the name and presence of a king,
 Before which titled souls bend slavishly—
 Loving their very shame !
 But we will shun those scenes :—for us the calm
 And peaceful stillness of the valley-home,
 Whence sou'l's, like dews, mount upward unto heaven !

HER. When I have won a name to couple thine—
 When, on the lips alike of brave and rev'rend,
 My name and doings shall be household words—
 And even thy cheek shall be glowing bright,

LASCELLES appears at window

Like sunset looking down on noble deeds,
And love shall take a sacred hue therefrom—
Filling its world with roseate scenes and dreams
That lift us to the stars,—then will we seek
The quiet and the shade !

LAS. (*aside*). So high a flight—
The heavier then the fall ! (*to HERCULE*) You use your time
To best advantage, never letting slip
Eel-sided opportunity :—that's well—
And yet it is a pity !

HER. It is a pity, Monsieur Lascelles will thrust his company
Where it could well be spared—

LAS. I doubt it not !
Hortense is blushing too ! Who gazing there,
Holding a human heart within his breast,
Could stand indifferent ? How sad a fate !
With all that beauty needs, and love desires,
To drink, perforce, of Lethe's sleepy cup,
And to forget for ever !

HER. Hark'ye—sir !
I speak my mind, and openly to all.
I love Hortense ; and o'er my new-found life,
Call'd Civilization, her bright influence hangs—
A spirit light of beauty ! To draw back,
Or to disown what is my soul's religion,
Were to turn heretic and recreant ;
And I am none !—I love her—let her speak !
Loves she, or loves she not ?

HOR. Monsieur Lascelles,
Our passions ever make our destinies,
And frame for us the epochs of our lives.
The love, that being prized is shamed to speak
And blazon'd before man, is worthless love ;
And such is not the offspring of the heart
Hortense bestow'd upon Hercule !

HER. You hear !

LAS. I do !

HER. And having heard—now go !

LAS. So hot !

HER. So proud !

LAS. And pride shall have a fall !

HER. Speak out !

I know the world enough, Monsieur Lascelles,
That in it there are those who love to cast
Their shadow forward, like an evil portent—
A murrain-laden spring—an early winter ;—
Not a clear, honest, biting frost, that men
Know as an open foe, and guard against ;
But the hot, glowing, sunny, smiling day,
That charms the world out of its confidence,

And comes, with its all-murderous pestilence,
To slay like a great rot!—you're one of them!

LAS. Candour and compliment never were born twins!
You bid me then speak out! Can you endure it?
And yet, why not? You're a man of soul!
Be strong—be firm!
Gird up your heart as in a mail of brass—
Self-conquering men are in themselves sublime—

HER. What means this preface?

HOR. There's an evil cloud
Laden with storm, and drawing on!

LAS. You love!
'Tis a sweet passion, and a holy one!
All smiles—love, youth, hope, chastity, and faith—
And there we stop—there comes the obstacle—

HER. What obstacle?

LAS. Between Hortense and thee!

HER. What obstacle?

LAS. A little one. A church!
Shall passion combat with high heaven's decree?
Forbid it, law!

HER. What law?

LAS. The law that says
The font shall shut the altar out from view!
The law that says, in golden characters,
That she who, at the rite of baptism,
Answered as sponsor for the Christian, ne'er
Shall call him husband!

(HORTENSE sinks weeping on a chair)
And is that the law?

HER. LAS. The very law!

HER. Find me a quibble for it!

You labour hard to do the right a wrong;
Spare yet a little trouble for the right!

Enter GABRIEL, c.

HOR. Father, is this the truth?

LAS. I do not lie,

Sweet, beautiful Hortense!

HER. Dry up thy tears!
We'll make the law subservient to ourselves,
And yet be happy—

GAB. It can never be;
The law establish'd in the church's code,
Can but be thrust aside by the great hand
And thunder-breath voice of the Pope himself!

HER. He's a good fellow then—I'll call on him
To-morrow morning early!

GAB. In the name
Of heaven, peace to thy irreverent tongue!
Mountains, and miles of shore—encircling seas,
Stand between Rome and thee!

HER. Not go to him !

Then let me send, and bid him come to me.

Is not the Pope a man ?—and being man,

No more than you, or he, or I !

HOR. (*to him*) Hercule, there is a word
More terrible than thunder, or the sound
Fore-running earthquake, which must tear asunder
Our hearts, as with the stroke of war—

HER. The word is—

HOR. Farewell !

HER. I cannot speak it yet !

It may be that I'm rude, and rough—unused

To all the customs of the civilized !

But there is something here that cries—Go on !—

As of a child's voice singing in the dark,

And cheering me to hope !

LAS. A brave resolve !
Seek Paris—seek the king—his power may sway
The Pope's decree ! Who knows ? Win the king's favour—
The rest lies open !

HER. Good !—I'll seek the king !
Oh ! for a name to lay before him—something
To ask the boon as payment for some deed
Worthy a king's imperial gratitude ! (*distant shouts*)

Enter FRACAS and TOBIE, c.

FRA. I said it !—I knew it !—I guessed what would come of the sacrilege of shooting my bull !—They've come !

ALL. Say, who've come ?

FRA. Who've come ?—the invaders !—the English !—the barbarians !—the ship that brought the Huron was a spy !—a trick to reconnoitre the coast—and now here they've landed, armed to the teeth, to burn, plunder, and destroy !

HER. Attack and beat them back then ! There are armed men around you ! (*shouts*)

FRA. Me !—I'm too old to fight !—besides they want a leader !

LAS. Your son, then—

TOB. Me !—what do we keep soldiers for ? There's not one of the English would look me steadily in the eye—if he would, I'd fight the whole armament singly ! The eye's my weapon, sir—not the sword !

HER. Cowards !

LAS. Your country may be lost !

TOB. Why does not your honour have a touch at glory ?

LAS. Show me a leader !

HER. Follow me, then—I'll lead you to the charge ! (*shouts*)

HOR. You go to die, perchance !

HER. Hortense, there are men whose lives are spent to live in after life—who place their youth, energies, and genius in the wheel of fortune, and trust their fates to heaven—I'm one of them.

—(shouts)—Others will strike for France—I for Hortense—each blow cleaves down a bar betwixt us! Shall I go or stay?

HOR. Go forth,—to honour and to victory!

HER. (to PRIOR) Yet, ere I go, my gratitude, and this! (taking portrait from his neck) Should I fall, the only token of my nameless fate—the last legacy of a dying mother to her child! (shouts)

GAB. Do I dream!—It is the face—the self-same face of that dear sister that years ago quitted this shore for a foreign land.—Are these the features of your mother, Hercule?

HER. So my good old nurse taught me to believe!

GAB. My sister's son!—my nephew— (shouts)

LAS. The attack has commenced!—we are waited for?

FRA. Exactly what I was about to observe!

LAS. This way leads to the conflict!

FRA. This way to the garret!

Exit with TOBIE, L.

Loud shouts. Armed Peasants appear at the back.

OMNES. Hercule! Hercule!

HER. I'm with you, gallant hearts! A moment since, friendless and hopeless, I hardly cared for life. Now it has grown precious to me in the existence of two sacred causes—gratitude and love! On, cheerily—for Honour,—my more than father, for thy sake! for Glory—Hortense—it is for thee!

Exit, c.

Shouts. Distant cannon. Martial music.

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—A Chamber in the Bailiff's House.

FRACAS discovered at a table, over books and papers.

FRA. I think I've balanced accounts with my hero of Huronia for killing my bull! If my messenger only rode hard, kept sober, and spared no spur, the minister by this time has my letter, and the black cloud is on the fortunes of Hercule. I've accused him as an English spy, and of certain treasonous malpractices, whose end is death or dungeon. Besides, to further my son's union with Hortense, he's just as well removed; and for the rest, Time is the great unriddler.

Enter GABRIEL and HORTENSE, R.

Bless me, the Father! And my pretty ma'mselle, to what do I owe gratitude for this honour?

GAB. Hortense felt so lonely at home, that—

FRA. Lonely! Not because Hercule is gone to Versailles. He's a very brave youth—a worthy youth; and most valiantly he repulsed the English! Pity he wasn't killed: how heroic that

would have been. Very noble in Tobie to give up his own chance of glory, that Hercule might distinguish himself, was it not?

GAB. Oh, no doubt! no doubt!

FRA. If he only had Tobie's eye! But he's a brave young man. What news from the good city of Paris? Has our dear friend, Hercule, seen the king?

GAB. Not yet, but we have hopes.

FRA. Cobwebs!

GAB. Monsieur Lascelles, who went with Hercule to Paris, writes me to be of hope and good cheer. That he will introduce him to the king at Versailles this very day, and all's done.

FRA. (*drily*) Yes—all. He goes to beg reward for his valour in the late action—

HOR. To beg reward! To claim a right, sir!

FRA. And that is, the hand of Hortense. A sweet reward, too! Oh, very sweet. You'll excuse the Father and I a few brief moments in private, I'm sure. (*she goes up*) It's no use, Father. The king can't help your nephew—they'll never wed!

GAB. But the king's interest with the pope!

FRA. Bah! the king wants all his interest with the pope for his own purposes. You've twice as much interest in that quarter as the king, through your kinsman the archbishop.

GAB. Do you think so? (*as if struck with an idea*)

FRA. There's not a doubt of it. But now to reasonable matters. Tobie's growing rabid with love, and Hortense had better marry and forget Hercule.

GAB. So said Monsieur Lascelles. He loves her still!

FRA. The devil he does; but Tobie's a better match than Monsieur Lascelles: who depends on a minister's favour, himself the foot-ball of a majority. I hate your great men who are always falling. My son Tobie—I thank heaven for it—will never be a great man. He's content with littleness and an eye; but come within—within.

Exeunt, L.

Enter MADAME KERKABON, R.

MAD. K. Just cleared the shower, by a miracle and a minute. What filthy weather we have in this part of the country—any one can tell it had never been used to court fashions.

HOR. It is very fickle, madam.

MAD. K. And very French. It's better trained at Paris—here you have it in the rough. Well, child, there's news from Paris.

HOR. From Hercule, madame? (*eagerly*)

MAD. K. (*severely*) It is supposed it comes from your godson, child. Therese saw the letter in Victor's hand, so she tells me, before she left the house.

HOR. A letter for me?

MAD. K. Certainly not. It's directed to his uncle, as a matter of duty. I shouldn't wonder if he admits the impossibility of a union between you, and waives his suit in favour of Monsieur Lascelles.

HOR. Monsieur Lascelles, madame! Monsieur Lascelles is already in possession of my sentiments in answer to his love.

Sentiments that have remained firm these few years past, and are stronger now than ever.

MAD. K. A great mistake, Hortense, and savouring terribly of the mediæval ages. We are more modern and artificial now. What are your objections to Monsieur Lascelles? Come, state them.

HOR. Firstly, he is above me in station.

MAD. K. Marry him, and be above him. Marriage is the ladder to preferment. Come, the second.

HOR. I cannot bear to see him.

MAD. K. Marry him, and you never will! It's the best way in the world to rid yourself of a troublesome suitor. Well, another?

HOR. Lastly, I cannot love him.

MAD. K. No necessity, my child. Marry him, and you can do without that.

Enter VICTOR, with a packet, R.

VIC. Where is Le Pere Gabriel?

GABRIEL, entering with FRACAS, L.

GAB. What's your will, Victor?

VIC. This packet, brought post by a messenger from Paris. It is in the handwriting of Hercule.

GAB. Of Hercule! (*opens it, and reads; all the characters betray various emotions*) "Honoured sir, I have been to Paris, and hate it. It is large, gay, and full of dishonesty. I have been robbed at play by gentlemen, fleeced by friends, and my purse stolen by a thief, whose ears I cut off, and carry about with me. Remembering your peaceful advice, I have only fought five duels in two days. The king is at Versailles, from whence I despatch this letter. I have resolved to walk in the gardens till I encounter him, though Lascelles advises more delay. I'll no more of it. I will see the king, and claim my due."

MAD. K. Headstrong and presumptuous! Has he no respect for royal etiquette? Has he no reverence for new customs?

FRA. None at all! He mocked at the high bailiff!

MAD. K. Nothing but fighting! Suppose he should kill the king?

FRA. Not improbable! he shot my bull!

MAD. K. Let him take a lesson from me: I hate all old conventions and manners.

FRA. Will you take lunch?

MAD. K. Except eating and drinking—I make an exception there. Come, Hortense: brother, you'll follow.

GAB. In an instant.

FRA. (*to HORTENSE*) Tobie's distracted. You'll think him over.

MAD. K. Lascelles is your man; chew it over at lunch.

Exeunt MADAME, FRACAS, and HORTENSE, L.

GAB. Victor, can you be firm and secret?

VIC. Both.

GAB. If I should trust you now—*(pauses)*

VIC. You hesitate:

Yet look as if you'd read my heart within.

I'll lay it open to you. A friendless boy

I came into your house—

GAB. I'll spare the tale—

Was not Hercule your friend?

VIC. A fixed and firm one.

GAB. The name of friend is something more than sound;

Not the mere syllable, life-long as the time

It takes pronouncing, but the love that lives

'Twixt the divinity of fatherhood

And the chaste fondness of a brother, Victor.

Will you be such an one?

VIC. Put me to the proof!

GAB. A long and tedious journey which, when ta'en

Is only half the mission!

VIC. And to serve

My friend, Hercule?

GAB. For his sake.

VIC. I am ready.

GAB. Well answered; you must to-night depart

For Paris, to my kinsman the archbishop.

I will provide you letters—he will give you

A sealed-up missive—

VIC. To bring back to you.

GAB. No: you must turn your back on France and speed,

By day and night, for Rome.

VIC. For Rome?

GAB. The Pope!—

Kneel 'fore his sacred feet. O'erleap all bars

That lie between thee and thy enterprize:

Let not the glories of the eternal city

Dazzle thy senses, and make drunk thy duty,

That it forget itself: shut thine eyes to all!

Allurements, charms, temptations pass you by,

As blindness glideth past a glittering show

Unconscious of its presence. More than life

Hangs on thy speed—honour and hopeful hearts!

VIC. At dusk I will be ready.

GAB. Be it so—

I will prepare the packets, and such means

As will equip thee for thy journey. Others

Give counsel against danger. Boy, more peril

Lies in the summer smile of nature's beauties

Than when she frowns and thunders! Turn from that,

I will not fear thee 'mid a thousand wrecks—

Away! To-night—remember!

Exeunt GABRIEL, L. VICTOR, R.

SCENE II.—*The Gardens of Versailles.*

Enter LOUIS, L. U. E. surrounded by Courtiers, among whom are the MARQUIS DE VILLARCEAUX, MONSIEUR DE BRISSAC, COLONEL LATREMONT, and MONSIEUR DE CHATEAUVILLAIN.

LOU. And so, your marriage with the Lady Blanche
Is thrust aside—for policy?

MAR. So please you.

LOU. It is a ready word, this policy—

The market currency of shrewd-brain'd men—
With which they purchase wealth at honour's price,
And sell it at its own. How fares the lady?
'Twas said at Court she loved you!

MAR. I believe so,

The silly girl was fond.

LOU. Hum! Somewhat pretty?

MAR. She'd pass!

CHA. An angel, sire.

LOU. Too good for us, then,
And something too ethereal for the Marquis!
Virtuous, I've heard?

COL. As chaste as Dian.

LOU. (drily) Oh!
Very unfit for kings and courts then. Chaste!
Very unfashionable, and unfit for him.
Of honourable birth!

MAR. Not noble, sire.

LOU. No, only virtuous; so you said but now.
But she had wealth?

MAR. Had, sire: the troubled times
Brought ruin on her father's house.

LOU. How bore
The lady the sad shock of her rejection?

MAR. Clouds, and then rain—a frown, and then a tear—
Wept wildly, and talked about her heart.

LOU. To which
You answered?—

MAR. With a fact in Court statistics,
“We've crowns for heads, sceptres for hands, and stars
“For breasts, but no nobility for hearts.”

LOU. And no one knowing your heart, doubts, my lord,
The absence of nobility in that.
Well, Brissac, the Spaniard threatens us!
What's our royalty to do?

BRIS. Spare not
French gold to buy alliance with the Spaniard,
And he's your own.

CHA. No need to part with it:
Propose the terms of an alliance—meet them
In seeming friendship—at a signal given,

Have our brave Frenchmen ready at a word
To fall upon and slaughter.

Lou. And I doubt not
That our "brave" Frenchmen would enjoy the work.

Pshaw! Know us better, Chateavillain! Brissac, you
Are a wise man!

Bris. Keeping your company, sire,
Hath made me so.

Col. (*impatiently*) Tut! Tut!

Lou. What counsel you?

Col. To fight, not bribe or massacre. Our swords
Swing on the side we wear our hearts, and both
Our country's and our king's! Pest on this peace!
I'm grey in service—

And would die sword in hand.

Lou. Psha! You're a fool!

Col. Keeping your company, sire, has made me so—
That's the response of the court catechism—
I'll not be out of fashion.

All. Insolent!

Lou. 'Tis so, but it smacks hard of honesty,
A healthy herb, too rural for the Court,
And, somehow, I—I like it. Come, let's seek
Louvois, and hear the news abroad. The English
Making a descent upon St. Malo, were
Repulsed with slaughter.

Col. By a hero, who—

Lou. No matter who—our Minister of War
Takes care of him, or should do. Come, my lords!

Exeunt R. I. E.

Enter LASCELLES, L. U. E.

Las. Where loiters my *protégé*?—it is his wont to haunt these gardens like a day-light spectre, in the bare hope (a bare one truly), of encountering the king. I but now passed the minister in the presence, and he cast a mingled glance of suspicion and mistrust upon me, that troubles me! He held an open letter in his hand, and looked from that to me with such a gaze—can he have discovered my secret correspondence with the Spanish general? Have I been betrayed?

Enter LOUVOIS, perturbed, L.

Louv. Well met, Lascelles! We have treachery about us!

Las. Treachery?

Louv. In the very precincts of the royal presence. Threatening, it may be, the very person of the king—perchance the life. And you have brought this peril to our doors.

Las. (*aside*) I'm lost. Monsieur—

Louv. Who is this Indian haunting the walks of Louis? What means his constant desire to meet the king—the king *alone*, and will entrust his business to none of the officers, not even to the

minister himself. This looks strange—Kings are men only, and assassinations are not scarce.

LAS. That letter, then—

LOUV. Refers to him—hints darkly at treason, and certain circumstances which bear at least a tinct of suspicion, enough to justify our fears.

LAS. (*aside*) I breathe again. He is the man who repulsed the British at St. Malo, and comes to ask at the king's own hands his reward.

LOUV. Psha ! This is no affair of the king's. I'll send a lackey to this village hero, and learn the utmost stretch of his ambitious desires. (*crosses, R.*)

LAS. But he is obstinate—aspires to an interview with royalty itself.

LOUV. Send him to the Bastille, then. We must be cautious, sir; these are troublous times, and intimations like these (*the letter*) behoves us to be watchful. The king went this way ?

Exit, R.

LAS. Sent to the Bastille ! Why not ? Were it once so, what stands between Hortense and I ? Oh, Love ! 'tis the sweet, green spot in my heart yet that glory has not withered—the memory of my first love—of her !—of her !

Enter HERCULE, dressed in the magnificent costume of the period,
L. U. E.

Well, friend—I had lost you.

HER. I had lost myself. I am overwhelmed with Civilization, turn on which hand I will. Here are tale-tellers that bring the blush into the listener's cheek. Intriguantes that ape modesty, and libel it. Courtiers, the painted dolls of the great puppet-show fashion, recounting before admiring auditors the adventures of last night, enough to turn an honest heart sick to hear told of. On this side gambling, profligacy—on the other, debauchery and riot ! Everywhere shame, folly, hypocrisy—the golden husks of the fruit of vice, with bitterness and death within. And this—heaven save us !—this is Civilization.

LAS. You look on it with an eye of strangeness. Our Court is reckoned very splendid.

HER. It wears a glittering skin : so doth the viper.

LAS. And yet men worship this tinsel, and toil, and sin, and die by the wayside, and damn themselves to win it !

HER. I have heard so.

LAS. At least, you'll grant our victories are splendid. Look at our trophies and our monuments, and grant at least we have won glory there !

HER. That's well bethought. Eastward of the city gate stands a rich mansion, with a noble park and gardens. You must know the place: a statue of Charity faces the great gate, and on the west—

LAS. I know the house you speak of. It was the mad scheme of a once rich merchant, who reared that noble pile as an asylum for

afflicted poverty. A princely structure ; but he had miscalculated his means, and died a beggar. But almost facing Candide's Folly —(for so 'tis called)—stands a superb monument to the glory of the Chevalier Bayard. Observed ye that ?

HER. I did ; and learned a lesson at its base—

LAS. Of emulation ?

HER. Pity.

LAS. Pity !

HER. Hark !

I have been bred 'midst battles, and have read
Deep morals from the carnage-laden field :
Have seen its glory gay with panoply
Of shining blades and banners ; watched the smile
Of proudful valour as it rushed to strife,
Change to the clench of dying agony :
Heard grateful thousands raise the triumph song,
And plaudit shout to heaven ! and at home
Among the gleeful crowd traced widow's tears,
Heard the poor orphan's moan of loneliness,
And wail of childless mothers ! This, they said,
Was human glory ! Here a good man built
A home for helpless age and stricken youth ;
Where weariness might lay its failing limbs,
Affliction tell its tale and find relief.
A beggar'd, broken man, he died in ruin.

Men call it Folly, but poverty still gilds
His name with blessings ! Man, I call that Glory !

LAS. (*looking out, R. U. E.*) I see approaching
Some lords of the Court. It may be, that from them
You'll learn the whereabouts of the king.

HER. I'll to them (*going up*)

LAS. But a word in wisdom first.

These men are noble all—not rich alone ;
Not country squires, or common gentlemen !
Noble each man, and full of fiery spirit,
Becoming his high birth.

HER. I understand.

They're very rich ; of rarified nobility :
Fire-spirited, proud, valiant, wise—in short,
All things but gentlemen.

LAS. You misinterpret !

Howe'er you speak, let it be such smooth words
As gentle ears from gentle lips should hear.
Address them mildly, and respectfully,
With courtesy befitting you and them,
And like a gentleman.

HER. Do not mistrust me.

Exit LASCELLES, R. U. E.

O, Civilization, this thy work ! that men
Prank'd up with gaiety, and full of sound,

Like gilt-chased bells, will to the world's far ends
 Ring out a peal to draw men's eyes on them,
 Who looking closely, scratch the licker off,
 And find the baser metal underneath !
 For thee, Hortense, I will subdue the heat
 Of my ancestral blood, and something more
 Drawn from my Indian foster-mother's breast,
 And be a low-voiced, humble, yielding slave :
 A coinciding and convenient thing,
 Cringing and patient.

The KING attended by COURTIERS, &c., crosses from R. to L. U. E.

Oh, the devil seize
 Such under arts : I will be oil to oil !
 But if they bluster, blows.

MAR. (*to them*) Lascelles has set us
 Our relative parts, and here the object stands.
 How to proceed !

BRIS. Affront and challenge him.

HER. Your servant, sirs.
 Cans't guide me to the king ?

BRIS. The royal sun
 Hath not yet dawn'd upon his people's eyes.
 Have you some quest to him ?

CHA. My interest
 May be of service to you.

MAR. Pray use mine,
 'Tis at your pleasure quite.

HER. That's honest, sirs.
 (*aside*) They are right noble. (*aloud*)

You have frankly offer'd ;
 And such ingenuous openness deserves
 Its like from me. Know, then, it has been my fortune
 To do my new-found country some poor service
 In beating her invaders to their ships.
 Well, sirs, my heart—my life is bound in one—
 You must have loved—

MAR. Oh, dozens !

HER. I am yet
 But fresh in France, and have not learned the trade
 Of breaking hearts. I am as yet
 Not civilized enough for this.

CHA. They say
 Hortense is beautiful !

HER. You've heard of her !
 Man ! man ! the word is passionless and cold
 To paint Hortense. I know not with what eyes
 The world may view her ; they who look, then turn
 Aside, and have forgotten, cannot judge
 This fervid love of mine. I tell you, man,
 Looking on her, I look with a new eye

On universal nature, and see all
 Glittering bright as spires in the sun.
 To lose her, feel as doth the sinking seaman,
 With night around him, and the beating waves;
 Who sees the lights receding on his ship,
 And feels his arms grow strengthless.

MAR. What a pity
 One cannot wed one's godmother.

HER. Do you mock
 My plainness, my good lord?

MAR. No, but advise it
 As much unsuited to the ways of Court,
 To get aside its sorry Rosinante,
 And canter back again.

HER. This is insulting!
 MAR. Is it really? (*with indifference*)

HER. True! I am but strange at Court,
 And this may be the fashion.

BRIS. He to see
 The king! The king would spurn him.

HER. Messires!
 CHA. Let him go back, and love his godmother;
 Comfort her years, sustain her drooping limbs——

HER. Messires!
 MAR. And tell his Puritanic father-uncle
 To make a chorist of him.

HER. Gentlemen!
 Oh, I forgot! Proud wretches! Dogs! (*they turn*)
 So! so!

I've hit your names at last.

ALL. The insolent——
 CHA. Call for the guard.

BRIS. Pierce him!
 MAR. Let him defend

His insolence with steel!

CHA. Lascelles was right.
 HER. He was. He said you were no gentlemen,
 And I have found you none.

BRIS. Draw! Draw!
 HER. One word!

MAR. Not one!
 CHA. Unless apology;

And then upon his knee.

HER. To you! And yet
 We read of men who kneel before an image
 Carved out of wood: and why not to thee, thou man
 Of wood and tinsel. I'm no heretic,
 And pass you by for cowards.

ALL. Coward!

BRIS. Hush! The minister and train.

HER. The minister!

Enter LOUVOIS attended, R., going up L. in haste.

Louv. Good day, my lords ! (*all bow servilely*)

All. Your Excellency's servants !

Her. Please your good grace—

Louv. Another time—I'm busy—
To-morrow—Monday next—

Her. To-day, and now !

My business cools in these delays. When men

Come for the right they've won with blood and sweat,

It does not fit that they should cool their heels

Idly to please a minister's caprice.

I come for justice,—not to sue and beg

Like these elastic-back'd nobility,

For place or favour;—but to fetch my own,

My hard-earn'd right—the wages of my work—

Work done while you were sleeping!—which undone—

Had undone you ! To-morrow will not serve—

Here—here—and now !

Louv. Gregoire, what this man wants
Learn, and rejoin me !

Exit attended, L. U. E.

Her. Does he quit me so ?

Gre. I wait your pleasure—

Her. Sir ?

Gre. Or your commands !

Her. You are—

Gre. His Excellency's servant, sir, and yours !

Her. This o'ertops all ! His groom ! Go tell your master

I bring no tradesman's bill, that he should shun me

With a civilized 'Not at home !' nor do I come

To treat of horses—nor (with thanks so tell him)

I have no shoes to clean, nor loop to tie,

Nor band to buckle, that he sends me thee. (*striking him*)

There's hire for thee !—tell him I keep a blade

In readiness for him !

Gre. Help !—help !

Re-enter LOUVOIS and ATTENDANTS.

Louv. What means this outrage ?

Her. My lord—(*with fierce passion, then subduing himself with a strong effort—calmly*)

Well—well, he said try patience. Sir,

They tell me that you are a gentleman !

You have insulted me—most like a gentleman—

And I demand, as should a gentleman,

The satisfaction of a gentleman !

Louv. What, are you mad ?

Her. Then you refuse ?

Enter an EQUERRY L.

EQUERRY. The king!

HER. Ha!—ha!—the king!

LOUV. (*quickly*) He must not see the king!

Insult, it may be murder, may ensue.

Oppose him! Call the guard! (*great confusion*)ALL. (*drawing*) Stand back!

HER. Is't come to this?—that's well!—I love to see

The glitter of the sunbeams on the blade.

Mark, I am rous'd!—let him who in the world

Hath aught that's loving or to be beloved—

Comrade to live for—mistress to lament—

Preferment, name or glory in the future,

Worth risking life for, let him stand aside

Nor bar my passage to the king. Who dares

To cross a blade with me, let him to work

And try the prowess of the man he mock'd!

*(he fights with and disarms several—then rushes out, l.u.e.
exclaiming)*To the King! (*drums beat*)*Enter r. CAPTAIN and SOLDIERS.*

LOUV. Fire!

*Exit CAPTAIN—a shot heard—trumpets sound—KING and
COURTIERS cross from l. to r.—HERCULE returns wounded
in the sword arm—falls fainting in the arms of the
SOLDIERY—CAPTAIN binds the wound.*

TABLEAU—END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Study of Monsieur Lascelles.**Enter MADAME KERKABON and LASCELLES.*

MAD. K. Caged in the Bastille!—how terrible!

LAS. For us

It opes the gate of liberty—the liberty

In me to love and hope—in you to rise

High in the Court—Hortense once mine.

MAD. K. That's true!

But then Hercule, my nephew?

LAS. What of that?

The Duchy of Chambord now lacks a duchess.

A rich estate in the king's gift—now mark!

The Court is but the face of a large clock:

The king the hands; the ministers the wheels;

Myself, the spring and pendulum : stop me—
 A hair will do it—thwart me in this thing,
 On whose success a princely title hangs ;
 Cross me, the spring once check'd, the wheels will rest,
 And the hands stop—'tis worth the thinking of !

MAD. K. Bless me, you're quite a statesman ! What it is
 To live with one's eyes open !

LAS. Hear you more !

A cloud shall rain down honours
 On those who are my friends—lightnings on those
 Who would oppose me. Pass this Hercule by—
 Teach Hortense to forget him, and to leap
 To a high seat among the earth's elect,
 By stretching out her hand !

MAD. K. You've heard the fable
 Of the market woman and her crate of eggs ;
 She talk'd of bargains, sale on sale, and wealth
 Flowing in currents—building up the walls
 Of fortune's temple, until pride stept in ;
 She wagg'd disdainfully her head, when down
 Her brittle ware fell to the ground and smash'd
 Her dreams as well. Take you the lesson too :
 You've built a splendid structure, temple high,
 Gorgeous to look on !—boundless as ambition !
 But, it may chance, the walls are egg-shells only !

LAS. That my great risk. Who boldly dares, at worst,
 Will boldly fall—at best may greatly win—
 You'll aid my suit ?

MAD. K. I will !

LAS. With all your heart ?

MAD. K. Better ; with all my tongue : his great dependence
 Is on the royal influence with Rome—

LAS. I will crush out that hope, and lead the king
 (Who shall believe it an impossibility)
 To mock the suppliant's prayer. In the Bastille
 To let him linger, till Hortense shall utter
 The cabalistic word that sets him free—
 Her hand fast lock'd in mine before the altar.

Enter a SERVANT, l., announcing the "Prior of St. Malo," then enter GABRIEL and THERESE.

LAS. The Prior !

MAD. K. Heaven bless us, brother ! What
 Brings you from primitive St. Malo ?

GAB. Tell me—

LAS. You seem much worn and wearied !

GAB. Heed not that !

'Tis true I've borne a heavy load—a heart
 Brimful of sorrow : pass that by—and tell me
 If what we hear is true—that Hercule is,
 I parch to speak the word,—in the Bastille ?

LAS. It is so !

GAB. What is his crime ?

LAS. A brawl before the king ;

Defiance to the minister.

MAD. K. I knew it would be so ; who could not see

With half an eye the consequence of taking

An anybody into one's house. I saw it

From the very first—I said so ! —

THE. Said what, aunt ?

MAD. K. What, girl ? Why, what the end would be—I said so

THE. To whom ?

MAD. K. To half a dozen !

THE. Tell me one ?

MAD. K. Well, I forget them now !

THE. I shouldn't wonder !

LAS. Hortense in Paris ? Wherefore ?

GAB. To seek out

My kinsman, the archbishop,—and through him

To gain admission to the dread Bastille !

LAS. Her lover entered it with far less labour ; (*aside*)

And is she with him now ?

GAB. Doubtless ere this.

LAS. And what hopes she to gain, that must not come

From me to him ? 'Tis you can set him free ;

Teach her to love the man who worships her,

And he's at liberty. Let her remain

Still obdurate, the gates of the Bastille

Close on him, like a vault—for ever !

Exit, R.

GAB. Go !

Thy prize should needs be great, for thou hast paid

Its price in coin of honesty, and now

Stand like a broken bankrupt, with one hope,

And that a perilous one. I would not change

My lot for thine, nor barter for thy hope

Of guerdon here, mine of hereafter ! Come,

Let us go, girl !

(*going, L.*)

THE. Yes, sir—but whither ?

GAB. Whither ?

In this great land of homes shall we be homeless ?

Sure there are simple honest men in Paris,

Above the pitiful intrigue that creeps

Like a slow sap through the great heart of France,

And undermines it to its ruin ! Stay,

I bade young Victor, on his return, to seek me

Here at this house—how then to act ?

THE. We'll send

A messenger to wait about the spot,

And bring him to you.

GAB. Wisely-counsell'd, girl

Young women and old men should govern states

So to combine the clear elastic sense

Of youth with age's strong experience.

We should be better governed!

Exit, L.

THE. But as it is,

We leave the rule and reign of government

To young men and old women!

MAD. K. Stop, Therese!—*(aside)*—There's something to be learned here, that may be of use to Lascelles, and lift me a round nearer Chambord. *(aloud)* Therese, I'm not an inquisitive woman in general, nor given to curiosity, but what is the meaning of this mystery of my brother?

THE. A mystery, madame!

MAD. K. Yes, where's he sent Victor?

THE. Aye!—that is a secret, madame.

MAD. K. Which you have found?

THE. Which, having found, I'll keep!

MAD. K. Therese, you've often admired my diamond ear rings—they'd become you—you can take them!

THE. *(aside)* Humph! She doesn't play diamonds without having a trick in view!

MAD. K. And my blue lutestring, though a little out of fashion, might be altered to your figure, and would mighty well become your complexion.

THE. I'm sure you're very generous, madame.

MAD. K. You've a pretty foot, Therese; and I'm a judge of feet—silver buckles don't become them; there's the diamond ones in my jewel-case, which I wear very seldom now: take them—they're yours.

THE. Really, madame—

MAD. K. We understand each other now?

THE. I dare say.

MAD. K. Where's Victor gone?

THE. On the prior's business.

MAD. K. And that?

THE. Is none of ours!

MAD. K. He will return shortly?

THE. He will, unless—

MAD. K. Well?

THE. He is delayed.

MAD. K. By what?

THE. Success!

MAD. K. In what business?

THE. The prior's.

MAD. K. Which is—

THE. None of ours.

MAD. K. But Victor loves you, and would not hesitate to tell you his business at—where did you say?

THE. I said nothing, madame.

MAD. K. Nay, but you know—

THE. Nothing, madame.

MAD. K. And will say—

THE. Nothing, madame.

Exit, L.

MAD. K. There's your new generation for you! I brought that girl into my brother's house in order to be a spy upon them, and to let me into all secrets worthy knowing; and now the jade turns round on me, and actually bolts and bars the mysteries that were only on the latch before. And what has done it all? Not bribery—not fear—not honour, but love! Love, the great humanizer, transmogrifier, and tantalizer. They paint Love a naked little boy—it's a mistake. No naked little boy ever did half the mischief among womankind that is ascribed to Cupid: it's a complaint—an ague—a universal ache in the bones, for which there is only one physic, matrimony. Love's a sort of rheumatism, caught like a cold, and cured—the Lord knows how. *Exit, R.*

SCENE II.—A Dungeon in the Bastille.

HERCULE discovered.

HER. And this is Civilization? Prisons—chains,
Tortures that rack the faculties of man
In their invention. Straw, coarse food, the lash;
Light, the sweet blandness on the brow of God,
Denied as if 'twere venom: these the means—
The institutions used by man to bind
His human brother! Oh, Hortense! how dear!
How doubly dear she seems to grow to me
Now, that between us stands a gulph as broad
As lies 'twixt man and heaven! I grow sick
And faint in my heart hopings! My world now
Seems faded to a shadow.

Enter GAOLER and HORTENSE, R. 2 E.

My Hortense!

GAOLER retires.

HOR. I have heard all: your peril for my sake—
Peril that on your head has drawn the thunder
Of the vindictive minister. I fled
To Paris, to the good archbishop; he
Obtained me entrance to your prison. More—
Hath promised to lay bare before the king
Your unjust usage, and your claim for justice.
He'll do it, and we shall yet be happy.

Yet you are sad!

And sadness suits not with a heart of hope.

HER. Hortense, the word's grown old and out of date.
Have I not striven, and failed? What's more to do
Demands free action and unshackled limbs,
And here in this hot-bed of civilization
They fetter words and will—permit not truth
To dwell among them, but set policy
Above them for a god, and worship it.

You spoke but now of hope—
The desert flower whose seed is set in sand,
Rooted by every breeze.

HOR. The good old man
To whom I came, had heard our story through,
But bade me tell it him ; and as I spake,
The tale all running over with salt tears,
His gentle words fell cooling on my heart,
Like a fresh spring on parched and fevered lips.
He told us to be patient—patience wins
More than the bravest front—to trust in heaven,
And chance might bring our vessel to the port,
In spite of fortune, and Lascelles.

HER. I cannot pierce
The meaning of his speech.

HOR. Doubtless he'll seek
Justice and reparation from Louvois.

HER. Louvois ! Lascelles ! the tools of Government,
The bye-steps to the presence of the king ;
Ruling the ruler ! I'll have none of them !
I'll make my suit to Louis, and him only,
As man to man.

HOR. You argue wildly, Hercule.
The king is as a light upon a hill—
A beacon fire, and guide to all his people.
That light is tended by experienced hands,
To guard it from all peril.

HER. Right good places,
And oftener held by Interest than Experience.
Well, you shall guide me. As the good man says,
Patience !—a fitting homily to preach
Within a dungeon—patience now, Hortense ;
That's your court lesson. Two faces 'neath a hood—
Two tongues, or rather one tongue and a sting.
The oily tongue to lick, the sting to use !

HOR. This is hypocrisy. And honesty
Hath but one name ; and that's its own.

HER. In my barbarian days, I spoke the truth ;
Wronged not my neighbour, paid back benefits,
With benefit and gratitude to boot.
Dealt justly ;—held a friend to be a gift,
Precious as stars dropt down from heaven : bowed
Before the works of God ; beheld in them
His presence, palpable as at an altar ;
And worshipp'd heaven at the mountain's foot.

But this
Was Barbarism ! I am wiser now ;
More civilized. I know the way to lie,
To cheat, deceive, and be a zealous Christian !

HOR. This is the mood of nature—soured by trial ;
You have been tutored better.

Enter GAOLEER, R., who delivers a packet to HERCULE, and retires.

HER. (*opening it*) Do I dream ?
Free !

Hor. Free!

HER. (reads) "From the minister of France, to the prisoner in the Bastille, No. 181. His prison gates are open, and a carriage waits to bring him to the minister's presence, who is willing to forget the past, and gild the future." What may this mean?

HOR. A blessed meaning! Liberty!

Let's waste no time, but seek the minister,
And hope befriend us.

The minister has seen his fault—regrets his insults,
Poured on me in the presence of his slaves;
And sends to tender an apology
For his unseemly usage!

HOR. Yet, little versed
In the ways of civilized men!

HER. Wrong done, demands
Fit reparation, though the wronger wears
Ermine or serge. I go for justice, love!
My tongue shall speak aloud,
To wake the sleeper, justice, in his bed
Of eider down and purple.

HOR. Yet, for me—
For my sake—patience,

HER. 'Tis a woman's virtue:

Well, for your sake,—don't fear me—I'll remember.
Pray heaven he meet me with no curled lip,
Or haughtiness of gesture, lest my patience
Stand not the trial. Yet, one look on thee—
One thought of woman's patience; for thy sake,
The waves shall sink to ripples—Gentle as air,
But resolute as thunder! Let us go. E

Exeunt, R.

SCENE III.—*Reception Room in the Palace.*

LASCELLES and LOUVOIS discovered.

Las. Sent for him here?

Louv. What could I do? The king,
Instructed by that marplot, the archbishop,
Must needs look deeply into the affair;
And gave me orders—positive orders, mark you—
To fetch him out of prison, and reward him,
Both for his noble conduct and endurance.

What course but to obey? And I expect him—

Las. Immediately?

Louv. Upon the instant, here.
Lis. And the like.

Las. And the king, too?

LOUV. He'll enter privately, and by the door
Of which he has the pass-key. Now, Lascelles,
My policy will be to rid myself
Of this important Huron, ere he come?

Enter a PAGE who whispers to Louvois.

So, does he come alone?

PAGE. A lady with him.

LOUV. Bid her await him, in the ante-room,
And send the Indian here. That done, take care,
To draw the bolts of the king's private door,
And see no loit'rors intercept him. 'Tis
His pleasure to be secret.

PAGE. I shall mind, sir! *Exit, L.*

LAS. You'll see him then alone?

LOUV. I will!

LAS. You think

His suit is hopeless?

LOUV. With the king! As vain
As bridges made of snow. The king believes
The law immutable, and just now needs
More serve the Pope, than beg his favours—more,
The king is but a paper toy of mine;
And I yield small things to command in great.
He comes! Away with you!

Exit LASCELLES, R.

Enter PAGE conducting HERCULE, L.

PAGE. The minister!

(*Louvois motions PAGE to withdraw—he does so, L.*)

LOUV. Now, prisoner!

HER. Now, minister!

LOUV. Is that

Fit greeting for the first minister of France?

HER. Is yours fit greeting—chains and dungeon—mark you,
For one who spilt his blood to save your land?

LOUV. 'Tis true that your reward was overlooked,
But not forgotten. Our good king approves
Your services to France, applauds your valour,
And thanks it too—

HER. The king is very kind—

LOUV. Moreover, as a token of his favour,

He sends you gold, and an appointment
That's near his royal person!

HER. Let him keep

His gold for men whose service gold will buy!

I'd serve him out of love. Let me stand

Nearest his person in the conflict, guard

His royal bosom with an arm of steel;

Be his protector and defender. Hear him

Call me his friend—a king's friend—mark the word!

That's something to be proud of, and to fight for!
And that I covet only. The appointment
About his royal person is—

LOUV. His equerry in ordinary!

HER. What's that?

LOUV. A master of the horse.

HER. The chief
Of France's valiant cavalry?

LOUV. Oh, no!

A supervisor of the royal steeds—

A controller of the imperial farriery!

HER. I cry you pardon for my mighty error;
And thus the princely Louis honours me!
With gifts so noble pays me for my blood—
His royal farrier!

LOUV. See the appointment. (*shows it*)

HER. (*glancing over it*) Yes!

Most liberal! Most kind! Most generous-royal!

LOUV. Your answer?

HER. This:—that feeling my unworthiness
To hold a place so noble near his person,
With grateful thanks I give it back again;
But beg to say, down at my uncle's house,
We have a peasant boy who rubs our horses;
Cleanses the stable, and is skilled in shoeing,
To whom I'll recommend my monarch's gift
As somethings mutually worthy of each other!

LOUV. This insolence, barbarian—

HER. Is the flash—
The lightning flash of choler meeting insult—
Forerunning of the storm?

LOUV. Durst threaten?

HER. Yes!
I am wrong'd, sir—wrong'd in the most tender part
Of mankind, honour! You have prompted this;
You, in the petty spirit of a child,
Who flings a pebble and then flies his foe,
At very heart a coward! If there be
The knightly chivalry of France within
Your veins, I dare it to the proof!

LOUV. A proof

As terrible as just. If when to-morrow's sun
Sinks into night, it leaves thee in the realm
Of France, in the Bastille perpetual
Entombment be thy doom! I've said. Away!

Exit, R.

HER. Oh, nature! Is the race of men extinct,
Or do we give the name in mockery,
To things that are the husks and shells of men,
And animals within? This comes of ministers—
Of placing faith in underlings and servants;

In scullions, secondaries, and loud talkers ;
Let what will henceforth fall, I'll seek the king !

Enter LOUIS, conducting HORTENSE, L.

Lou. You'd wait upon the minister?—wait here ;
Below there are a thousand outlets forth,
And he may pass you in the throng. (*aside*) She's fair
And simple!—that's a novelty at Court.
Is this your friend? (*pointing to HERCULE*)

HOR. The friend of whom I told you,
Whose anxious hope to see the king is baffled
By courtly arts and cunning !

Lou. Humph!—he seems
A valiant, stalwart fellow!—and his brow
Looks like a throne whence intellect might cast
Its strictures on the world. Did you not say
His hand saved France ?

HOR. It did !

HER. And my reward
Was—'sdeath! it boils my blood to speak the word—
An equerry's appointment !

Lou. Was it so ?

And you desired—

HER. A captaincy at least,
In the king's armies ?

Lou. Do you know the king ?

HER. Not I, from Jupiter !

Lou. Nor you ?

HOR. Nor I !

I never gazed upon his royal face;
But I have heard his name, on good men's lips,
Lauded with honest praises—and his virtues,
Albeit o'ershadowed by follies of the time,
Quoted with pride, made rich with blessings—

Lou. (*aside*) Come—

There's something fresh and spring-like in such words,
And spoken by such lips. You came to Paris
To find the king, and know him not !

HER. Do you ?

Lou. A little—there are some that know him better,
I have heard say—I doubt it !

HER. You will see him
Perhaps to-day ?

Lou. Most certain—at my toilet ! (*aside*)

HER. Maybe you have some interest at Court ?

Lou. Not half so much as many folks believe !

HER. Not rich belike ?

Lou. Too many ways to spend
My yearly income !

HER. Come, I'll strike a bargain !

Here are a thousand crowns (*produces purse*) I'd see the king—

Bring me to sight of him, and they are yours !

Lou. Agreed !—I take them !

Her. Stay—and yet you look
An honest man.

Lou. I will redeem my word !

See—yonder come the courtiers—you would see
The King of France !

Her. Is he among them now ?

Lou. Not now—he will be by-and-bye !

Enter LASCELLES, LOUVOIS, and COURTIERS, R.

All. (*seeing Louis and uncovering*) The King !

Her. The king—where ?

Lou. Here !

HOR. Oh, heaven—he's lost !

Lou. (*seated*) Fear not !

Stand you tongue-tied in wonder ?—I have earn'd
The golden pieces fairly.

Her. (*slowly and calmly*) So you are
The King of France ?

Lou. I am the King of France !

You came to find me—

Her. Sire, I came to find

In the great capital of civilized France
The Arts which nourish nations into health ;
The Rule that guards them like a sentinel,
Customs that honour men, Laws that are form'd
To keep the social bonds of life intact,
And kingly privileges, whose true use
Is not to slay, but serve the subject. These
I came to find, with something of the heart
With which the boy steps on the stranger shore,
Built by report into a fairy land,
Prepared to think each star, and flower, and tree,
Brighter and fresher, greener than his own.
But in their stead, I find a land where men
Sell Honour and give Falsehood—Justice bought
By weight—and Right thrust out to beg in rags.

A king kept wilfully blind—a ministry
Like a huge cancer on the breast of France—
A Court that fans itself when the king smiles ;
And shivers at his frown ; a gay-dressed lie.
A Pomp that's rotten at the very core ;
A Church where Fashion shoulders out the God ;
Arts prized when they invent new pleasures—scorned
When they are merely useful: left to drag
With Genius through the world a nameless life,
When they should be its lustres and its stars !
I found corruption, avarice, deceit,
Envy, voluptuousness, and injustice—all
Shaded beneath the name and power of king ;
And this was—Civilization !

Louv. Insolence !
 Measureless and past belief !

Las. Does he know
 The presence in which he stands ?

Lou. Without a doubt !
 Let those whose heels are gibed by what he says
 Rub the sore place. I think he knows us, sirs.

Louv. (*aside to Louis*) 'Tis he of whom I told your majesty ;
 The Indian from St. Malo ; this the maid
 To whom he would desire your mediation
 With the Holy See.

HOR. All's lost, indeed, Hercule,
 Ruin encloses us !

HER. My liege—

Lou. Hold yet !
 I know your quest, and duly sympathise
 With the hard fate that falls to you. Believe
 The word of Louis, that he pities you,
 But feels your union is impossible.
 (*goes up—both plunged in grief—the COURTIERS pass by superciliously*)

COL. I pity you !
 You're a brave man, and worth as fair a lady.

BRIS. That writes us even for your sneer at courts !

CHA. Poor fellow ! I shall win the lady yet !

MAR. This pang's a salve for your sword-thrust, my hero !

Louv. Remember—if to-morrow's sun sets on you here,
 You die in the Bastille !

Las. (*to HORTENSE*) You hear—best weigh
 My offer freshly in your mind : my hand—
 Or Hercule's death !

HOR. Tempter, away !

HER. And this
 Is human justice ! Wretches !

Louv. (*fiercely*) Does he dare—

Lou. Hold, sir ! This gentleman is Louis' friend ;
 The man who dared to tell the truth to him,
 Is something to be prized above a courtier.
 And I command—take heed ; command you, lords,
 To pay him fitting and all due respect,
 At peril of your safeties and your freedoms :
 And to obey him, as if I stood by,
 To make his wishes laws. Monsieur Louvois,
 See it be done, and fittingly ! (*goes up*)

HER. Hortense !
 The cloud has burst, now let the storm rack, rage,
 Roar, or o'erwhelm—it has done its worst. Cling to me
 A little while before we part for ever !
 For ever—no tears—no tears—come, my girl !
 Be firm—be iron—she has fainted ! Lords,
 You heard the king's commands, and you, Monsieur,

See them obeyed—doff your plumed hats, and bow
 Your haughty necks as Innocence and Honour
 Pass on their way—yet lower—lower still !
 Check that insulting smile, Monsieur Lascelles,
 And bow you lower than the rest—that's well !

(*drops his hat*)

Pick up my hat, my lord; (*to BRISSAC*) Bring't after me.
 Way there—give way you courtly stuff—
 Way for honesty ! (*leads her up stage—trumpets*)

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Chamber in Lascelles' House.*

MADAME KERKABON and LASCELLES discovered.

LAS. Then Victor le Bel, as you gleaned, returned last night from Rome, from the Pope, and your spy encountered him ?

MAD. K. Returned late, when my brother's watcher had given up for the night—on the instant my spy stepped in, took him to his own house, and brought him here this morning.

LAS. This morning—then he is here now !

MAD. K. To be sure he is, and waiting your pleasure in the ante-room below.

LAS. Your spy should have entered into conversation with him, and drawn out of him whether his precious business referred to—

MAD. K. The Pope ? Oh, never trust him for cunning—he has seen his holiness, and received from his holy hands a dispensation, permitting the marriage between Hercule and Hortense—he drew thus much from him ; and never left him from his sight till he withdrew to rest—having supplied him with ink and paper, by his desire.

LAS. Doubtless to apprise the Prior of his arrival and success—he told him my wish to see him ?

MAD. K. I tell you all's secure. Now, only be liberal in your gifts and promises, and Hortense is yours now. I should mighty like to thwart the Huron of his triumph.

LAS. I will thwart him. The minister has promised to procure me a blank lettre-de-cachet, signed by the king, consigning him whose name I please to fill the blank with, for life, to the wearing miseries of the Bastille. Let the Pope thwart me—let them wed—their bridal eve shall be a merry one ! (*rings*)

Enter SERVANT, L.

Send in Monsieur le Bel !

Exit SERVANT, L.

MAD. K. I'd better not appear in this business, monsieur, as a matter of policy, you know—you think the Duchy of Chambord is safe ?

LAS. Fear not !

MAD. K. Because it would be hard, after labouring so zealously in the cause of virtue to be foiled in one's reward. I've been at no end of expense—and there's a great deal of trouble in rascality.

Exit, R.

Enter VICTOR, L.

LAS. You are welcome back to Versailles, Victor.

VIC. Sir,
You honour me !

LAS. I would do so. I'd lift
Lowly desert up to its place of right ;
Not let it idly grovel at the base
Of its just pedestal. I've known you long—
Admired you—respected—honoured you—
Loved your straightforward, manly honesty ;
And waited only opportunity
To do it justice. Now the time has come !

VIC. I always thought you noble, even when
In my low state you past contemptuous by,
And with a high-soul'd superciliousness,
Conversed in words that stung, and galling phrases,
At which equality would clench the fist ;
But courtesy held passion by the arm,
That arrogance might pass unscathed !

LAS. You wrong me !
And being something new in courtly ways,
Misjudg'd my motives. Let me now atone :
The mutual privilege of kings and men.

I like you, Victor. What's the news at Rome ?

VIC. The old news still. The rich and poor abide
At opposite ends of town ; mild charity
Blazons her name in full before her gift !
Laws that want mending ; judges almost past it !
Rogues rich in office ; honour at a premium ;
The never-pausing battle still fought on
For place above the worthy ; rank the great
Desideratum ; interest at par ;
And bribes so plentiful, that honest men
Have but to take their honesty to market
To sell it well !

LAS. That's plumply answered—you
Are called an honest man !

VIC. Am call'd so, sir !

LAS. Tush ! let's be frank with one another, Victor ;
You wish to rise as high as to the top
Of the double pinnacle, wealth and rank. You've seen
The world—confessed as much, just now—and know
That words and things are not at all times kin.
Bring what you call your honesty to market,
I'll make a bid for it !

VIC.

What mean your words ?

LAS. That I have spies abroad with lynx-like eyes,
 As you shall judge. The Pope has thrust aside,
 By virtue of his churchly power, the bar
 Twixt Hercule and Hortense. You hold the deed,
 And I must have it. I speak plain enough.
 To mince the business now were affectation ;
 So I deal honestly—that is, if honesty
 Dwells in plain speaking, as our grandams teach us.
 Read that, and think, ere you reply. (*gives a paper*)

VIC.

Right liberal !

Rank too, and promises—if promises
 Were cash'd as readily as notes—to buy
 A tithe of France !

LAS. Say, shall I have the paper ?

VIC. Monsieur Lascelles, what do you take me for ?

LAS. For a dependent, fortuneless young man,
 Who, if he flings away a powerful friend,
 At the critical moment, is—what I take him not
 To be—a fool ! Come, think it o'er again,
 And let your answer be—the packet !

VIC. (*after a pause—gives it*) There !
 I give my honour to your hands.

LAS. Doubt not
 It's in very excellent keeping. Victor, you
 Are an honest man—that is according to
 The newest readings. (*gives a purse*) There's your reward
 in part.
 Let all go well, I'll lift thee to a height
 Whence thou shalt see stern probity like mites
 Go plodding on its way—you smile !

VIC. I do—

I'll tell you why I smiled :—
 Remembering Aesop's wise but simple fable,
 How that the lion's mighty strength essay'd
 In vain, a mouse achieved—a low-born mouse ;
 A fortuneless, dependant, friendless mouse.
 The strength of nobleness, alike of soul
 And body, bows before the lesser strength
 Of court diplomacy ; and that in turn
 Before the sharp-edged, tiny tooth of cunning !
 You're good at guessing—by to-morrow guess
 The noble lion—then the politic net,
 And lastly, the poor, plodding, cunning mouse !

Exit, L.

LAS. Triumph !—joy !—here I hold a hand of trumps !
 The game's my own !—the fortune of the board
 Lies in my play—the stake, Hortense and love !

Exit, R.

SCENE II.—*The Palace at Versailles.*

*Enter MADAME KERKABON, with an open letter in her hand,
followed by HORTENSE.*

MAD. K. A jointure fit to buy a marquisate—horses, carriages, servants, liveries, such a state to which one half the coroneted heads in France would bow, and the simple price your hand!

HOR. A simple price! My faith-plight and my heart—both given to Hercule!

MAD. K. What can it matter? You can't marry Hercule, and you can Monsieur Lascelles! What's the use of standing at a shop window hankering after a sweetmeat that's too high priced for you—take what you can get, and be grateful to Providence and Monsieur—now be a good girl, Hortense, and take the certainty—you may wait years to wed Hercule, and then not get him after all.

HOR. Monsieur Lascelles owes you much methinks for your zealous exertions in his cause; but now, the constantly-renewed subject grows tedious and impertinent; and I must desire, command, that it is silent henceforth, and for ever! (*goes up*)

MAD. K. That's a full stop. I see my Duchy of Chambord fading visibly away before my very eyes.

Enter THERESE, c.

THE. Oh, what a beautiful place this palace is!—beats the Prior's grand dining room to a kitchen. Have you seen the king, Hortense?

HOR. I have!

THE. So have I, behind—I saw the back of his royal periwig, the peak of his royal sword, and the heels of his royal shoes, walking away in company with Hercule—and he was leaning on Hercule's arm—and all the courtiers were looking as pleased as if his majesty had graciously ordered them to take a dose of physic each.

HOR. A right royal heart—I bless him from my soul!

MAD. K. I don't like that! That Huron seems to have the knack of making himself agreeable to everybody but me. The king leaning on his arm, said you?

THE. Yes, and all the ladies of the court ogling him, and looking so simperingly modest that you'd have hardly believed they painted.

MAD. K. (*spitefully*) Ah, I shouldn't wonder if some of them fell in love with him—

THE. I should wonder if they did not?

MAD. K. And wanted to wed him—nothing more likely. Some lady of our gracious monarch's fancy, who'll get the king to command Hercule to marry her—and he must obey the king you know.

THE. I don't see that he must—I don't see what his majesty has to do with any such matter as that—I should only like to catch him fastening any of his lords or dukes upon me for a husband—I'd let him know what liberty and equality was. But there's more news abroad, Hortense—Victor has come back, and wants to find the

prior. Poor fellow!—he's looking so glum and dusty—I hope nobody's been trying to take advantage of him and make him a duke, or a drum major!

HOR. Seeking the prior? I'll take him to where the worthy father sits waiting the issue of the royal audience—come with me, Therese. (*going, L.*)

MAD. K. What answer shall I give Monsieur Lascelles?

HOR. The answer scorn pays insult with—the great affirmative with which waning life answers the demand of death—silence? My heart and hand dwell not in opposite climes—they live and die together.

Exit with THERESE, L.

MAD. K. The Duchy of Chambord has been my beacon fire and candle light, this month past—and that Silence has snuffed it out! But I'll have my revenge upon man, and go into a convent—I've got interest enough to be made lady abbess, and I'll snub all the younger and pretty nuns, till they run mad or run away.

Exit, R.

Enter LOUIS, HERCULE, and COURTIERS, L. U. E.

LOU. From the king's hand, receive the gift you prize
Above all others, your Commission, bearing
The royal signet. (*gives parchment*) You are now a captain,
Commanding the tenth company of guards,
Your place about the person of your king!
By your leave, gentlemen, (*COURTIERS all back*) the brave
and noble

Deserve our warmest love. Hercule, with you
We sympathise—and could our hand put down
The fiat of ecclesiastic law—

HER. That, sire, is past!—the hope is quench'd, like fire;
But still the flame will smoulder!

LOU. You are young!
Look round our Court—here 'mong its thousand beauties,
Forms which enchant, glances which set on fire,
Lips, locking music in their coral walls;
Choose one, and countless wealth shall grace the hand
That links her to thee on the bridal day
With the rich dower of queens!

HER. I thank you, sire,
But—dared I speak—

LOU. Speak openly!

HER. My liege,

Why do you banish men to other climes,
If to deprive them of their fatherland
Be not to punish them?

LOU. The drift of this?

HER. Look at the stars that deck your royal breast;
Orders and crosses, medals, jewels that

Outvie in value half an empire : yet
Among them is a simple silver clasp,
Prized more than all the rest !

Lou. It was my mother's !

Her. Throw that away !

Lou. It was her only gift !

Her. And what is love to man ?—an only gift

Too precious to be idly thrown away !

And is it not as precious as our land,

Which heeding not another's golden sky,

Soft airs, sweet flowers, hill and dale conjoined

By nature's cunning past comparison ;

Is still our land—and, as our land, surpasses

Such fairy worlds—aye, fifty thousand times !

There are some dreams that last a life—mine

Is one of these—I shall dream on till death

Shall end the vision !

Lou. I will serve you yet ;

Ask me some other boon !

Her. The Spanish force

Threaten our land—in the approaching strife

Set me a place !

Lou. A hero's choice ! Thy troop

Shall with thee to the war—farewell, my soldier !

Exit with COURTIERS, L. U. E.

Her. Soldier !—battle !—death !

It is not hard to die !—and life is but

A shadow on the wall—a falling leaf,

Toy'd with by autumn winds—a flower—a star,

Among the infinite infinitesimal !

We are but breath, whispering against the wind ;

Sand in the desert ; dew upon the sea !

Enter VICTOR, R.

Vic. As I could wish—alone !

Her. You're welcome home !

Vic. You'd say so, could you guess my errand !

Her. What

Vic. I have been to Rome——

The eternal city !

Her. Faith !

The city of eternal craft and guile,

The hot-bed of our faith, which is not left

To grow 'neath heaven's care, but forced by man.

I've learn'd to be a rogue there, and came home

To France to practise it !

Her. You'll blunder in't !

Vic. You think so ?

Her. I would back my thought with oath !

Vic. Yet, you might be deceived——

HER. In other men,

But not in you !

VIC. Well, time shall prove it. First,
Beware Lascelles ; he meditates a scheme,
As vile as it is deadly.

HER. I fear not !

VIC. Well, I have warn'd you ; but as warning only
Is like the flash before the lightning stroke,
Here is a counter-blast. (*gives letters*) The good archbishop,
In face of many perils, gathered these
Decisive proofs of Lascelles' treachery ;
His secret correspondence with the foe,
The crafty Spaniard. Letters in his hand ;
His traitorous offer—price and all set down ;
That cannot choose but bring him to the block.
Play these cards well, you win the honours all,
And something more by tricks !

HER. My noble friend,
Who dares to doubt thee !

VIC. There is more to come.
(*gives a sealed packet*)
At fitting moment open this—when hangs
Your mutual chance of triumph on a thread,
Then break the seal. Hortense is near—as yet,
I would not meet her. Fare you well !

Exit, R.

HER. Farewell !—The word
That we must learn to speak—the little word
That, like a smothered fire in the earth,
Breaks up the heart to give it vent. She comes !

Enter HORTENSE, L. U. E.

HOR. Hercule, you make me prouder every day
I know you ! You have ta'en the king's reward ;
Have joined the ranks of France, and go to fight
The battle of the right !

HER. And you applaud me ?

HOR. I honour you ! Are we not bann'd and barr'd ?
Should I, who in my prideful, selfish love,
Would ne'er have stood between the light and thee,
Now hold thee from a sphere wherein thou'l shine
Brightest among the bright. I'll wed thy fame ;
Thy name, that glory couples with proud deeds !
There is no sin in that. My thoughts shall fly
Beside thee to the battle, where if they guard not,
At least they'll hallow every blow !

HER. Hortense,
I now begin to find thy teaching out ;
To pick the solid gold from out the dross ;
What Civilization is—to struggle up
Against the downward crush of heavy grief ;
To be resigned, because heaven wills it so ;

To force 'gainst nature out the patient yielding,
That is at best a stubborn part of man.

Yes, now I learn the lesson !

HOR. Night draws on;
The troops will march at dawn—

HER. And we perchance
May never meet again. Hortense, we'll speak
As brother speaks to sister—though the words
Choke as they rise—though the hot tears will start—
Though the voice tremble—though the spirit quiver
With the strong battle that is waged within.
Yet, we will speak—and calmly—lovingly—
As with a brother's and a sister's love !
One smile to hearten me—

HOR. Would the gift were dearer !

HER. There is one hour in nature, when men's spirits
Are hush'd sometimes to universal peace,
The twilight hour, when heaven seems bidding earth
A sweet good night ! Now let that hour be mine.

HOR. My heart is speaking, though my tongue is mute ;
I dare not trust my words !

HER. Oh, could I dare
To lift the flood-gates of my passionate heart,
How would my soul gush with the torrent forth,
Until it maddened. I have lived in dreams,
And now the waking hour is come at last.
Thou wert the fairy form of all held dear ;
Memories of parents, playmates, friends with thee
Remembered, grew thrice precious. Enemies
Took but thy shape and feature in my dream ;
And enmity was dead ! And now—and now—
The calm is tenfold deadlier than the storm.
I dare no more —farewell, Hortense—farewell !

Exit, c.

HOR. And he is gone!—how dim seems all around.
Let one we love depart,
There seems a void in nature, which no aid
Of all that is material under heaven
Can properly fill up.

Enter LASCELLES, R.

LAS. (*aside*) The troops await
My signal in the ante-room—all's safe
If fortune turn not craven—we're alone,
It could not happen better. Sweet Hortense,
Can you be kinder now ?

HOR. I cannot think,
Monsieur Lascelles will press a suit, where now
It hath become an insult. (*crosses to R.*)

LAS. Your answer ?

HOR. Rejection and contempt !

LAS. You love, Hercule ;

Pity to let him die in the Bastille ;
And I can doom him there !

You dare not.

HOR.
LAS.

Love

Dares mightier things : an order from the king —

HOR. He will not sign it.

'Tis already sign'd.

LAS. (HERCULE appears, c. listening.)

Behold this scroll — *a lettre de cachet*, signed
By the king's hand : a blank left for the name
To be fill'd up at pleasure. Shall I write
The name of Hercule ? Here are pen and ink.

(pointing to a table)

Shall Hercule die

Unto the world and men, a nameless death ?
Now if your love be love and not a dream,
You will decide for me.

HOR. This mockery,
Is doubly cruel ! Are you a man ?

LAS. So much one
That I dare love Hortense. (sits at table, pen in hand)

It rests with you,

Time gallops. Shall I fill the blank up ?

HOR. Hold !
The peril awes me like a threatened child ;
Yet, should I yield and wed this man, how meet
The eye of Hercule ?

LAS. (aside, rising) Good. She hesitates —
A timely word thrown in now — (advances)

Can he fail

To prize at full the love that sets him free
From hopeless thraldom ?

(HERCULE advances to table, sits, and takes up the pen)

HOR. Let fate do its worst —
For Hercule's sake, who would have died for me,
I'll sell myself — save him, and I am yours.

LAS. Adored Hortense — (going up)

HER. Stand back, Monsieur Lascelles :
I am your debtor, for some knowledge bought
At a round price, and therefore doubly worth.
The modern, novel, civilized art of Love,
As practis'd in the land of France. To threat
Instead of to entreat : to play upon
A weak girl's fears instead of on her heart
To be from head to heel a triple villain,
And a discovered blazoned traitor — these
Are the new traits of Love in modern mouths ;
So exquisitely fashionable, and, withal
So very civilised.

LAS. This insolence —

HOR. Beware of him—there's venom in his tongue
And thunder at his beck.

HER. Go bid him thunder,
I shiver not!

LAS. What ho! The Guards!

Enter CAPTAIN and GUARDS, R.

HER. The Guards?

HOR. Oh, Hercule, Hercule, you are lost indeed.

LAS. Look yonder, insolent.

HER. Well, sir, I do.

LAS. They are your doomsmen, waiting but my word
To drag you to the terrible Bastille;
Who triumphs now?

HER. We shall see. (*to OFFICER*) What company?

CAPT. The tenth.

HER. By virtue of the king's commission
That constitutes me Captain, I command you
To seize that man, sir; the Bastille is large,
Yea, large enough to hold Monsieur Lascelles!

LAS. Psha! this is mere bravado. Where's your power
To carry this high crest?

HER. (*to OFFICER, giving commission*) Read that, sir, then
Answer the braggart. For the rest, your name
Will fill the blank up quite as well as mine. (*writes*)
Remove your prisoner.

*Enter the KING, LOUVOIS, VICTOR, THERESE, GABRIEL, COURTIERS,
LADIES, PAGES, &c., c. from R.*

LAS. My liege, I'm wrong'd—
Your zealous, faithful servant, grossly wrong'd
By this unmanner'd insolent! To you
I look for justice.

HER. (*giving the letters*) Let him have it, sire!
The proofs of trait'rous intercourse with Spain;
Terms offered to betray into their hands
The armies and the person of the king;
To make them undeniably, and strike
His tongue with dumbness, see where on the page
Glitters the signature that writes him traitor!
Now give him justice, sire.

LOU. Away with him.

LAS. I'm crushed; but in my fall I'll conquer too!
Hark you, who stand the haughty victor by,
With the proud smile of triumph: we wise men
Fall not without an earth-shake. You are free
To wed; the Pope's decree confirms it—here

(*takes out document*)
The sacred words—(*tearing it to fragments*)—which thus I
render null,
And dash the untasted cup of sweetness down

From the expectant lip. (to VICTOR) Now, valiant youth,
Far-seeing cunning Victor, who wins now?

VIC. (L.) Ah, who? Break open the sealed packet, Hercule.
(*while he is doing so*)

When well-known rogues send word to honest men
To meet them on the morrow, honest men
Are put upon their guard. How easy too
To copy the Pope's letter in the night,
And sell it to the rogue. You read me now:
The copied paper lies in fragments, there
The true one shines resplendent.

(*a general movement of joy and gratulation*)

LAS. I am foil'd!

VIC. The lion is set free—the net destroy'd—
The humble plodding mouse has done it all.

LOU. Hence to the Bastille.

(LASCELLES is taken off, guarded, R. 1 E.)
You are each other's now:

Your path a path of flowers, through the world,
A golden pilgrimage—be happy. Nay,
Speak nothing. Hercule, when I bade you take
A wife from forth the lustres of the Court,
I promis'd her a dower. You shall wed
What Bravery deserves, Nobility:
Receive from the king's hands a titled wife,
The new-created Duchess of Chambord! (they go up)

MAD. K. (R.) There goes my greatness overboard with a splash!
It's not fashionable to curse, but I'll go into a convent to-morrow,
and pray they may be all as miserable as I am.

Exit, r.

GAB. (advancing, L. c.) My brave Victor, you have surpassed
my hopes. It shall go hard but I will find a way to reward thee
well, and lighten all my labours.

VIC. (L.) Faith, honestly, sir, I know but one way to lighten
my labours, and that's to make them heavier.

GAB. A wife?

VIC. You've hit it.

GAB. Where's the cause of all the mischief?

THE. (R.) Please, sir, it's me.

GAB. You love him?

THE. I own my folly, sir, I do.

GAB. And he loves you?

THE. Sir, he has just wisdom enough for that.

HER. (advancing) My brain grows dizzy with the weight of joy:
Hortense—mine ever.

HOR. Ever, ever, Hercule!

HER. My staunch true friend. (*extending his hand to VICTOR*)

LOU. I'll find thee yet an office

That's worthy of thee.

VIC. Sire, I'll deserve it.

Lou. And yet no smiles ! Tush, faces shadow'd thus,
Mock the bright sunshine of the heart.

HER. My liege,

My heart wells forth its gratitude to heaven
In eloquent silence : 'tis too full to speak !
And like a landmark from the distant sea
Looms high the lesson I would learn. To hope
Against Despair—to trust against Suspicion—
To feel that woman, and her angel love,
Are the true rectifiers of the world ;
And that to her, and her alone, we owe
The charm that makes our ruggedness a garden.
Yes, hand in hand must Truth and Honour walk,
With Woman for the guide ! That's—Civilization !

(*trumpets*)

PAGES.

COURTIERS.

HORTENSE. HERCULE. LOUIS. VICTOR. THERESE.
LOUVOIS.

PAGES.

COURTIERS.

GABRIEL.

Curtain.