

This golden legend on the iron door is subsequently found and regarded as a portent. The King's great prophets are summoned to interpret it. They read it as a doom from the stars. The King's pride has been too overweening, and he is marked for ruin. Therefore the King, to symbolise the sacrifice of all his pride, lays his crown and sceptre humbly before the iron door and goes away bare-headed. The little boy comes back. His prayer to the King's door has apparently been answered. He regards the King's crown as a hoop, and the sceptre as a stick to beat it with; and he frisks away, delighted with his toys. When the King returns, his sacrificial offerings have disappeared. "The gods have come," he says, "The stars are satisfied."

"THE GOLDEN DOOM" [1912]

In *The Golden Doom*, the playful aspiration of a little boy becomes inextricably intertangled with the destiny of a mighty monarch. The piece is set "outside the King's great door in Zericon, some while before the fall of Babylon":—and the reading of this simple stage-direction fills the ear with singing like that which Ibsen's Hilda heard in those inspired moments when she hearkened to the music of harps in the air.

This little boy comes to beg the King of Zericon for a hoop to play with; and, in the absence of the monarch, he addresses his petition to the King's great door,—a sacred door, which it is death to touch. When the sentries are not looking, this unthinking boy scrawls upon the iron door a little doggerel poem that is running in his mind,—using as a pencil a nugget of gold which he has fished up from the river near at hand.