The Duchess of Padua

by Oscar Wilde

Free public domain classic — Noveliopdf

The Project Gutenberg eBook of The Duchess of Padua

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: The Duchess of Padua

Author: Oscar Wilde

Release date: April 1, 1997 [eBook #875] Most recently updated: October 26, 2014

Language: English

Other information and formats: www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/875

Credits: Transcribed from the 1916 Methuen and Co. edition by David Price

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE DUCHESS OF PADUA ***

Transcribed from the 1916 Methuen and Co. edition by David Price, email ccx074@pglaf.org

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA

A PLAY

BY OSCAR WILDE

METHUEN & CO. LTD. 36 ESSEX STREET W.C. LONDON

Fifth Edition

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

Simone Gesso, Duke of Padua

Beatrice, his Wife

Andreas Pollajuolo, Cardinal of Padua

Maffio Petrucci, Jeppo Vitellozzo, Taddeo Bardi } Gentlemen of the Duke's Household

Guido Ferranti, a Young Man

Ascanio Cristofano, his Friend

Count Moranzone, an Old Man

Bernardo Cavalcanti, Lord Justice of Padua

Hugo, the Headsman

Lucy, a Tire woman

Servants, Citizens, Soldiers, Monks, Falconers with their hawks and dogs, etc.

Place: Padua

Time: The latter half of the Sixteenth Century

THE SCENES OF THE PLAY

Act I.

The Market Place of Padua (25 minutes).

Act II.

Room in the Duke's Palace (36 minutes).

Act III.

Corridor in the Duke’s Palace (29 minutes).

Act IV.

The Hall of Justice (31 minutes).

Act V.

The Dungeon (25 minutes).

Style of Architecture: Italian, Gothic and Romanesque.

ACT I

SCENE

The Market Place of Padua at noon; in the background is the great Cathedral of Padua; the architecture is Romanesque, and wrought in black and white marbles; a flight of marble steps leads up to the Cathedral door; at the foot of the steps are two large stone lions; the houses on each aide of the stage have coloured awnings from their windows, and are flanked by stone arcades; on the right of the stage is the public fountain, with a triton in green bronze blowing from a conch; around the fountain is a stone seat; the bell of the Cathedral is ringing, and the citizens, men, women and children, are passing into the Cathedral.

[Enter Guido Ferranti and Ascanio Cristofano.]

Now by my life, Guido, I will go no farther; for if I walk another step I will have no life left to swear by; this wild-goose errand of yours!

[Sits down on the step of the fountain.]

Guido

I think it must be here. [Goes up to passer-by and doffs his cap.] Pray, sir, is this the market place, and that the church of Santa Croce? [Citizen bows.] I thank you, sir.

Ascanio

Well?

Guido

Ay! it is here.

Ascanio

I would it were somewhere else, for I see no wine-shop.

Guido

[Taking a letter from his pocket and reading it.] ‘The hour noon; the city, Padua; the place, the market; and the day, Saint Philip’s Day.’

Ascanio

And what of the man, how shall we know him?

Guido [reading still]

‘I will wear a violet cloak with a silver falcon broidered on the shoulder.’ A brave attire, Ascanio.

Ascanio

I’d sooner have my leathern jerkin. And you think he will tell you of your father?

Guido

Why, yes! It is a month ago now, you remember; I was in the vineyard, just at the corner nearest the road, where the goats used to get in, a man rode up and asked me was my name Guido, and gave me this letter, signed ‘Your Father’s Friend,’ bidding me be here to-day if I would know the secret of my birth, and telling me how to recognise the writer! I had always thought old Pedro was my uncle, but he told me that he was not, but that I had been left a child in his charge by some one he had never since seen.

Ascanio

And you don’t know who your father is?

Guido

No.

Ascanio

No recollection of him even?

Guido

None, Ascanio, none.

Ascanio [laughing]

Then he could never have boxed your ears so often as my father did mine.

Guido [smiling]

I am sure you never deserved it.

Ascanio

Never; and that made it worse. I hadn’t the consciousness of guilt to buoy me up. What hour did you say he fixed?

Guido

Noon.

[Clock in the Cathedral strikes.]

Ascanio

It is that now, and your man has not come. I don’t believe in him, Guido. I think it is some wench who has set her eye at you; and, as I have followed you from Perugia to Padua, I swear you shall follow me to the nearest tavern. [Rises.] By the great gods of eating, Guido, I am as hungry as a widow is for a husband, as tired as a young maid is of good advice, and as dry as a monk’s sermon. Come, Guido, you stand there looking at nothing, like the fool who tried to look into his own mind; your man will not come.

Guido

Well, I suppose you are right. Ah! [Just as he is leaving the stage with Ascanio, enter Lord Moranzone in a violet cloak, with a silver falcon broidered on the shoulder; he passes across to the Cathedral, and just as he is going in Guido runs up and touches him.]

Moranzone

Guido Ferranti, thou hast come in time.

Guido

What! Does my father live?

Moranzone

Ay! lives in thee. Thou art the same in mould and lineament, Carriage and form, and outward semblances; I trust thou art in noble mind the same.

Guido

Oh, tell me of my father; I have lived But for this moment.

Moranzone

We must be alone.

Guido

This is my dearest friend, who out of love Has followed me to Padua; as two brothers, There is no secret which we do not share.

Moranzone

There is one secret which ye shall not share; Bid him go hence.

Guido [to Ascanio]

Come back within the hour. He does not know that nothing in this world Can dim the perfect mirror of our love. Within the hour come.

Ascanio

Speak not to him, There is a dreadful terror in his look.

Guido [laughing]

Nay, nay, I doubt not that he has come to tell That I am some great Lord of Italy, And we will have long days of joy together. Within the hour, dear Ascanio.

[Exit Ascanio.]

Now tell me of my father? [Sits down on a stone seat.] Stood he tall? I warrant he looked tall upon his horse. His hair was black? or perhaps a reddish gold, Like a red fire of gold? Was his voice low? The very bravest men have voices sometimes Full of low music; or a clarion was it That brake with terror all his enemies? Did he ride singly? or with many squires And valiant gentlemen to serve his state? For oftentimes methinks I feel my veins Beat with the blood of kings. Was he a king?

Moranzone

Ay, of all men he was the kingliest.

Guido [proudly]

Then when you saw my noble father last He was set high above the heads of men?

Moranzone

Ay, he was high above the heads of men,

[Walks over to Guido and puts his hand upon his shoulder.]

On a red scaffold, with a butcher’s block Set for his neck.

Guido [leaping up]

What dreadful man art thou, That like a raven, or the midnight owl, Com’st with this awful message from the grave?

Moranzone

I am known here as the Count Moranzone, Lord of a barren castle on a rock, With a few acres of unkindly land And six not thrifty servants. But I was one Of Parma’s

noblest princes; more than that, I was your father’s friend.

Guido [clasping his hand]

Tell me of him.

Moranzone

You are the son of that great Duke Lorenzo, He was the Prince of Parma, and the Duke Of all the fair domains of Lombardy Down to the gates of Florence; nay, Florence even Was wont to pay him tribute—

Guido

Come to his death.

Moranzone

You will hear that soon enough. Being at war— O noble lion of war, that would not suffer Injustice done in Italy!—he led The very flower of chivalry against That foul adulterous Lord of Rimini, Giovanni Malatesta—whom God curse! And was by him in treacherous ambush taken, And like a villain, or a low-born knave, Was by him on the public scaffold murdered.

Guido [clutching his dagger]

Doth Malatesta live?

Moranzone

No, he is dead.

Guido

Did you say dead? O too swift runner, Death, Couldst thou not wait for me a little space, And I had done thy bidding!

Moranzone [clutching his wrist]

Thou canst do it! The man who sold thy father is alive.

Guido

Sold! was my father sold?

Moranzone

Ay! trafficked for, Like a vile chattel, for a price betrayed, Bartered and bargained for in privy market By one whom he had held his perfect friend, One he had trusted, one he had well loved, One whom by ties of kindness he had bound—

Guido

And he lives Who sold my father?

Moranzone

I will bring you to him.

Guido

So, Judas, thou art living! well, I will make This world thy field of blood, so buy it straight-way, For thou must hang there.

Moranzone

Judas said you, boy? Yes, Judas in his treachery, but still He was more wise than Judas was, and held Those thirty silver pieces not enough.

Guido

What got he for my father’s blood?

Moranzone

What got he? Why cities, fiefs, and principalities, Vineyards, and lands.

Guido

Of which he shall but keep Six feet of ground to rot in. Where is he, This damned villain, this foul devil? where? Show me the man, and come he cased in steel, In complete panoply and pride of war, Ay, guarded by a thousand men-at-arms, Yet I shall reach him through their spears, and feel The last black drop of blood from his black heart Crawl down my blade. Show me the man, I say, And I will kill him.

Moranzone [coldly]

Fool, what revenge is there? Death is the common heritage of all, And death comes best when it comes suddenly.

[Goes up close to Guido.]

Your father was betrayed, there is your cue; For you shall sell the seller in his turn. I will make you of his household, you shall sit At the same board with him, eat of his bread—

Guido

O bitter bread!

Moranzone

Thy palate is too nice, Revenge will make it sweet. Thou shalt o’ nights Pledge him in wine, drink from his cup, and be His intimate, so he will fawn on thee, Love thee, and trust thee in all secret things. If he bid thee be merry thou must laugh, And if it be his humour to be sad Thou shalt don sables. Then when the time is ripe—

[Guido clutches his sword.]

Nay, nay, I trust thee not; your hot young blood, Undisciplined nature, and too violent rage Will never tarry for this great revenge, But wreck itself on passion.

Guido

Thou knowest me not. Tell me the man, and I in everything Will do thy bidding.

Moranzone

Well, when the time is ripe, The victim trusting and the occasion sure, I will by sudden secret messenger Send thee a sign.

Guido

How shall I kill him, tell me?

Moranzone

That night thou shalt creep into his private chamber; But if he sleep see that thou wake him first, And hold thy hand upon his throat, ay! that way, Then having told him of what blood thou art, Sprung from what father, and for what revenge, Bid him to pray for mercy; when he prays, Bid him to set a price upon his life, And when he strips himself of all his gold Tell him thou needest not gold, and hast not mercy, And do thy business straight away. Swear to me Thou wilt not kill him till I bid thee do it, Or else I go to mine own house, and leave Thee ignorant, and thy father unavenged.

Guido

Now by my father's sword—

Moranzone

The common hangman Brake that in sunder in the public square.

Guido

Then by my father's grave—

Moranzone

What grave? what grave? Your noble father lieth in no grave, I saw his dust strewn on the air, his ashes Whirled through the windy streets like common straws To plague a beggar's eyesight, and his head, That gentle head, set on the prison spike, For the vile rabble in their insolence To shoot their tongues at.

Guido

Was it so indeed? Then by my father's spotless memory, And by the shameful manner of his death, And by the base betrayal by his friend, For these at least remain, by these I swear I will not lay my hand upon his life Until you bid me, then—God help his soul, For he shall die as never dog died yet. And now, the sign, what is it?

Moranzone

This dagger, boy; It was your father’s.

Guido

Oh, let me look at it! I do remember now my reputed uncle, That good old husbandman I left at home, Told me a cloak wrapped round me when a babe Bare too such yellow leopards wrought in gold; I like them best in steel, as they are here, They suit my purpose better. Tell me, sir, Have you no message from my father to me?

Moranzone

Poor boy, you never saw that noble father, For when by his false friend he had been sold, Alone of all his gentlemen I escaped To bear the news to Parma to the Duchess.

Guido

Speak to me of my mother.

Moranzone

When thy mother Heard my black news, she fell into a swoon, And, being with untimely travail seized— Bare thee into the world before thy time, And then her soul went heavenward, to wait Thy father, at the gates of Paradise.

Guido

A mother dead, a father sold and bartered! I seem to stand on some beleaguered wall, And messenger comes after messenger With a new tale of terror; give me breath, Mine ears are tired.

Moranzone

When thy mother died, Fearing our enemies, I gave it out Thou wert dead also, and then privily Conveyed thee to an ancient servitor, Who by Perugia lived; the rest thou knowest.

Guido

Saw you my father afterwards?

Moranzone

Ay! once; In mean attire, like a vineyard dresser, I stole to Rimini.

Guido [taking his hand]

O generous heart!

Moranzone

One can buy everything in Rimini, And so I bought the gaolers! when your father Heard that a man child had been born to him, His noble face lit up beneath his helm Like a great fire seen far out at sea, And taking my two hands, he bade me, Guido, To rear you worthy of him; so I have reared you To revenge his death upon the friend who sold him.

Guido

Thou hast done well; I for my father thank thee. And now his name?

Moranzone

How you remind me of him, You have each gesture that your father had.

Guido

The traitor’s name?

Moranzone

Thou wilt hear that anon; The Duke and other nobles at the Court Are coming hither.

Guido

What of that? his name?

Moranzone

Do they not seem a valiant company Of honourable, honest gentlemen?

Guido

His name, milord?

[Enter the Duke of Padua with Count Bardi, Maffio, Petrucci, and other gentlemen of his Court.]

Moranzone [quickly]

The man to whom I kneel Is he who sold your father! mark me well.

Guido [clutches hit dagger]

The Duke!

Moranzone

Leave off that fingering of thy knife. Hast thou so soon forgotten? [Kneels to the Duke.] My noble Lord.

Duke

Welcome, Count Moranzone; ’tis some time Since we have seen you here in Padua. We hunted near your castle yesterday— Call you it castle? that bleak house of yours Wherein you sit a-mumbling o’er your beads, Telling your vices like a good old man.

[Catches sight of Guido and starts back.]

Who is that?

Moranzone

My sister’s son, your Grace, Who being now of age to carry arms, Would for a season tarry at your Court

Duke [still looking at Guido]

What is his name?

Moranzone

Guido Ferranti, sir.

Duke

His city?

Moranzone

He is Mantuan by birth.

Duke [advancing towards Guido]

You have the eyes of one I used to know, But he died childless. Are you honest, boy? Then be not spendthrift of your honesty, But keep it to yourself; in Padua Men think that honesty is ostentatious, so It is not of the fashion. Look at these lords.

Count Bardi [aside]

Here is some bitter arrow for us, sure.

Duke

Why, every man among them has his price, Although, to do them justice, some of them Are quite expensive.

Count Bardi [aside]

There it comes indeed.

Duke

So be not honest; eccentricity Is not a thing should ever be encouraged, Although, in this dull stupid age of ours, The most eccentric thing a man can do Is to have brains, then the mob mocks at him; And for the mob, despise it as I do, I hold its bubble praise and windy favours In such account, that popularity Is the one insult I have never suffered.

Maffio [aside]

He has enough of hate, if he needs that.

Duke

Have prudence; in your dealings with the world Be not too hasty; act on the second thought, First impulses are generally good.

Guido [aside]

Surely a toad sits on his lips, and spills its venom there.

Duke

See thou hast enemies, Else will the world think very little of thee; It is its test of power; yet see thou show’st A smiling mask of friendship to all men, Until thou hast them safely in thy grip, Then thou canst crush them.

Guido [aside]

O wise philosopher! That for thyself dost dig so deep a grave.

Moranzone [to him]

Dost thou mark his words?

Guido

Oh, be thou sure I do.

Duke

And be not over-scrupulous; clean hands With nothing in them make a sorry show. If you would have the lion’s share of life You must wear the fox’s skin. Oh, it will fit you; It is a coat which fitteth every man.

Guido

Your Grace, I shall remember.

Duke

That is well, boy, well. I would not have about me shallow fools, Who with mean scruples weigh the gold of life, And faltering, paltering, end by failure; failure, The only crime which I have not committed: I would have men about me. As for conscience, Conscience is but the name which cowardice Fleeing from battle scrawls upon its shield. You understand me, boy?

Guido

I do, your Grace, And will in all things carry out the creed Which you have taught

me.

Maffio

I never heard your Grace So much in the vein for preaching; let the Cardinal Look to his laurels, sir.

Duke

The Cardinal! Men follow my creed, and they gabble his. I do not think much of the Cardinal; Although he is a holy churchman, and I quite admit his dulness. Well, sir, from now We count you of our household

[He holds out his hand for Guido to kiss. Guido starts back in horror, but at a gesture from Count Moranzone, kneels and kisses it.]

We will see That you are furnished with such equipage As doth befit your honour and our state.

Guido

I thank your Grace most heartily.

Duke

Tell me again What is your name?

Guido

Guido Ferranti, sir.

Duke

And you are Mantuan? Look to your wives, my lords, When such a gallant comes to Padua. Thou dost well to laugh, Count Bardi; I have noted How merry is that husband by whose hearth Sits an uncomely wife.

Maffio

May it please your Grace, The wives of Padua are above suspicion.

Duke

What, are they so ill-favoured! Let us go, This Cardinal detains our pious Duchess; His sermon and his beard want cutting both: Will you come with us, sir, and hear a text From holy Jerome?

Moranzone [bowing]

My liege, there are some matters—

Duke [interrupting]

Thou need’st make no excuse for missing mass. Come, gentlemen.

[Exit with his suite into Cathedral.]

Guido [after a pause]

So the Duke sold my father; I kissed his hand.

Moranzone

Thou shalt do that many times.

Guido

Must it be so?

Moranzone

Ay! thou hast sworn an oath.

Guido

That oath shall make me marble.

Moranzone

Farewell, boy, Thou wilt not see me till the time is ripe.

Guido

I pray thou comest quickly.

Moranzone

I will come When it is time; be ready.

Guido

Fear me not.

Moranzone

Here is your friend; see that you banish him Both from your heart and Padua.

Guido

From Padua, Not from my heart.

Moranzone

Nay, from thy heart as well, I will not leave thee till I see thee do it.

Guido

Can I have no friend?

Moranzone

Revenge shall be thy friend; Thou need’st no other.

Guido

Well, then be it so.

[Enter Ascanio Cristofano.]

Ascanio

Come, Guido, I have been beforehand with you in everything, for I have drunk a flagon of wine, eaten a pasty, and kissed the maid who served it. Why, you look as melancholy as a schoolboy who cannot buy apples, or a politician who cannot sell his vote. What news, Guido, what news?

Guido

Why, that we two must part, Ascanio.

Ascanio

That would be news indeed, but it is not true.

Guido

Too true it is, you must get hence, Ascanio, And never look upon my face again.

Ascanio

No, no; indeed you do not know me, Guido; ’Tis true I am a common yeoman’s son, Nor versed in fashions of much courtesy; But, if you are nobly born, cannot I be Your serving man? I will tend you with more love Than any hired servant.

Guido [clasping his hand]

Ascanio!

[Sees Moranzone looking at him and drops Ascanio’s hand.]

It cannot be.

Ascanio

What, is it so with you? I thought the friendship of the antique world Was not yet dead, but that the Roman type Might even in this poor and common age Find counterparts of love; then by this love Which beats between us like a summer sea, Whatever lot has fallen to your hand May I not share it?

Guido

Share it?

Ascanio

Ay!

Guido

No, no.

Ascanio

Have you then come to some inheritance Of lordly castle, or of stored-up gold?

Guido [bitterly]

Ay! I have come to my inheritance. O bloody legacy! and O murderous dole!

Which, like the thrifty miser, must I hoard, And to my own self keep; and so, I pray you, Let us part here.

Ascanio

What, shall we never more Sit hand in hand, as we were wont to sit, Over some book of ancient chivalry Stealing a truant holiday from school, Follow the huntsmen through the autumn woods, And watch the falcons burst their tasselled jesses, When the hare breaks from covert.

Guido

Never more.

Ascanio

Must I go hence without a word of love?

Guido

You must go hence, and may love go with you.

Ascanio

You are unknightly, and ungenerous.

Guido

Unknightly and ungenerous if you will. Why should we waste more words about the matter Let us part now.

Ascanio

Have you no message, Guido?

Guido

None; my whole past was but a schoolboy’s dream; To-day my life begins. Farewell.

Ascanio

Farewell [exit slowly.]

Guido

Now are you satisfied? Have you not seen My dearest friend, and my most loved companion, Thrust from me like a common kitchen knave! Oh, that I did it! Are you not satisfied?

Moranzone

Ay! I am satisfied. Now I go hence, Do not forget the sign, your father's dagger, And do the business when I send it to you.

Guido

Be sure I shall. [Exit Lord Moranzone.]

Guido

O thou eternal heaven! If there is aught of nature in my soul, Of gentle pity, or fond kindliness, Wither it up, blast it, bring it to nothing, Or if thou wilt not, then will I myself Cut pity with a sharp knife from my heart And strangle mercy in her sleep at night Lest she speak to me. Vengeance there I have it. Be thou my comrade and my bedfellow, Sit by my side, ride to the chase with me, When I am weary sing me pretty songs, When I am light o' heart, make jest with me, And when I dream, whisper into my ear The dreadful secret of a father's murder— Did I say murder? [Draws his dagger.] Listen, thou terrible God! Thou God that punishest all broken oaths, And bid some angel write this oath in fire, That from this hour, till my dear father's murder In blood I have revenged, I do forswear The noble ties of honourable friendship, The noble joys of dear companionship, Affection's bonds, and loyal gratitude, Ay, more, from this same hour I do forswear All love of women, and the barren thing Which men call beauty—

[The organ peals in the Cathedral, and under a canopy of cloth of silver tissue, borne by four pages in scarlet, the Duchess of Padua comes down the steps; as she passes across their eyes meet for a moment, and as she leaves the stage she looks back at Guido, and the dagger falls from his hand.]

Oh! who is that?

A Citizen

The Duchess of Padua!

END OF ACT I.

ACT II

SCENE

A state room in the Ducal Palace, hung with tapestries representing the Masque of Venus; a large door in the centre opens into a corridor of red marble, through which one can see a view of Padua; a large canopy is set (R.C.) with three thrones, one a little lower than the others; the ceiling is made of long gilded beams; furniture of the period, chairs covered with gilt leather, and buffets set with gold and silver plate, and chests painted with mythological scenes. A number of the courtiers is out on the corridor looking from it down into the street below; from the street comes the roar of a mob and cries of ‘Death to the Duke’: after a little interval enter the Duke very calmly; he is leaning on the arm of Guido Ferranti; with him enters also the Lord Cardinal; the mob still shouting.

Duke

No, my Lord Cardinal, I weary of her! Why, she is worse than ugly, she is good.

Maffio [excitedly]

Your Grace, there are two thousand people there Who every moment grow more clamorous.

Duke

Tut, man, they waste their strength upon their lungs! People who shout so loud, my lords, do nothing; The only men I fear are silent men.

[A yell from the people.]

You see, Lord Cardinal, how my people love me.

[Another yell.]

Go, Petrucci, And tell the captain of the guard below To clear the square. Do you not hear me, sir? Do what I bid you.

[Exit Petrucci.]

Cardinal

I beseech your Grace To listen to their grievances.

Duke [sitting on his throne]

Ay! the peaches Are not so big this year as they were last. I crave your pardon, my lord Cardinal, I thought you spake of peaches.

[A cheer from the people.]

What is that?

Guido [rushes to the window]

The Duchess has gone forth into the square, And stands between the people and the guard, And will not let them shoot.

Duke

The devil take her!

Guido [still at the window]

And followed by a dozen of the citizens Has come into the Palace.

Duke [starting up]

By Saint James, Our Duchess waxes bold!

Bardi

Here comes the Duchess.

Duke

Shut that door there; this morning air is cold.

[They close the door on the corridor.]

[Enter the Duchess followed by a crowd of meanly dressed Citizens.]

Duchess [flinging herself upon her knees]

I do beseech your Grace to give us audience.

Duke

What are these grievances?

Duchess

Alas, my Lord, Such common things as neither you nor I, Nor any of these noble gentlemen, Have ever need at all to think about; They say the bread, the very bread they eat, Is made of sorry chaff.

First Citizen

Ay! so it is, Nothing but chaff.

Duke

And very good food too, I give it to my horses.

Duchess [restraining herself]

They say the water, Set in the public cisterns for their use, [Has, through the breaking of the aqueduct,] To stagnant pools and muddy puddles turned.

Duke

They should drink wine; water is quite unwholesome.

Second Citizen

Alack, your Grace, the taxes which the customs Take at the city gate are grown so high We cannot buy wine.

Duke

Then you should bless the taxes

Which make you temperate.

Duchess

Think, while we sit In gorgeous pomp and state, gaunt poverty Creeps through their sunless lanes, and with sharp knives Cuts the warm throats of children stealthily And no word said.

Third Citizen

Ay! marry, that is true, My little son died yesternight from hunger; He was but six years old; I am so poor, I cannot bury him.

Duke

If you are poor, Are you not blessed in that? Why, poverty Is one of the Christian virtues,

[Turns to the Cardinal.]

Is it not? I know, Lord Cardinal, you have great revenues, Rich abbey-lands, and tithes, and large estates For preaching voluntary poverty.

Duchess

Nay but, my lord the Duke, be generous; While we sit here within a noble house [With shaded porticoes against the sun, And walls and roofs to keep the winter out], There are many citizens of Padua Who in vile tenements live so full of holes, That the chill rain, the snow, and the rude blast, Are tenants also with them; others sleep Under the arches of the public bridges All through the autumn nights, till the wet mist Stiffens their limbs, and fevers come, and so—

Duke

And so they go to Abraham’s bosom, Madam. They should thank me for sending them to Heaven, If they are wretched here. [To the Cardinal.] Is it not said Somewhere in Holy Writ, that every man Should be contented with that state of life God calls him to? Why should I change their state, Or meddle with an all-wise

providence, Which has apportioned that some men should starve, And others surfeit? I did not make the world.

First Citizen

He hath a hard heart.

Second Citizen

Nay, be silent, neighbour; I think the Cardinal will speak for us.

Cardinal

True, it is Christian to bear misery, Yet it is Christian also to be kind, And there seem many evils in this town, Which in your wisdom might your Grace reform.

First Citizen

What is that word reform? What does it mean?

Second Citizen

Marry, it means leaving things as they are; I like it not.

Duke

Reform Lord Cardinal, did you say reform? There is a man in Germany called Luther, Who would reform the Holy Catholic Church. Have you not made him heretic, and uttered Anathema, maranatha, against him?

Cardinal [rising from his seat]

He would have led the sheep out of the fold, We do but ask of you to feed the sheep.

Duke

When I have shorn their fleeces I may feed them. As for these rebels— [Duchess entreats him.]

First Citizen

That is a kind word, He means to give us something.

Second Citizen

Is that so?

Duke

These ragged knaves who come before us here, With mouths chock-full of treason.

Third Citizen

Good my Lord, Fill up our mouths with bread; we'll hold our tongues.

Duke

Ye shall hold your tongues, whether you starve or not. My lords, this age is so familiar grown, That the low peasant hardly doffs his hat, Unless you beat him; and the raw mechanic Elbows the noble in the public streets.

[To the Citizens.]

Still as our gentle Duchess has so prayed us, And to refuse so beautiful a beggar Were to lack both courtesy and love, Touching your grievances, I promise this—

First Citizen

Marry, he will lighten the taxes!

Second Citizen

Or a dole of bread, think you, for each man?

Duke

That, on next Sunday, the Lord Cardinal Shall, after Holy Mass, preach you a sermon Upon the Beauty of Obedience.

[Citizens murmur.]

First Citizen

I' faith, that will not fill our stomachs!

Second Citizen

A sermon is but a sorry sauce, when You have nothing to eat with it.

Duchess

Poor people, You see I have no power with the Duke, But if you go into the court without, My almoner shall from my private purse, Divide a hundred ducats ’mongst you all.

First Citizen

God save the Duchess, say I.

Second Citizen

God save her.

Duchess

And every Monday morn shall bread be set For those who lack it.

[Citizens applaud and go out.]

First Citizen [going out]

Why, God save the Duchess again!

Duke [calling him back]

Come hither, fellow! what is your name?

First Citizen

Dominick, sir.

Duke

A good name! Why were you called Dominick?

First Citizen [scratching his head]

Marry, because I was born on St. George’s day.

Duke

A good reason! here is a ducat for you! Will you not cry for me God save the Duke?

First Citizen [feebly]

God save the Duke.

Duke

Nay! louder, fellow, louder.

First Citizen [a little louder]

God save the Duke!

Duke

More lustily, fellow, put more heart in it! Here is another ducat for you.

First Citizen [enthusiastically]

God save the Duke!

Duke [mockingly]

Why, gentlemen, this simple fellow's love Touches me much. [To the Citizen, harshly.] Go! [Exit Citizen, bowing.] This is the way, my lords, You can buy popularity nowadays. Oh, we are nothing if not democratic!

[To the Duchess.]

Well, Madam, You spread rebellion 'midst our citizens.

Duchess

My Lord, the poor have rights you cannot touch, The right to pity, and the right to mercy.

Duke

So, so, you argue with me? This is she, The gentle Duchess for whose hand I yielded Three of the fairest towns in Italy, Pisa, and Genoa, and Orvieto.

Duchess

Promised, my Lord, not yielded: in that matter Brake you your word as ever.

Duke

You wrong us, Madam, There were state reasons.

Duchess

What state reasons are there For breaking holy promises to a state?

Duke

There are wild boars at Pisa in a forest Close to the city: when I promised Pisa Unto your noble and most trusting father, I had forgotten there was hunting there. At Genoa they say, Indeed I doubt them not, that the red mullet Runs larger in the harbour of that town Than anywhere in Italy.

[Turning to one of the Court.]

You, my lord, Whose gluttonous appetite is your only god, Could satisfy our Duchess on that point.

Duchess

And Orvieto?

Duke [yawning]

I cannot now recall Why I did not surrender Orvieto According to the word of my contract. Maybe it was because I did not choose.

[Goes over to the Duchess.]

Why look you, Madam, you are here alone; ’Tis many a dusty league to your grey France, And even there your father barely keeps A hundred ragged squires for his Court. What hope have you, I say? Which of these lords And noble gentlemen of Padua Stands by your side.

Duchess

There is not one.

[Guido starts, but restrains himself.]

Duke

Nor shall be, While I am Duke in Padua: listen, Madam, Being mine own, you shall do as I will, And if it be my will you keep the house, Why then, this palace shall

your prison be; And if it be my will you walk abroad, Why, you shall take the air from morn to night.

Duchess

Sir, by what right—?

Duke

Madam, my second Duchess Asked the same question once: her monument Lies in the chapel of Bartholomew, Wrought in red marble; very beautiful. Guido, your arm. Come, gentlemen, let us go And spur our falcons for the mid-day chase. Bethink you, Madam, you are here alone.

[Exit the Duke leaning on Guido, with his Court.]

Duchess [looking after them]

The Duke said rightly that I was alone; Deserted, and dishonoured, and defamed, Stood ever woman so alone indeed? Men when they woo us call us pretty children, Tell us we have not wit to make our lives, And so they mar them for us. Did I say woo? We are their chattels, and their common slaves, Less dear than the poor hound that licks their hand, Less fondled than the hawk upon their wrist. Woo, did I say? bought rather, sold and bartered, Our very bodies being merchandise. I know it is the general lot of women, Each miserably mated to some man Wrecks her own life upon his selfishness: That it is general makes it not less bitter. I think I never heard a woman laugh, Laugh for pure merriment, except one woman, That was at night time, in the public streets. Poor soul, she walked with painted lips, and wore The mask of pleasure: I would not laugh like her; No, death were better.

[Enter Guido behind unobserved; the Duchess flings herself down before a picture of the Madonna.]

O Mary mother, with your sweet pale face Bending between the little angel heads That hover round you, have you no help for me? Mother of God, have you no help

for me?

Guido

I can endure no longer. This is my love, and I will speak to her. Lady, am I a stranger to your prayers?

Duchess [rising]

None but the wretched needs my prayers, my lord.

Guido

Then must I need them, lady.

Duchess

How is that? Does not the Duke show thee sufficient honour?

Guido

Your Grace, I lack no favours from the Duke, Whom my soul loathes as I loathe wickedness, But come to proffer on my bended knees, My loyal service to thee unto death.

Duchess

Alas! I am so fallen in estate I can but give thee a poor meed of thanks.

Guido [seizing her hand]

Hast thou no love to give me?

[The Duchess starts, and Guido falls at her feet.]

O dear saint, If I have been too daring, pardon me! Thy beauty sets my boyish blood aflame, And, when my reverent lips touch thy white hand, Each little nerve with such wild passion thrills That there is nothing which I would not do To gain thy love. [Leaps up.] Bid me reach forth and pluck Perilous honour from the lion’s jaws, And I will wrestle with the Nemean beast On the bare desert! Fling to the cave of War A gaud, a ribbon, a dead flower, something That once has touched thee, and I’ll

bring it back Though all the hosts of Christendom were there, Inviolate again! ay, more than this, Set me to scale the pallid white-faced cliffs Of mighty England, and from that arrogant shield Will I raze out the lilies of your France Which England, that sea-lion of the sea, Hath taken from her! O dear Beatrice, Drive me not from thy presence! without thee The heavy minutes crawl with feet of lead, But, while I look upon thy loveliness, The hours fly like winged Mercuries And leave existence golden.

Duchess

I did not think I should be ever loved: do you indeed Love me so much as now you say you do?

Guido

Ask of the sea-bird if it loves the sea, Ask of the roses if they love the rain, Ask of the little lark, that will not sing Till day break, if it loves to see the day:— And yet, these are but empty images, Mere shadows of my love, which is a fire So great that all the waters of the main Can not avail to quench it. Will you not speak?

Duchess

I hardly know what I should say to you.

Guido

Will you not say you love me?

Duchess

Is that my lesson? Must I say all at once? 'Twere a good lesson If I did love you, sir; but, if I do not, What shall I say then?

Guido

If you do not love me, Say, none the less, you do, for on your tongue Falsehood for very shame would turn to truth.

Duchess

What if I do not speak at all? They say Lovers are happiest when they are in doubt

Guido

Nay, doubt would kill me, and if I must die, Why, let me die for joy and not for doubt. Oh, tell me may I stay, or must I go?

Duchess

I would not have you either stay or go; For if you stay you steal my love from me, And if you go you take my love away. Guido, though all the morning stars could sing They could not tell the measure of my love. I love you, Guido.

Guido [stretching out his hands]

Oh, do not cease at all; I thought the nightingale sang but at night; Or if thou needst must cease, then let my lips Touch the sweet lips that can such music make.

Duchess

To touch my lips is not to touch my heart.

Guido

Do you close that against me?

Duchess

Alas! my lord, I have it not: the first day that I saw you I let you take my heart away from me; Unwilling thief, that without meaning it Did break into my fenced treasury And filch my jewel from it! O strange theft, Which made you richer though you knew it not, And left me poorer, and yet glad of it!

Guido [clasping her in his arms]

O love, love, love! Nay, sweet, lift up your head, Let me unlock those little scarlet doors That shut in music, let me dive for coral In your red lips, and I'll bear back a prize Richer than all the gold the Gryphon guards In rude Armenia.

Duchess

You are my lord, And what I have is yours, and what I have not Your fancy lends me, like a prodigal Spending its wealth on what is nothing worth.

[Kisses him.]

Guido

Methinks I am bold to look upon you thus: The gentle violet hides beneath its leaf And is afraid to look at the great sun For fear of too much splendour, but my eyes, O daring eyes! are grown so venturous That like fixed stars they stand, gazing at you, And surfeit sense with beauty.

Duchess

Dear love, I would You could look upon me ever, for your eyes Are polished mirrors, and when I peer Into those mirrors I can see myself, And so I know my image lives in you.

Guido [taking her in his arms]

Stand still, thou hurrying orb in the high heavens, And make this hour immortal! [A pause.]

Duchess

Sit down here, A little lower than me: yes, just so, sweet, That I may run my fingers through your hair, And see your face turn upwards like a flower To meet my kiss. Have you not sometimes noted, When we unlock some long-disuséd room With heavy dust and soiling mildew filled, Where never foot of man has come for years, And from the windows take the rusty bar, And fling the broken shutters to the air, And let the bright sun in, how the good sun Turns every grimy particle of dust Into a little thing of dancing gold? Guido, my heart is that long-empty room, But you have let love in, and with its gold Gilded all life. Do you not think that love Fills up the sum of life?

Guido

Ay! without love Life is no better than the unhewn stone Which in the quarry lies, before the sculptor Has set the God within it. Without love Life is as silent as the common reeds That through the marshes or by rivers grow, And have no music in them.

Duchess

Yet out of these The singer, who is Love, will make a pipe And from them he draws music; so I think Love will bring music out of any life. Is that not true?

Guido

Sweet, women make it true. There are men who paint pictures, and carve statues, Paul of Verona and the dyer's son, Or their great rival, who, by the sea at Venice, Has set God's little maid upon the stair, White as her own white lily, and as tall, Or Raphael, whose Madonnas are divine Because they are mothers merely; yet I think Women are the best artists of the world, For they can take the common lives of men Soiled with the money-getting of our age, And with love make them beautiful.

Duchess

Ah, dear, I wish that you and I were very poor; The poor, who love each other, are so rich.

Guido

Tell me again you love me, Beatrice.

Duchess [fingering his collar]

How well this collar lies about your throat.

[Lord Moranzone looks through the door from the corridor outside.]

Guido

Nay, tell me that you love me.

Duchess

I remember, That when I was a child in my dear France, Being at Court at Fontainebleau, the King Wore such a collar.

Guido

Will you not say you love me?

Duchess [smiling]

He was a very royal man, King Francis, Yet he was not royal as you are. Why need I tell you, Guido, that I love you?

[Takes his head in her hands and turns his face up to her.]

Do you not know that I am yours for ever, Body and soul?

[Kisses him, and then suddenly catches sight of Moranzone and leaps up.]

Oh, what is that? [Moranzone disappears.]

Guido

What, love?

Duchess

Methought I saw a face with eyes of flame Look at us through the doorway.

Guido

Nay, ’twas nothing: The passing shadow of the man on guard.

[The Duchess still stands looking at the window.]

’Twas nothing, sweet.

Duchess

Ay! what can harm us now, Who are in Love’s hand? I do not think I’d care Though the vile world should with its lackey Slander Trample and tread upon my life; why should I? They say the common field-flowers of the field Have sweeter scent when they are trodden on Than when they bloom alone, and that some herbs Which have no perfume, on being bruiséd die With all Arabia round them; so it is With the

young lives this dull world seeks to crush, It does but bring the sweetness out of them, And makes them lovelier often. And besides, While we have love we have the best of life: Is it not so?

Guido

Dear, shall we play or sing? I think that I could sing now.

Duchess

Do not speak, For there are times when all existences Seem narrowed to one single ecstasy, And Passion sets a seal upon the lips.

Guido

Oh, with mine own lips let me break that seal! You love me, Beatrice?

Duchess

Ay! is it not strange I should so love mine enemy?

Guido

Who is he?

Duchess

Why, you: that with your shaft did pierce my heart! Poor heart, that lived its little lonely life Until it met your arrow.

Guido

Ah, dear love, I am so wounded by that bolt myself That with untended wounds I lie a-dying, Unless you cure me, dear Physician.

Duchess

I would not have you cured; for I am sick With the same malady.

Guido

Oh, how I love you! See, I must steal the cuckoo’s voice, and tell The one tale over.

Duchess

Tell no other tale! For, if that is the little cuckoo’s song, The nightingale is hoarse, and the loud lark Has lost its music.

Guido

Kiss me, Beatrice!

[She takes his face in her hands and bends down and kisses him; a loud knocking then comes at the door, and Guido leaps up; enter a Servant.]

Servant

A package for you, sir.

Guido [carelessly]

Ah! give it to me.

[Servant hands package wrapped in vermilion silk, and exit; as Guido is about to open it the Duchess comes up behind, and in sport takes it from him.]

Duchess [laughing]

Now I will wager it is from some girl Who would have you wear her favour; I am so jealous I will not give up the least part in you, But like a miser keep you to myself, And spoil you perhaps in keeping.

Guido

It is nothing.

Duchess

Nay, it is from some girl.

Guido

You know ’tis not.

Duchess [turns her back and opens it]

Now, traitor, tell me what does this sign mean, A dagger with two leopards wrought in steel?

Guido [taking it from her]

O God!

Duchess

I'll from the window look, and try If I can't see the porter's livery Who left it at the gate! I will not rest Till I have learned your secret.

[Runs laughing into the corridor.]

Guido

Oh, horrible! Had I so soon forgot my father's death, Did I so soon let love into my heart, And must I banish love, and let in murder That beats and clamours at the outer gate? Ay, that I must! Have I not sworn an oath? Yet not to-night; nay, it must be to-night. Farewell then all the joy and light of life, All dear recorded memories, farewell, Farewell all love! Could I with bloody hands Fondle and paddle with her innocent hands? Could I with lips fresh from this butchery Play with her lips? Could I with murderous eyes Look in those violet eyes, whose purity Would strike men blind, and make each eyeball reel In night perpetual? No, murder has set A barrier between us far too high For us to kiss across it.

Duchess

Guido!

Guido

Beatrice, You must forget that name, and banish me Out of your life for ever.

Duchess [going towards him]

O dear love!

Guido [stepping back]

There lies a barrier between us two We dare not pass.

Duchess

I dare do anything So that you are beside me.

Guido

Ah! There it is, I cannot be beside you, cannot breathe The air you breathe; I cannot any more Stand face to face with beauty, which unnerves My shaking heart, and makes my desperate hand Fail of its purpose. Let me go hence, I pray; Forget you ever looked upon me.

Duchess

What! With your hot kisses fresh upon my lips Forget the vows of love you made to me?

Guido

I take them back.

Duchess

Alas, you cannot, Guido, For they are part of nature now; the air Is tremulous with their music, and outside The little birds sing sweeter for those vows.

Guido

There lies a barrier between us now, Which then I knew not, or I had forgot.

Duchess

There is no barrier, Guido; why, I will go In poor attire, and will follow you Over the world.

Guido [wildly]

The world’s not wide enough To hold us two! Farewell, farewell for ever.

Duchess [calm, and controlling her passion]

Why did you come into my life at all, then, Or in the desolate garden of my heart Sow that white flower of love—?

Guido

O Beatrice!

Duchess

Which now you would dig up, uproot, tear out, Though each small fibre doth so hold my heart That if you break one, my heart breaks with it? Why did you come into my life? Why open The secret wells of love I had sealed up? Why did you open them—?

Guido

O God!

Duchess [clenching her hand]

And let The floodgates of my passion swell and burst Till, like the wave when rivers overflow That sweeps the forest and the farm away, Love in the splendid avalanche of its might Swept my life with it? Must I drop by drop Gather these waters back and seal them up? Alas! Each drop will be a tear, and so Will with its saltness make life very bitter.

Guido

I pray you speak no more, for I must go Forth from your life and love, and make a way On which you cannot follow.

Duchess

I have heard That sailors dying of thirst upon a raft, Poor castaways upon a lonely sea, Dream of green fields and pleasant water-courses, And then wake up with red thirst in their throats, And die more miserably because sleep Has cheated them: so they die cursing sleep For having sent them dreams: I will not curse you Though I am cast away upon the sea Which men call Desolation.

Guido

O God, God!

Duchess

But you will stay: listen, I love you, Guido.

[She waits a little.]

Is echo dead, that when I say I love you There is no answer?

Guido

Everything is dead, Save one thing only, which shall die to-night!

Duchess

If you are going, touch me not, but go.

[Exit Guido.]

Barrier! Barrier! Why did he say there was a barrier? There is no barrier between us two. He lied to me, and shall I for that reason Loathe what I love, and what I worshipped, hate? I think we women do not love like that. For if I cut his image from my heart, My heart would, like a bleeding pilgrim, follow That image through the world, and call it back With little cries of love.

[Enter Duke equipped for the chase, with falconers and hounds.]

Duke

Madam, you keep us waiting; You keep my dogs waiting.

Duchess

I will not ride to-day.

Duke

How now, what’s this?

Duchess

My Lord, I cannot go.

Duke

What, pale face, do you dare to stand against me? Why, I could set you on a sorry jade And lead you through the town, till the low rabble You feed toss up their hats

and mock at you.

Duchess

Have you no word of kindness ever for me?

Duke

I hold you in the hollow of my hand And have no need on you to waste kind words.

Duchess

Well, I will go.

Duke [slapping his boot with his whip]

No, I have changed my mind, You will stay here, and like a faithful wife Watch from the window for our coming back. Were it not dreadful if some accident By chance should happen to your loving Lord? Come, gentlemen, my hounds begin to chafe, And I chafe too, having a patient wife. Where is young Guido?

Maffio

My liege, I have not seen him For a full hour past.

Duke

It matters not, I dare say I shall see him soon enough. Well, Madam, you will sit at home and spin. I do protest, sirs, the domestic virtues Are often very beautiful in others.

[Exit Duke with his Court.]

Duchess

The stars have fought against me, that is all, And thus to-night when my Lord lieth asleep, Will I fall upon my dagger, and so cease. My heart is such a stone nothing can reach it Except the dagger’s edge: let it go there, To find what name it carries: ay! to-night Death will divorce the Duke; and yet to-night He may die also, he is very old. Why should he not die? Yesterday his hand Shook with a palsy: men have

died from palsy, And why not he? Are there not fevers also, Agues and chills, and other maladies Most incident to old age? No, no, he will not die, he is too sinful; Honest men die before their proper time. Good men will die: men by whose side the Duke In all the sick pollution of his life Seems like a leper: women and children die, But the Duke will not die, he is too sinful. Oh, can it be There is some immortality in sin, Which virtue has not? And does the wicked man Draw life from what to other men were death, Like poisonous plants that on corruption live? No, no, I think God would not suffer that: Yet the Duke will not die: he is too sinful. But I will die alone, and on this night Grim Death shall be my bridegroom, and the tomb My secret house of pleasure: well, what of that? The world's a graveyard, and we each, like coffins, Within us bear a skeleton.

[Enter Lord Moranzone all in black; he passes across the back of the stage looking anxiously about.]

Moranzone

Where is Guido? I cannot find him anywhere.

Duchess [catches sight of him]

O God! 'Twas thou who took my love away from me.

Moranzone [with a look of joy]

What, has he left you?

Duchess

Nay, you know he has. Oh, give him back to me, give him back, I say, Or I will tear your body limb from limb, And to the common gibbet nail your head Until the carrion crows have stripped it bare. Better you had crossed a hungry lioness Before you came between me and my love.

[With more pathos.]

Nay, give him back, you know not how I love him. Here by this chair he knelt a half

hour since; ’Twas there he stood, and there he looked at me; This is the hand he kissed, and these the ears Into whose open portals he did pour A tale of love so musical that all The birds stopped singing! Oh, give him back to me.

Moranzone

He does not love you, Madam.

Duchess

May the plague Wither the tongue that says so! Give him back.

Moranzone

Madam, I tell you you will never see him, Neither to-night, nor any other night.

Duchess

What is your name?

Moranzone

My name? Revenge!

[Exit.]

Duchess

Revenge! I think I never harmed a little child. What should Revenge do coming to my door? It matters not, for Death is there already, Waiting with his dim torch to light my way. ’Tis true men hate thee, Death, and yet I think Thou wilt be kinder to me than my lover, And so dispatch the messengers at once, Harry the lazy steeds of lingering day, And let the night, thy sister, come instead, And drape the world in mourning; let the owl, Who is thy minister, scream from his tower And wake the toad with hooting, and the bat, That is the slave of dim Persephone, Wheel through the sombre air on wandering wing! Tear up the shrieking mandrakes from the earth And bid them make us music, and tell the mole To dig deep down thy cold and narrow bed, For I shall lie within thine arms to-night.

END OF ACT II.

ACT III

SCENE

A large corridor in the Ducal Palace: a window (L.C.) looks out on a view of Padua by moonlight: a staircase (R.C.) leads up to a door with a portière of crimson velvet, with the Duke’s arms embroidered in gold on it: on the lowest step of the staircase a figure draped in black is sitting: the hall is lit by an iron cresset filled with burning tow: thunder and lightning outside: the time is night.

[Enter Guido through the window.]

Guido

The wind is rising: how my ladder shook! I thought that every gust would break the cords!

[Looks out at the city.]

Christ! What a night: Great thunder in the heavens, and wild lightnings Striking from pinnacle to pinnacle Across the city, till the dim houses seem To shudder and to shake as each new glare Dashes adown the street.

[Passes across the stage to foot of staircase.]

Ah! who art thou That sittest on the stair, like unto Death Waiting a guilty soul? [A pause.] Canst thou not speak? Or has this storm laid palsy on thy tongue, And chilled thy utterance?

[The figure rises and takes off his mask.]

Moranzone

Guido Ferranti, Thy murdered father laughs for joy to-night.

Guido [confusedly]

What, art thou here?

Moranzone

Ay, waiting for your coming.

Guido [looking away from him]

I did not think to see you, but am glad, That you may know the thing I mean to do.

Moranzone

First, I would have you know my well-laid plans; Listen: I have set horses at the gate Which leads to Parma: when you have done your business We will ride hence, and by to-morrow night—

Guido

It cannot be.

Moranzone

Nay, but it shall.

Guido

Listen, Lord Moranzone, I am resolved not to kill this man.

Moranzone

Surely my ears are traitors, speak again: It cannot be but age has dulled my powers, I am an old man now: what did you say? You said that with that dagger in your belt You would avenge your father's bloody murder; Did you not say that?

Guido

No, my lord, I said I was resolved not to kill the Duke.

Moranzone

You said not that; it is my senses mock me; Or else this midnight air o'ercharged with storm Alters your message in the giving it.

Guido

Nay, you heard rightly; I'll not kill this man.

Moranzone

What of thine oath, thou traitor, what of thine oath?

Guido

I am resolved not to keep that oath.

Moranzone

What of thy murdered father?

Guido

Dost thou think My father would be glad to see me coming, This old man’s blood still hot upon mine hands?

Moranzone

Ay! he would laugh for joy.

Guido

I do not think so, There is better knowledge in the other world; Vengeance is God’s, let God himself revenge.

Moranzone

Thou art God’s minister of vengeance.

Guido

No! God hath no minister but his own hand. I will not kill this man.

Moranzone

Why are you here, If not to kill him, then?

Guido

Lord Moranzone, I purpose to ascend to the Duke’s chamber, And as he lies asleep lay on his breast The dagger and this writing; when he awakes Then he will know who held him in his power And slew him not: this is the noblest vengeance Which I can take.

Moranzone

You will not slay him?

Guido

No.

Moranzone

Ignoble son of a noble father, Who sufferest this man who sold that father To live an hour.

Guido

’Twas thou that hindered me; I would have killed him in the open square, The day I saw him first.

Moranzone

It was not yet time; Now it is time, and, like some green-faced girl, Thou pratest of forgiveness.

Guido

No! revenge: The right revenge my father’s son should take.

Moranzone

You are a coward, Take out the knife, get to the Duke’s chamber, And bring me back his heart upon the blade. When he is dead, then you can talk to me Of noble vengeances.

Guido

Upon thine honour, And by the love thou bearest my father’s name, Dost thou think my father, that great gentleman, That generous soldier, that most chivalrous lord, Would have crept at night-time, like a common thief, And stabbed an old man sleeping in his bed, However he had wronged him: tell me that.

Moranzone

[after some hesitation]

You have sworn an oath, see that you keep that oath. Boy, do you think I do not know your secret, Your traffic with the Duchess?

Guido

Silence, liar! The very moon in heaven is not more chaste. Nor the white stars so pure.

Moranzone

And yet, you love her; Weak fool, to let love in upon your life, Save as a plaything.

Guido

You do well to talk: Within your veins, old man, the pulse of youth Throbs with no ardour. Your eyes full of rheum Have against Beauty closed their filmy doors, And your clogged ears, losing their natural sense, Have shut you from the music of the world. You talk of love! You know not what it is.

Moranzone

Oh, in my time, boy, have I walked i' the moon, Swore I would live on kisses and on blisses, Swore I would die for love, and did not die, Wrote love bad verses; ay, and sung them badly, Like all true lovers: Oh, I have done the tricks! I know the partings and the chamberings; We are all animals at best, and love Is merely passion with a holy name.

Guido

Now then I know you have not loved at all. Love is the sacrament of life; it sets Virtue where virtue was not; cleanses men Of all the vile pollutions of this world; It is the fire which purges gold from dross, It is the fan which winnows wheat from chaff, It is the spring which in some wintry soil Makes innocence to blossom like a rose. The days are over when God walked with men, But Love, which is his image, holds his place. When a man loves a woman, then he knows God's secret, and the secret of the world. There is no house so lowly or so mean, Which, if their hearts be

pure who live in it, Love will not enter; but if bloody murder Knock at the Palace gate and is let in, Love like a wounded thing creeps out and dies. This is the punishment God sets on sin. The wicked cannot love.

[A groan comes from the Duke’s chamber.]

Ah! What is that? Do you not hear? ’Twas nothing. So I think That it is woman’s mission by their love To save the souls of men: and loving her, My Lady, my white Beatrice, I begin To see a nobler and a holier vengeance In letting this man live, than doth reside In bloody deeds o’ night, stabs in the dark, And young hands clutching at a palsied throat. It was, I think, for love’s sake that Lord Christ, Who was indeed himself incarnate Love, Bade every man forgive his enemy.

Moranzone [sneeringly]

That was in Palestine, not Padua; And said for saints: I have to do with men.

Guido

It was for all time said.

Moranzone

And your white Duchess, What will she do to thank you?

Guido

Alas, I will not see her face again. ’Tis but twelve hours since I parted from her, So suddenly, and with such violent passion, That she has shut her heart against me now: No, I will never see her.

Moranzone

What will you do?

Guido

After that I have laid the dagger there, Get hence to-night from Padua.

Moranzone

And then?

Guido

I will take service with the Doge at Venice, And bid him pack me straightway to the wars, And there I will, being now sick of life, Throw that poor life against some desperate spear.

[A groan from the Duke’s chamber again.]

Did you not hear a voice?

Moranzone

I always hear, From the dim confines of some sepulchre, A voice that cries for vengeance. We waste time, It will be morning soon; are you resolved You will not kill the Duke?

Guido

I am resolved.

Moranzone

O wretched father, lying unavenged.

Guido

More wretched, were thy son a murderer.

Moranzone

Why, what is life?

Guido

I do not know, my lord, I did not give it, and I dare not take it.

Moranzone

I do not thank God often; but I think I thank him now that I have got no son! And you, what bastard blood flows in your veins That when you have your enemy in your grasp You let him go! I would that I had left you With the dull hinds that reared

you.

Guido

Better perhaps That you had done so! May be better still I'd not been born to this distressful world.

Moranzone

Farewell!

Guido

Farewell! Some day, Lord Moranzone, You will understand my vengeance.

Moranzone

Never, boy.

[Gets out of window and exit by rope ladder.]

Guido

Father, I think thou knowest my resolve, And with this nobler vengeance art content. Father, I think in letting this man live That I am doing what thou wouldst have done. Father, I know not if a human voice Can pierce the iron gateway of the dead, Or if the dead are set in ignorance Of what we do, or do not, for their sakes. And yet I feel a presence in the air, There is a shadow standing at my side, And ghostly kisses seem to touch my lips, And leave them holier. [Kneels down.] O father, if 'tis thou, Canst thou not burst through the decrees of death, And if corporeal semblance show thyself, That I may touch thy hand! No, there is nothing. [Rises.] 'Tis the night that cheats us with its phantoms, And, like a puppet-master, makes us think That things are real which are not. It grows late. Now must I to my business.

[Pulls out a letter from his doublet and reads it.]

When he wakes, And sees this letter, and the dagger with it, Will he not have some loathing for his life, Repent, perchance, and lead a better life, Or will he mock because a young man spared His natural enemy? I do not care. Father, it is thy

bidding that I do, Thy bidding, and the bidding of my love Which teaches me to know thee as thou art.

[Ascends staircase stealthily, and just as he reaches out his hand to draw back the curtain the Duchess appears all in white. Guido starts back.]

Duchess

Guido! what do you here so late?

Guido

O white and spotless angel of my life, Sure thou hast come from Heaven with a message That mercy is more noble than revenge?

Duchess

There is no barrier between us now.

Guido

None, love, nor shall be.

Duchess

I have seen to that.

Guido

Tarry here for me.

Duchess

No, you are not going? You will not leave me as you did before?

Guido

I will return within a moment’s space, But first I must repair to the Duke’s chamber, And leave this letter and this dagger there, That when he wakes—

Duchess

When who wakes?

Guido

Why, the Duke.

Duchess

He will not wake again.

Guido

What, is he dead?

Duchess

Ay! he is dead.

Guido

O God! how wonderful Are all thy secret ways! Who would have said That on this very night, when I had yielded Into thy hands the vengeance that is thine, Thou with thy finger wouldst have touched the man, And bade him come before thy judgment seat.

Duchess

I have just killed him.

Guido [in horror]

Oh!

Duchess

He was asleep; Come closer, love, and I will tell you all. I had resolved to kill myself to-night. About an hour ago I waked from sleep, And took my dagger from beneath my pillow, Where I had hidden it to serve my need, And drew it from the sheath, and felt the edge, And thought of you, and how I loved you, Guido, And turned to fall upon it, when I marked The old man sleeping, full of years and sin; There lay he muttering curses in his sleep, And as I looked upon his evil face Suddenly like a flame there flashed across me, There is the barrier which Guido spoke of: You said there lay a barrier between us, What barrier but he?— I hardly know What happened, but a steaming mist of blood Rose up between us two.

Guido

Oh, horrible!

Duchess

And then he groaned, And then he groaned no more! I only heard The dripping of the blood upon the floor.

Guido

Enough, enough.

Duchess

Will you not kiss me now? Do you remember saying that women’s love Turns men to angels? well, the love of man Turns women into martyrs; for its sake We do or suffer anything.

Guido

O God!

Duchess

Will you not speak?

Guido

I cannot speak at all.

Duchess

Let as not talk of this! Let us go hence: Is not the barrier broken down between us? What would you more? Come, it is almost morning.

[Puts her hand on Guido’s.]

Guido [breaking from her]

O damned saint! O angel fresh from Hell! What bloody devil tempted thee to this! That thou hast killed thy husband, that is nothing— Hell was already gaping for his soul— But thou hast murdered Love, and in its place Hast set a horrible and

bloodstained thing, Whose very breath breeds pestilence and plague, And strangles Love.

Duchess [in amazed wonder]

I did it all for you. I would not have you do it, had you willed it, For I would keep you without blot or stain, A thing unblemished, unassailed, untarnished. Men do not know what women do for love. Have I not wrecked my soul for your dear sake, Here and hereafter?

Guido

No, do not touch me, Between us lies a thin red stream of blood; I dare not look across it: when you stabbed him You stabbed Love with a sharp knife to the heart. We cannot meet again.

Duchess [wringing her hands]

For you! For you! I did it all for you: have you forgotten? You said there was a barrier between us; That barrier lies now i' the upper chamber Upset, overthrown, beaten, and battered down, And will not part us ever.

Guido

No, you mistook: Sin was the barrier, you have raised it up; Crime was the barrier, you have set it there. The barrier was murder, and your hand Has builded it so high it shuts out heaven, It shuts out God.

Duchess

I did it all for you; You dare not leave me now: nay, Guido, listen. Get horses ready, we will fly to-night. The past is a bad dream, we will forget it: Before us lies the future: shall we not have Sweet days of love beneath our vines and laugh?— No, no, we will not laugh, but, when we weep, Well, we will weep together; I will serve you; I will be very meek and very gentle: You do not know me.

Guido

Nay, I know you now; Get hence, I say, out of my sight.

Duchess [pacing up and down]

O God, How I have loved this man!

Guido

You never loved me. Had it been so, Love would have stayed your hand. How could we sit together at Love's table? You have poured poison in the sacred wine, And Murder dips his fingers in the sop.

Duchess [throws herself on her knees]

Then slay me now! I have spilt blood to-night, You shall spill more, so we go hand in hand To heaven or to hell. Draw your sword, Guido. Quick, let your soul go chambering in my heart, It will but find its master's image there. Nay, if you will not slay me with your sword, Bid me to fall upon this reeking knife, And I will do it.

Guido [wresting knife from her]

Give it to me, I say. O God, your very hands are wet with blood! This place is Hell, I cannot tarry here. I pray you let me see your face no more.

Duchess

Better for me I had not seen your face.

[Guido recoils: she seizes his hands as she kneels.]

Nay, Guido, listen for a while: Until you came to Padua I lived Wretched indeed, but with no murderous thought, Very submissive to a cruel Lord, Very obedient to unjust commands, As pure I think as any gentle girl Who now would turn in horror from my hands—

[Stands up.]

You came: ah! Guido, the first kindly words I ever heard since I had come from France Were from your lips: well, well, that is no matter. You came, and in the passion of your eyes I read love's meaning; everything you said Touched my dumb

soul to music, so I loved you. And yet I did not tell you of my love. ’Twas you who sought me out, knelt at my feet As I kneel now at yours, and with sweet vows,

[Kneels.]

Whose music seems to linger in my ears, Swore that you loved me, and I trusted you. I think there are many women in the world Who would have tempted you to kill the man. I did not. Yet I know that had I done so, I had not been thus humbled in the dust,

[Stands up.]

But you had loved me very faithfully.

[After a pause approaches him timidly.]

I do not think you understand me, Guido: It was for your sake that I wrought this deed Whose horror now chills my young blood to ice, For your sake only. [Stretching out her arm.] Will you not speak to me? Love me a little: in my girlish life I have been starved for love, and kindliness Has passed me by.

Guido

I dare not look at you: You come to me with too pronounced a favour; Get to your tirewomen.

Duchess

Ay, there it is! There speaks the man! yet had you come to me With any heavy sin upon your soul, Some murder done for hire, not for love, Why, I had sat and watched at your bedside All through the night-time, lest Remorse might come And pour his poisons in your ear, and so Keep you from sleeping! Sure it is the guilty, Who, being very wretched, need love most.

Guido

There is no love where there is any guilt.

Duchess

No love where there is any guilt! O God, How differently do we love from men! There is many a woman here in Padua, Some workman’s wife, or ruder artisan’s, Whose husband spends the wages of the week In a coarse revel, or a tavern brawl, And reeling home late on the Saturday night, Finds his wife sitting by a fireless hearth, Trying to hush the child who cries for hunger, And then sets to and beats his wife because The child is hungry, and the fire black. Yet the wife loves him! and will rise next day With some red bruise across a careworn face, And sweep the house, and do the common service, And try and smile, and only be too glad If he does not beat her a second time Before her child!—that is how women love.

[A pause: Guido says nothing.]

I think you will not drive me from your side. Where have I got to go if you reject me?— You for whose sake this hand has murdered life, You for whose sake my soul has wrecked itself Beyond all hope of pardon.

Guido

Get thee gone: The dead man is a ghost, and our love too, Flits like a ghost about its desolate tomb, And wanders through this charnel house, and weeps That when you slew your lord you slew it also. Do you not see?

Duchess

I see when men love women They give them but a little of their lives, But women when they love give everything; I see that, Guido, now.

Guido

Away, away, And come not back till you have waked your dead.

Duchess

I would to God that I could wake the dead, Put vision in the glazéd eves, and give The tongue its natural utterance, and bid The heart to beat again: that cannot be: For what is done, is done: and what is dead Is dead for ever: the fire cannot warm him:

The winter cannot hurt him with its snows; Something has gone from him; if you call him now, He will not answer; if you mock him now, He will not laugh; and if you stab him now He will not bleed. I would that I could wake him! O God, put back the sun a little space, And from the roll of time blot out to-night, And bid it not have been! Put back the sun, And make me what I was an hour ago! No, no, time will not stop for anything, Nor the sun stay its courses, though Repentance Calling it back grow hoarse; but you, my love, Have you no word of pity even for me? O Guido, Guido, will you not kiss me once? Drive me not to some desperate resolve: Women grow mad when they are treated thus: Will you not kiss me once?

Guido [holding up knife]

I will not kiss you Until the blood grows dry upon this knife, [Wildly] Back to your dead!

Duchess [going up the stairs]

Why, then I will be gone! and may you find More mercy than you showed to me to-night!

Guido

Let me find mercy when I go at night And do foul murder.

Duchess [coming down a few steps.]

Murder did you say? Murder is hungry, and still cries for more, And Death, his brother, is not satisfied, But walks the house, and will not go away, Unless he has a comrade! Tarry, Death, For I will give thee a most faithful lackey To travel with thee! Murder, call no more, For thou shalt eat thy fill. There is a storm Will break upon this house before the morning, So horrible, that the white moon already Turns grey and sick with terror, the low wind Goes moaning round the house, and the high stars Run madly through the vaulted firmament, As though the night wept tears of liquid fire For what the day shall look upon. Oh, weep, Thou lamentable heaven! Weep thy fill! Though sorrow like a cataract drench the fields, And make the earth

one bitter lake of tears, It would not be enough. [A peal of thunder.] Do you not hear, There is artillery in the Heaven to-night. Vengeance is wakened up, and has unloosed His dogs upon the world, and in this matter Which lies between us two, let him who draws The thunder on his head beware the ruin Which the forked flame brings after.

[A flash of lightning followed by a peal of thunder.]

Guido

Away! away!

[Exit the Duchess, who as she lifts the crimson curtain looks back for a moment at Guido, but he makes no sign. More thunder.]

Now is life fallen in ashes at my feet And noble love self-slain; and in its place Crept murder with its silent bloody feet. And she who wrought it—Oh! and yet she loved me, And for my sake did do this dreadful thing. I have been cruel to her: Beatrice! Beatrice, I say, come back.

[Begins to ascend staircase, when the noise of Soldiers is heard.]

Ah! what is that? Torches ablaze, and noise of hurrying feet. Pray God they have not seized her.

[Noise grows louder.]

Beatrice! There is yet time to escape. Come down, come out!

[The voice of the Duchess outside.]

This way went he, the man who slew my lord.

[Down the staircase comes hurrying a confused body of Soldiers; Guido is not seen at first, till the Duchess surrounded by Servants carrying torches appears at the top of the staircase, and points to Guido, who is seized at once, one of the Soldiers dragging the knife from his hand and showing it to the Captain of the Guard in sight of the audience. Tableau.]

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV

SCENE

The Court of Justice: the walls are hung with stamped grey velvet: above the hangings the wall is red, and gilt symbolical figures bear up the roof, which is made of red beams with grey soffits and moulding: a canopy of white satin flowered with gold is set for the Duchess: below it a long bench with red cloth for the Judges: below that a table for the clerks of the court. Two soldiers stand on each side of the canopy, and two soldiers guard the door; the citizens have some of them collected in the Court; others are coming in greeting one another; two tipstaffs in violet keep order with long white wands.

First Citizen

Good morrow, neighbour Anthony.

Second Citizen

Good morrow, neighbour Dominick.

First Citizen

This is a strange day for Padua, is it not?—the Duke being dead.

Second Citizen

I tell you, neighbour Dominick, I have not known such a day since the last Duke died.

First Citizen

They will try him first, and sentence him afterwards, will they not, neighbour Anthony?

Second Citizen

Nay, for he might ’scape his punishment then; but they will condemn him first so that he gets his deserts, and give him trial afterwards so that no injustice is done.

First Citizen

Well, well, it will go hard with him I doubt not.

Second Citizen

Surely it is a grievous thing to shed a Duke’s blood.

Third Citizen

They say a Duke has blue blood.

Second Citizen

I think our Duke’s blood was black like his soul.

First Citizen

Have a watch, neighbour Anthony, the officer is looking at thee.

Second Citizen

I care not if he does but look at me; he cannot whip me with the lashes of his eye.

Third Citizen

What think you of this young man who stuck the knife into the Duke?

Second Citizen

Why, that he is a well-behaved, and a well-meaning, and a well-favoured lad, and yet wicked in that he killed the Duke.

Third Citizen

’Twas the first time he did it: may be the law will not be hard on him, as he did not do it before.

Second Citizen

True.

Tipstaff

Silence, knave.

Second Citizen

Am I thy looking-glass, Master Tipstaff, that thou callest me knave?

First Citizen

Here be one of the household coming. Well, Dame Lucy, thou art of the Court, how does thy poor mistress the Duchess, with her sweet face?

Mistress Lucy

O well-a-day! O miserable day! O day! O misery! Why it is just nineteen years last June, at Michaelmas, since I was married to my husband, and it is August now, and here is the Duke murdered; there is a coincidence for you!

Second Citizen

Why, if it is a coincidence, they may not kill the young man: there is no law against coincidences.

First Citizen

But how does the Duchess?

Mistress Lucy

Well well, I knew some harm would happen to the house: six weeks ago the cakes were all burned on one side, and last Saint Martin even as ever was, there flew into the candle a big moth that had wings, and a’most scared me.

First Citizen

But come to the Duchess, good gossip: what of her?

Mistress Lucy

Marry, it is time you should ask after her, poor lady; she is distraught almost. Why, she has not slept, but paced the chamber all night long. I prayed her to have a posset,

or some aqua-vitæ, and to get to bed and sleep a little for her health's sake, but she answered me she was afraid she might dream. That was a strange answer, was it not?

Second Citizen

These great folk have not much sense, so Providence makes it up to them in fine clothes.

Mistress Lucy

Well, well, God keep murder from us, I say, as long as we are alive.

[Enter Lord Moranzone hurriedly.]

Moranzone

Is the Duke dead?

Second Citizen

He has a knife in his heart, which they say is not healthy for any man.

Moranzone

Who is accused of having killed him?

Second Citizen

Why, the prisoner, sir.

Moranzone

But who is the prisoner?

Second Citizen

Why, he that is accused of the Duke's murder.

Moranzone

I mean, what is his name?

Second Citizen

Faith, the same which his godfathers gave him: what else should it be?

Tipstaff

Guido Ferranti is his name, my lord.

Moranzone

I almost knew thine answer ere you gave it.

[Aside.]

Yet it is strange he should have killed the Duke, Seeing he left me in such different mood. It is most likely when he saw the man, This devil who had sold his father's life, That passion from their seat within his heart Thrust all his boyish theories of love, And in their place set vengeance; yet I marvel That he escaped not.

[Turning again to the crowd.]

How was he taken? Tell me.

Third Citizen

Marry, sir, he was taken by the heels.

Moranzone

But who seized him?

Third Citizen

Why, those that did lay hold of him.

Moranzone

How was the alarm given?

Third Citizen

That I cannot tell you, sir.

Mistress Lucy

It was the Duchess herself who pointed him out.

Moranzone [aside]

The Duchess! There is something strange in this.

Mistress Lucy

Ay! And the dagger was in his hand—the Duchess's own dagger.

Moranzone

What did you say?

Mistress Lucy

Why, marry, that it was with the Duchess's dagger that the Duke was killed.

Moranzone [aside]

There is some mystery about this: I cannot understand it.

Second Citizen

They be very long a-coming,

First Citizen

I warrant they will come soon enough for the prisoner.

Tipstaff

Silence in the Court!

First Citizen

Thou dost break silence in bidding us keep it, Master Tipstaff.

[Enter the Lord Justice and the other Judges.]

Second Citizen

Who is he in scarlet? Is he the headsman?

Third Citizen

Nay, he is the Lord Justice.

[Enter Guido guarded.]

Second Citizen

There be the prisoner surely.

Third Citizen

He looks honest.

First Citizen

That be his villany: knaves nowadays do look so honest that honest folk are forced to look like knaves so as to be different.

[Enter the Headman, who takes his stand behind Guido.]

Second Citizen

Yon be the headsman then! O Lord! Is the axe sharp, think you?

First Citizen

Ay! sharper than thy wits are; but the edge is not towards him, mark you.

Second Citizen [scratching his neck]

I’ faith, I like it not so near.

First Citizen

Tut, thou need’st not be afraid; they never cut the heads of common folk: they do but hang us.

[Trumpets outside.]

Third Citizen

What are the trumpets for? Is the trial over?

First Citizen

Nay, ’tis for the Duchess.

[Enter the Duchess in black velvet; her train of flowered black velvet is carried by two pages in violet; with her is the Cardinal in scarlet, and the gentlemen of the Court in black; she takes her seat on the throne above the Judges, who rise and take

their caps off as she enters; the Cardinal sits next to her a little lower; the Courtiers group themselves about the throne.]

Second Citizen

O poor lady, how pale she is! Will she sit there?

First Citizen

Ay! she is in the Duke’s place now.

Second Citizen

That is a good thing for Padua; the Duchess is a very kind and merciful Duchess; why, she cured my child of the ague once.

Third Citizen

Ay, and has given us bread: do not forget the bread.

A Soldier

Stand back, good people.

Second Citizen

If we be good, why should we stand back?

Tipstaff

Silence in the Court!

Lord Justice

May it please your Grace, Is it your pleasure we proceed to trial Of the Duke’s murder? [Duchess bows.] Set the prisoner forth. What is thy name?

Guido

It matters not, my lord.

Lord Justice

Guido Ferranti is thy name in Padua.

Guido

A man may die as well under that name as any other.

Lord Justice

Thou art not ignorant What dreadful charge men lay against thee here, Namely, the treacherous murder of thy Lord, Simone Gesso, Duke of Padua; What dost thou say in answer?

Guido

I say nothing.

Lord Justice [rising]

Guido Ferranti—

Moranzone [stepping from the crowd]

Tarry, my Lord Justice.

Lord Justice

Who art thou that bid’st justice tarry, sir?

Moranzone

So be it justice it can go its way; But if it be not justice—

Lord Justice

Who is this?

Count Bardi

A very noble gentleman, and well known To the late Duke.

Lord Justice

Sir, thou art come in time To see the murder of the Duke avenged. There stands the man who did this heinous thing.

Moranzone

My lord, I ask again what proof have ye?

Lord Justice [holding up the dagger]

This dagger, Which from his blood-stained hands, itself all blood, Last night the soldiers seized: what further proof Need we indeed?

Moranzone [takes the danger and approaches the Duchess]

Saw I not such a dagger Hang from your Grace’s girdle yesterday?

[The Duchess shudders and makes no answer.]

Ah! my Lord Justice, may I speak a moment With this young man, who in such peril stands?

Lord Justice

Ay, willingly, my lord, and may you turn him To make a full avowal of his guilt.

[Lord Moranzone goes over to Guido, who stands R. and clutches him by the hand.]

Moranzone [in a low voice]

She did it! Nay, I saw it in her eyes. Boy, dost thou think I’ll let thy father’s son Be by this woman butchered to his death? Her husband sold your father, and the wife Would sell the son in turn.

Guido

Lord Moranzone, I alone did this thing: be satisfied, My father is avenged.

Lord Justice

Doth he confess?

Guido

My lord, I do confess That foul unnatural murder has been done.

First Citizen

Why, look at that: he has a pitiful heart, and does not like murder; they will let him go for that.

Lord Justice

Say you no more?

Guido

My lord, I say this also, That to spill human blood is deadly sin.

Second Citizen

Marry, he should tell that to the headsman: ’tis a good sentiment.

Guido

Lastly, my lord, I do entreat the Court To give me leave to utter openly The dreadful secret of this mystery, And to point out the very guilty one Who with this dagger last night slew the Duke.

Lord Justice

Thou hast leave to speak.

Duchess [rising]

I say he shall not speak: What need have we of further evidence? Was he not taken in the house at night In Guilt’s own bloody livery?

Lord Justice [showing her the statute]

Your Grace Can read the law.

Duchess [waiving book aside]

Bethink you, my Lord Justice, Is it not very like that such a one May, in the presence of the people here, Utter some slanderous word against my Lord, Against the city, or the city’s honour, Perchance against myself.

Lord Justice

My liege, the law.

Duchess

He shall not speak, but, with gags in his mouth, Shall climb the ladder to the bloody

block.

Lord Justice

The law, my liege.

Duchess

We are not bound by law, But with it we bind others.

Moranzone

My Lord Justice, Thou wilt not suffer this injustice here.

Lord Justice

The Court needs not thy voice, Lord Moranzone. Madam, it were a precedent most evil To wrest the law from its appointed course, For, though the cause be just, yet anarchy Might on this licence touch these golden scales And unjust causes unjust victories gain.

Count Bardi

I do not think your Grace can stay the law.

Duchess

Ay, it is well to preach and prate of law: Methinks, my haughty lords of Padua, If ye are hurt in pocket or estate, So much as makes your monstrous revenues Less by the value of one ferry toll, Ye do not wait the tedious law’s delay With such sweet patience as ye counsel me.

Count Bardi

Madam, I think you wrong our nobles here.

Duchess

I think I wrong them not. Which of you all Finding a thief within his house at night, With some poor chattel thrust into his rags, Will stop and parley with him? do ye not Give him unto the officer and his hook To be dragged gaolwards straightway? And

so now, Had ye been men, finding this fellow here, With my Lord’s life still hot upon his hands, Ye would have haled him out into the court, And struck his head off with an axe.

Guido

O God!

Duchess

Speak, my Lord Justice.

Lord Justice

Your Grace, it cannot be: The laws of Padua are most certain here: And by those laws the common murderer even May with his own lips plead, and make defence.

Duchess

This is no common murderer, Lord Justice, But a great outlaw, and a most vile traitor, Taken in open arms against the state. For he who slays the man who rules a state Slays the state also, widows every wife, And makes each child an orphan, and no less Is to be held a public enemy, Than if he came with mighty ordonnance, And all the spears of Venice at his back, To beat and batter at our city gates— Nay, is more dangerous to our commonwealth, For walls and gates, bastions and forts, and things Whose common elements are wood and stone May be raised up, but who can raise again The ruined body of my murdered lord, And bid it live and laugh?

Maffio

Now by Saint Paul I do not think that they will let him speak.

Jeppo Vitellozzo

There is much in this, listen.

Duchess

Wherefore now, Throw ashes on the head of Padua, With sable banners hang each silent street, Let every man be clad in solemn black; But ere we turn to these sad

rites of mourning Let us bethink us of the desperate hand Which wrought and brought this ruin on our state, And straightway pack him to that narrow house, Where no voice is, but with a little dust Death fills right up the lying mouths of men.

Guido

Unhand me, knaves! I tell thee, my Lord Justice, Thou mightst as well bid the untrammelled ocean, The winter whirlwind, or the Alpine storm, Not roar their will, as bid me hold my peace! Ay! though ye put your knives into my throat, Each grim and gaping wound shall find a tongue, And cry against you.

Lord Justice

Sir, this violence Avails you nothing; for save the tribunal Give thee a lawful right to open speech, Naught that thou sayest can be credited.

[The Duchess smiles and Guido falls back with a gesture of despair.]

Madam, myself, and these wise Justices, Will with your Grace’s sanction now retire Into another chamber, to decide Upon this difficult matter of the law, And search the statutes and the precedents.

Duchess

Go, my Lord Justice, search the statutes well, Nor let this brawling traitor have his way.

Moranzone

Go, my Lord Justice, search thy conscience well, Nor let a man be sent to death unheard.

[Exit the Lord Justice and the Judges.]

Duchess

Silence, thou evil genius of my life! Thou com’st between us two a second time; This time, my lord, I think the turn is mine.

Guido

I shall not die till I have uttered voice.

Duchess

Thou shalt die silent, and thy secret with thee.

Guido

Art thou that Beatrice, Duchess of Padua?

Duchess

I am what thou hast made me; look at me well, I am thy handiwork.

Maffio

See, is she not Like that white tigress which we saw at Venice, Sent by some Indian soldan to the Doge?

Jeppo

Hush! she may hear thy chatter.

Headsman

My young fellow, I do not know why thou shouldst care to speak, Seeing my axe is close upon thy neck, And words of thine will never blunt its edge. But if thou art so bent upon it, why Thou mightest plead unto the Churchman yonder: The common people call him kindly here, Indeed I know he has a kindly soul.

Guido

This man, whose trade is death, hath courtesies More than the others.

Headsman

Why, God love you, sir, I'll do you your last service on this earth.

Guido

My good Lord Cardinal, in a Christian land, With Lord Christ's face of mercy looking down From the high seat of Judgment, shall a man Die unabsolved, unshrived? And if not so, May I not tell this dreadful tale of sin, If any sin there be

upon my soul?

Duchess

Thou dost but waste thy time.

Cardinal

Alack, my son, I have no power with the secular arm. My task begins when justice has been done, To urge the wavering sinner to repent And to confess to Holy Church’s ear The dreadful secrets of a sinful mind.

Duchess

Thou mayest speak to the confessional Until thy lips grow weary of their tale, But here thou shalt not speak.

Guido

My reverend father, You bring me but cold comfort.

Cardinal

Nay, my son, For the great power of our mother Church, Ends not with this poor bubble of a world, Of which we are but dust, as Jerome saith, For if the sinner doth repentant die, Our prayers and holy masses much avail To bring the guilty soul from purgatory.

Duchess

And when in purgatory thou seest my Lord With that red star of blood upon his heart, Tell him I sent thee hither.

Guido

O dear God!

Moranzone

This is the woman, is it, whom you loved?

Cardinal

Your Grace is very cruel to this man.

Duchess

No more than he was cruel to her Grace.

Cardinal

Yet mercy is the sovereign right of princes.

Duchess

I got no mercy, and I give it not. He hath changed my heart into a heart of stone, He hath sown rank nettles in a goodly field, He hath poisoned the wells of pity in my breast, He hath withered up all kindness at the root; My life is as some famine murdered land, Whence all good things have perished utterly: I am what he hath made me.

[The Duchess weeps.]

Jeppo

Is it not strange That she should so have loved the wicked Duke?

Maffio

It is most strange when women love their lords, And when they love them not it is most strange.

Jeppo

What a philosopher thou art, Petrucci!

Maffio

Ay! I can bear the ills of other men, Which is philosophy.

Duchess

They tarry long, These greybeards and their council; bid them come; Bid them come quickly, else I think my heart Will beat itself to bursting: not indeed, That I here care to live; God knows my life Is not so full of joy, yet, for all that, I would not die

companionless, or go Lonely to Hell. Look, my Lord Cardinal, Canst thou not see across my forehead here, In scarlet letters writ, the word Revenge? Fetch me some water, I will wash it off: 'Twas branded there last night, but in the day-time I need not wear it, need I, my Lord Cardinal? Oh, how it sears and burns into my brain: Give me a knife; not that one, but another, And I will cut it out.

Cardinal

It is most natural To be incensed against the murderous hand That treacherously stabbed your sleeping lord.

Duchess

I would, old Cardinal, I could burn that hand; But it will burn hereafter.

Cardinal

Nay, the Church Ordains us to forgive our enemies.

Duchess

Forgiveness? what is that? I never got it. They come at last: well, my Lord Justice, well.

[Enter the Lord Justice.]

Lord Justice

Most gracious Lady, and our sovereign Liege, We have long pondered on the point at issue, And much considered of your Grace's wisdom, And never wisdom spake from fairer lips—

Duchess

Proceed, sir, without compliment.

Lord Justice

We find, As your own Grace did rightly signify, That any citizen, who by force or craft Conspires against the person of the Liege, Is ipso facto outlaw, void of rights

Such as pertain to other citizens, Is traitor, and a public enemy, Who may by any casual sword be slain Without the slayer's danger; nay, if brought Into the presence of the tribunal, Must with dumb lips and silence reverent Listen unto his well-deserved doom, Nor has the privilege of open speech.

Duchess

I thank thee, my Lord Justice, heartily; I like your law: and now I pray dispatch This public outlaw to his righteous doom; What is there more?

Lord Justice

Ay, there is more, your Grace. This man being alien born, not Paduan, Nor by allegiance bound unto the Duke, Save such as common nature doth lay down, Hath, though accused of treasons manifold, Whose slightest penalty is certain death, Yet still the right of public utterance Before the people and the open court; Nay, shall be much entreated by the Court, To make some formal pleading for his life, Lest his own city, righteously incensed, Should with an unjust trial tax our state, And wars spring up against the commonwealth: So merciful are the laws of Padua Unto the stranger living in her gates.

Duchess

Being of my Lord's household, is he stranger here?

Lord Justice

Ay, until seven years of service spent He cannot be a Paduan citizen.

Guido

I thank thee, my Lord Justice, heartily; I like your law.

Second Citizen

I like no law at all: Were there no law there'd be no law-breakers, So all men would be virtuous.

First Citizen

So they would; ’Tis a wise saying that, and brings you far.

Tipstaff

Ay! to the gallows, knave.

Duchess

Is this the law?

Lord Justice

It is the law most certainly, my liege.

Duchess

Show me the book: ’tis written in blood-red.

Jeppo

Look at the Duchess.

Duchess

Thou accursed law, I would that I could tear thee from the state As easy as I tear thee from this book.

[Tears out the page.]

Come here, Count Bardi: are you honourable? Get a horse ready for me at my house, For I must ride to Venice instantly.

Bardi

To Venice, Madam?

Duchess

Not a word of this, Go, go at once. [Exit Count Bardi.] A moment, my Lord Justice. If, as thou sayest it, this is the law— Nay, nay, I doubt not that thou sayest right, Though right be wrong in such a case as this— May I not by the virtue of mine office Adjourn this court until another day?

Lord Justice

Madam, you cannot stay a trial for blood.

Duchess

I will not tarry then to hear this man Rail with rude tongue against our sacred person. Come, gentlemen.

Lord Justice

My liege, You cannot leave this court until the prisoner Be purged or guilty of this dread offence.

Duchess

Cannot, Lord Justice? By what right do you Set barriers in my path where I should go? Am I not Duchess here in Padua, And the state's regent?

Lord Justice

For that reason, Madam, Being the fountain-head of life and death Whence, like a mighty river, justice flows, Without thy presence justice is dried up And fails of purpose: thou must tarry here.

Duchess

What, wilt thou keep me here against my will?

Lord Justice

We pray thy will be not against the law.

Duchess

What if I force my way out of the court?

Lord Justice

Thou canst not force the Court to give thee way.

Duchess

I will not tarry. [Rises from her seat.]

Lord Justice

Is the usher here? Let him stand forth. [Usher comes forward.] Thou knowest thy business, sir.

[The Usher closes the doors of the court, which are L., and when the Duchess and her retinue approach, kneels down.]

Usher

In all humility I beseech your Grace Turn not my duty to discourtesy, Nor make my unwelcome office an offence.

Duchess

Is there no gentleman amongst you all To prick this prating fellow from our way?

Maffio [drawing his sword]

Ay! that will I.

Lord Justice

Count Maffio, have a care, And you, sir. [To Jeppo.] The first man who draws his sword Upon the meanest officer of this Court, Dies before nightfall.

Duchess

Sirs, put up your swords: It is most meet that I should hear this man.

[Goes back to throne.]

Moranzone

Now hast thou got thy enemy in thy hand.

Lord Justice [taking the time-glass up]

Guido Ferranti, while the crumbling sand Falls through this time-glass, thou hast leave to speak. This and no more.

Guido

It is enough, my lord.

Lord Justice

Thou standest on the extreme verge of death; See that thou speakest nothing but the truth, Naught else will serve thee.

Guido

If I speak it not, Then give my body to the headsman there.

Lord Justice [turns the time-glass]

Let there be silence while the prisoner speaks.

Tipstaff

Silence in the Court there.

Guido

My Lords Justices, And reverent judges of this worthy court, I hardly know where to begin my tale, So strangely dreadful is this history. First, let me tell you of what birth I am. I am the son of that good Duke Lorenzo Who was with damned treachery done to death By a most wicked villain, lately Duke Of this good town of Padua.

Lord Justice

Have a care, It will avail thee nought to mock this prince Who now lies in his coffin.

Maffio

By Saint James, This is the Duke of Parma’s rightful heir.

Jeppo

I always thought him noble.

Guido

I confess That with the purport of a just revenge, A most just vengeance on a man of blood, I entered the Duke’s household, served his will, Sat at his board, drank of his wine, and was His intimate: so much I will confess, And this too, that I waited till he grew To give the fondest secrets of his life Into my keeping, till he fawned on me, And trusted me in every private matter Even as my noble father trusted him; That

for this thing I waited.

[To the Headsman.]

Thou man of blood! Turn not thine axe on me before the time: Who knows if it be time for me to die? Is there no other neck in court but mine?

Lord Justice

The sand within the time-glass flows apace. Come quickly to the murder of the Duke.

Guido

I will be brief: Last night at twelve o’ the clock, By a strong rope I scaled the palace wall, With purport to revenge my father’s murder— Ay! with that purport I confess, my lord. This much I will acknowledge, and this also, That as with stealthy feet I climbed the stair Which led unto the chamber of the Duke, And reached my hand out for the scarlet cloth Which shook and shivered in the gusty door, Lo! the white moon that sailed in the great heaven Flooded with silver light the darkened room, Night lit her candles for me, and I saw The man I hated, cursing in his sleep; And thinking of a most dear father murdered, Sold to the scaffold, bartered to the block, I smote the treacherous villain to the heart With this same dagger, which by chance I found Within the chamber.

Duchess [rising from her seat]

Oh!

Guido [hurriedly]

I killed the Duke. Now, my Lord Justice, if I may crave a boon, Suffer me not to see another sun Light up the misery of this loathsome world.

Lord Justice

Thy boon is granted, thou shalt die to-night. Lead him away. Come, Madam

[Guido is led off; as he goes the Duchess stretches out her arms and rushes down the

stage.]

Duchess

Guido! Guido!

[Faints.]

Tableau

END OF ACT IV.

ACT V

SCENE

A dungeon in the public prison of Padua; Guido lies asleep on a pallet (L.C.); a table with a goblet on it is set (L.C.); five soldiers are drinking and playing dice in the corner on a stone table; one of them has a lantern hung to his halbert; a torch is set in the wall over Guido's head. Two grated windows behind, one on each side of the door which is (C.), look out into the passage; the stage is rather dark.

First Soldier [throws dice]

Sixes again! good Pietro.

Second Soldier

I' faith, lieutenant, I will play with thee no more. I will lose everything.

Third Soldier

Except thy wits; thou art safe there!

Second Soldier

Ay, ay, he cannot take them from me.

Third Soldier

No; for thou hast no wits to give him.

The Soldiers [loudly]

Ha! ha! ha!

First Soldier

Silence! You will wake the prisoner; he is asleep.

Second Soldier

What matter? He will get sleep enough when he is buried. I warrant he'd be glad if we could wake him when he's in the grave.

Third Soldier

Nay! for when he wakes there it will be judgment day.

Second Soldier

Ay, and he has done a grievous thing; for, look you, to murder one of us who are but flesh and blood is a sin, and to kill a Duke goes being near against the law.

First Soldier

Well, well, he was a wicked Duke.

Second Soldier

And so he should not have touched him; if one meddles with wicked people, one is like to be tainted with their wickedness.

Third Soldier

Ay, that is true. How old is the prisoner?

Second Soldier

Old enough to do wrong, and not old enough to be wise.

First Soldier

Why, then, he might be any age.

Second Soldier

They say the Duchess wanted to pardon him.

First Soldier

Is that so?

Second Soldier

Ay, and did much entreat the Lord Justice, but he would not.

First Soldier

I had thought, Pietro, that the Duchess was omnipotent.

Second Soldier

True, she is well-favoured; I know none so comely.

The Soldiers

Ha! ha! ha!

First Soldier

I meant I had thought our Duchess could do anything.

Second Soldier

Nay, for he is now given over to the Justices, and they will see that justice be done; they and stout Hugh the headsman; but when his head is off, why then the Duchess can pardon him if she likes; there is no law against that.

First Soldier

I do not think that stout Hugh, as you call him, will do the business for him after all. This Guido is of gentle birth, and so by the law can drink poison first, if it so be his pleasure.

Third Soldier

And if he does not drink it?

First Soldier

Why, then, they will kill him.

[Knocking comes at the door.]

First Soldier

See who that is.

[Third Soldier goes over and looks through the wicket.]

Third Soldier

It is a woman, sir.

First Soldier

Is she pretty?

Third Soldier

I can’t tell. She is masked, lieutenant.

First Soldier

It is only very ugly or very beautiful women who ever hide their faces. Let her in.

[Soldier opens the door, and the Duchess masked and cloaked enters.]

Duchess [to Third Soldier]

Are you the officer on guard?

First Soldier [coming forward]

I am, madam.

Duchess

I must see the prisoner alone.

First Soldier

I am afraid that is impossible. [The Duchess hands him a ring, he looks at and returns it to her with a bow and makes a sign to the Soldiers.] Stand without there.

[Exeunt the Soldiers.]

Duchess

Officer, your men are somewhat rough.

First Soldier

They mean no harm.

Duchess

I shall be going back in a few minutes. As I pass through the corridor do not let them try and lift my mask.

First Soldier

You need not be afraid, madam.

Duchess

I have a particular reason for wishing my face not to be seen.

First Soldier

Madam, with this ring you can go in and out as you please; it is the Duchess's own ring.

Duchess

Leave us. [The Soldier turns to go out.] A moment, sir. For what hour is . . .

First Soldier

At twelve o'clock, madam, we have orders to lead him out; but I dare say he won't wait for us; he's more like to take a drink out of that poison yonder. Men are afraid of the headsman.

Duchess

Is that poison?

First Soldier

Ay, madam, and very sure poison too.

Duchess

You may go, sir.

First Soldier

By Saint James, a pretty hand! I wonder who she is. Some woman who loved him, perhaps.

[Exit.]

Duchess [taking her mark off]

At last! He can escape now in this cloak and vizard, We are of a height almost: they will not know him; As for myself what matter? So that he does not curse me as he goes, I care but little: I wonder will he curse me. He has the right. It is eleven now; They will not come till twelve.

[Goes over to the table.]

So this is poison. Is it not strange that in this liquor here There lies the key to all philosophies?

[Takes the cup up.]

It smells of poppies. I remember well That, when I was a child in Sicily, I took the scarlet poppies from the corn, And made a little wreath, and my grave uncle, Don John of Naples, laughed: I did not know That they had power to stay the springs of life, To make the pulse cease beating, and to chill The blood in its own vessels, till men come And with a hook hale the poor body out, And throw it in a ditch: the body, ay,— What of the soul? that goes to heaven or hell. Where will mine go?

[Takes the torch from the wall, and goes over to the bed.]

How peacefully here he sleeps, Like a young schoolboy tired out with play: I would that I could sleep so peacefully, But I have dreams. [Bending over him.] Poor boy: what if I kissed him? No, no, my lips would burn him like a fire. He has had enough of Love. Still that white neck Will ’scape the headsman: I have seen to that: He will get hence from Padua to-night, And that is well. You are very wise, Lord Justices, And yet you are not half so wise as I am, And that is well. O God! how I have loved you, And what a bloody flower did Love bear!

[Comes back to the table.]

What if I drank these juices, and so ceased? Were it not better than to wait till Death Come to my bed with all his serving men, Remorse, disease, old age, and misery? I wonder does one suffer much: I think That I am very young to die like this, But so it must be. Why, why should I die? He will escape to-night, and so his blood Will not be on my head. No, I must die; I have been guilty, therefore I must die; He loves me not, and therefore I must die: I would die happier if he would kiss me, But he will not do that. I did not know him. I thought he meant to sell me to the Judge; That is not strange; we women never know Our lovers till they leave us.

[Bell begins to toll.]

Thou vile bell, That like a bloodhound from thy brazen throat Call'st for this man's life, cease! thou shalt not get it. He stirs—I must be quick: [Takes up cup.] O Love, Love, Love, I did not think that I would pledge thee thus!

[Drinks poison, and sets the cup down on the table behind her: the noise wakens Guido, who starts up, and does not see what she has done. There is silence for a minute, each looking at the other.]

I do not come to ask your pardon now, Seeing I know I stand beyond all pardon; Enough of that: I have already, sir, Confessed my sin to the Lords Justices; They would not listen to me: and some said I did invent a tale to save your life; You have trafficked with me; others said That women played with pity as with men; Others that grief for my slain Lord and husband Had robbed me of my wits: they would not hear me, And, when I sware it on the holy book, They bade the doctor cure me. They are ten, Ten against one, and they possess your life. They call me Duchess here in Padua. I do not know, sir; if I be the Duchess, I wrote your pardon, and they would not take it; They call it treason, say I taught them that; Maybe I did. Within an hour, Guido, They will be here, and drag you from the cell, And bind your hands behind your back, and bid you Kneel at the block: I am before them there; Here is

the signet ring of Padua, ’Twill bring you safely through the men on guard; There is my cloak and vizard; they have orders Not to be curious: when you pass the gate Turn to the left, and at the second bridge You will find horses waiting: by to-morrow You will be at Venice, safe. [A pause.] Do you not speak? Will you not even curse me ere you go?— You have the right. [A pause.] You do not understand There lies between you and the headsman’s axe Hardly so much sand in the hour-glass As a child’s palm could carry: here is the ring: I have washed my hand: there is no blood upon it: You need not fear. Will you not take the ring?

Guido [takes ring and kisses it]

Ay! gladly, Madam.

Duchess

And leave Padua.

Guido

Leave Padua.

Duchess

But it must be to-night.

Guido

To-night it shall be.

Duchess

Oh, thank God for that!

Guido

So I can live; life never seemed so sweet As at this moment.

Duchess

Do not tarry, Guido, There is my cloak: the horse is at the bridge, The second bridge below the ferry house: Why do you tarry? Can your ears not hear This dreadful bell,

whose every ringing stroke Robs one brief minute from your boyish life. Go quickly.

Guido

Ay! he will come soon enough.

Duchess

Who?

Guido [calmly]

Why, the headsman.

Duchess

No, no.

Guido

Only he Can bring me out of Padua.

Duchess

You dare not! You dare not burden my o’erburdened soul With two dead men! I think one is enough. For when I stand before God, face to face, I would not have you, with a scarlet thread Around your white throat, coming up behind To say I did it.

Guido

Madam, I wait.

Duchess

No, no, you cannot: you do not understand, I have less power in Padua to-night Than any common woman; they will kill you. I saw the scaffold as I crossed the square, Already the low rabble throng about it With fearful jests, and horrid merriment, As though it were a morris-dancer’s platform, And not Death’s sable throne. O Guido, Guido, You must escape!

Guido

Madam, I tarry here.

Duchess

Guido, you shall not: it would be a thing So terrible that the amazed stars Would fall from heaven, and the palsied moon Be in her sphere eclipsed, and the great sun Refuse to shine upon the unjust earth Which saw thee die.

Guido

Be sure I shall not stir.

Duchess [wringing her hands]

Is one sin not enough, but must it breed A second sin more horrible again Than was the one that bare it? O God, God, Seal up sin's teeming womb, and make it barren, I will not have more blood upon my hand Than I have now.

Guido [seizing her hand]

What! am I fallen so low That I may not have leave to die for you?

Duchess [tearing her hand away]

Die for me?—no, my life is a vile thing, Thrown to the miry highways of this world; You shall not die for me, you shall not, Guido; I am a guilty woman.

Guido

Guilty?—let those Who know what a thing temptation is, Let those who have not walked as we have done, In the red fire of passion, those whose lives Are dull and colourless, in a word let those, If any such there be, who have not loved, Cast stones against you. As for me—

Duchess

Alas!

Guido [falling at her feet]

You are my lady, and you are my love! O hair of gold, O crimson lips, O face Made for the luring and the love of man! Incarnate image of pure loveliness! Worshipping thee I do forget the past, Worshipping thee my soul comes close to thine, Worshipping thee I seem to be a god, And though they give my body to the block, Yet is my love eternal!

[Duchess puts her hands over her face: Guido draws them down.]

Sweet, lift up The trailing curtains that overhang your eyes That I may look into those eyes, and tell you I love you, never more than now when Death Thrusts his cold lips between us: Beatrice, I love you: have you no word left to say? Oh, I can bear the executioner, But not this silence: will you not say you love me? Speak but that word and Death shall lose his sting, But speak it not, and fifty thousand deaths Are, in comparison, mercy. Oh, you are cruel, And do not love me.

Duchess

Alas! I have no right For I have stained the innocent hands of love With spilt-out blood: there is blood on the ground; I set it there.

Guido

Sweet, it was not yourself, It was some devil tempted you.

Duchess [rising suddenly]

No, no, We are each our own devil, and we make This world our hell.

Guido

Then let high Paradise Fall into Tartarus! for I shall make This world my heaven for a little space. The sin was mine, if any sin there was. ’Twas I who nurtured murder in my heart, Sweetened my meats, seasoned my wine with it, And in my fancy slew the accursed Duke A hundred times a day. Why, had this man Died half so often as I wished him to, Death had been stalking ever through the house, And murder had not slept. But you, fond heart, Whose little eyes grew tender over a whipt hound, You

whom the little children laughed to see Because you brought the sunlight where you passed, You the white angel of God’s purity, This which men call your sin, what was it?

Duchess

Ay! What was it? There are times it seems a dream, An evil dream sent by an evil god, And then I see the dead face in the coffin And know it is no dream, but that my hand Is red with blood, and that my desperate soul Striving to find some haven for its love From the wild tempest of this raging world, Has wrecked its bark upon the rocks of sin. What was it, said you?—murder merely? Nothing But murder, horrible murder.

Guido

Nay, nay, nay, ’Twas but the passion-flower of your love That in one moment leapt to terrible life, And in one moment bare this gory fruit, Which I had plucked in thought a thousand times. My soul was murderous, but my hand refused; Your hand wrought murder, but your soul was pure. And so I love you, Beatrice, and let him Who has no mercy for your stricken head, Lack mercy up in heaven! Kiss me, sweet.

[Tries to kiss her.]

Duchess

No, no, your lips are pure, and mine are soiled, For Guilt has been my paramour, and Sin Lain in my bed: O Guido, if you love me Get hence, for every moment is a worm Which gnaws your life away: nay, sweet, get hence, And if in after time you think of me, Think of me as of one who loved you more Than anything on earth; think of me, Guido, As of a woman merely, one who tried To make her life a sacrifice to love, And slew love in the trial: Oh, what is that? The bell has stopped from ringing, and I hear The feet of armed men upon the stair.

Guido [aside]

That is the signal for the guard to come.

Duchess

Why has the bell stopped ringing?

Guido

If you must know, That stops my life on this side of the grave, But on the other we shall meet again.

Duchess

No, no, ’tis not too late: you must get hence; The horse is by the bridge, there is still time. Away, away, you must not tarry here!

[Noise of Soldiers in the passage.]

A Voice Outside

Room for the Lord Justice of Padua!

[The Lord Justice is seen through the grated window passing down the corridor preceded by men bearing torches.]

Duchess

It is too late.

A Voice Outside

Room for the headsman.

Duchess [sinks down]

Oh!

[The Headsman with his axe on his shoulder is seen passing the corridor, followed by Monks bearing candles.]

Guido

Farewell, dear love, for I must drink this poison. I do not fear the headsman, but I would die Not on the lonely scaffold. But here, Here in thine arms, kissing thy

mouth: farewell!

[Goes to the table and takes the goblet up.]

What, art thou empty?

[Throws it to the ground.]

O thou churlish gaoler, Even of poisons niggard!

Duchess [faintly]

Blame him not.

Guido

O God! you have not drunk it, Beatrice? Tell me you have not?

Duchess

Were I to deny it, There is a fire eating at my heart Which would find utterance.

Guido

O treacherous love, Why have you not left a drop for me?

Duchess

No, no, it held but death enough for one.

Guido

Is there no poison still upon your lips, That I may draw it from them?

Duchess

Why should you die? You have not spilt blood, and so need not die: I have spilt blood, and therefore I must die. Was it not said blood should be spilt for blood? Who said that? I forget.

Guido

Tarry for me, Our souls will go together.

Duchess

Nay, you must live. There are many other women in the world Who will love you, and not murder for your sake.

Guido

I love you only.

Duchess

You need not die for that.

Guido

Ah, if we die together, love, why then Can we not lie together in one grave?

Duchess

A grave is but a narrow wedding-bed.

Guido

It is enough for us

Duchess

And they will strew it With a stark winding-sheet, and bitter herbs: I think there are no roses in the grave, Or if there are, they all are withered now Since my Lord went there.

Guido

Ah! dear Beatrice, Your lips are roses that death cannot wither.

Duchess

Nay, if we lie together, will not my lips Fall into dust, and your enamoured eyes Shrivel to sightless sockets, and the worms, Which are our groomsmen, eat away your heart?

Guido

I do not care: Death has no power on love. And so by Love’s immortal sovereignty I will die with you.

Duchess

But the grave is black, And the pit black, so I must go before To light the candles for your coming hither. No, no, I will not die, I will not die. Love, you are strong, and young, and very brave; Stand between me and the angel of death, And wrestle with him for me.

[Thrusts Guido in front of her with his back to the audience.]

I will kiss you, When you have thrown him. Oh, have you no cordial, To stay the workings of this poison in me? Are there no rivers left in Italy That you will not fetch me one cup of water To quench this fire?

Guido

O God!

Duchess

You did not tell me There was a drought in Italy, and no water: Nothing but fire.

Guido

O Love!

Duchess

Send for a leech, Not him who stanched my husband, but another We have no time: send for a leech, I say: There is an antidote against each poison, And he will sell it if we give him money. Tell him that I will give him Padua, For one short hour of life: I will not die. Oh, I am sick to death; no, do not touch me, This poison gnaws my heart: I did not know It was such pain to die: I thought that life Had taken all the agonies to itself; It seems it is not so.

Guido

O damnéd stars Quench your vile cresset-lights in tears, and bid The moon, your mistress, shine no more to-night.

Duchess

Guido, why are we here? I think this room Is poorly furnished for a marriage chamber. Let us get hence at once. Where are the horses? We should be on our way to Venice now. How cold the night is! We must ride faster.

[The Monks begin to chant outside.]

Music! It should be merrier; but grief Is of the fashion now—I know not why. You must not weep: do we not love each other?— That is enough. Death, what do you here? You were not bidden to this table, sir; Away, we have no need of you: I tell you It was in wine I pledged you, not in poison. They lied who told you that I drank your poison. It was spilt upon the ground, like my Lord's blood; You came too late.

Guido

Sweet, there is nothing there: These things are only unreal shadows.

Duchess

Death, Why do you tarry, get to the upper chamber; The cold meats of my husband's funeral feast Are set for you; this is a wedding feast. You are out of place, sir; and, besides, 'tis summer. We do not need these heavy fires now, You scorch us. Oh, I am burned up, Can you do nothing? Water, give me water, Or else more poison. No: I feel no pain— Is it not curious I should feel no pain?— And Death has gone away, I am glad of that. I thought he meant to part us. Tell me, Guido, Are you not sorry that you ever saw me?

Guido

I swear I would not have lived otherwise. Why, in this dull and common world of ours Men have died looking for such moments as this And have not found them.

Duchess

Then you are not sorry? How strange that seems.

Guido

What, Beatrice, have I not Stood face to face with beauty? That is enough For one

man’s life. Why, love, I could be merry; I have been often sadder at a feast, But who were sad at such a feast as this When Love and Death are both our cup-bearers? We love and die together.

Duchess

Oh, I have been Guilty beyond all women, and indeed Beyond all women punished. Do you think— No, that could not be—Oh, do you think that love Can wipe the bloody stain from off my hands, Pour balm into my wounds, heal up my hurts, And wash my scarlet sins as white as snow?— For I have sinned.

Guido

They do not sin at all Who sin for love.

Duchess

No, I have sinned, and yet Perchance my sin will be forgiven me. I have loved much

[They kiss each other now for the first time in this Act, when suddenly the Duchess leaps up in the dreadful spasm of death, tears in agony at her dress, and finally, with face twisted and distorted with pain, falls back dead in a chair. Guido seizing her dagger from her belt, kills himself; and, as he falls across her knees, clutches at the cloak which is on the back of the chair, and throws it entirely over her. There is a little pause. Then down the passage comes the tramp of Soldiers; the door is opened, and the Lord Justice, the Headsman, and the Guard enter and see this figure shrouded in black, and Guido lying dead across her. The Lord Justice rushes forward and drags the cloak off the Duchess, whose face is now the marble image of peace, the sign of God’s forgiveness.]

Tableau

Curtain

Printed by T. and A. Constable, Printers to His Majesty at the Edinburgh University Press

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE DUCHESS OF PADUA ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG™ LICENSE

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg

mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to

anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any

alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg electronic works provided that:

• You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.” • You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works. • You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work. • You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you

must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund

of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg

Project Gutenberg is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg's goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 41 Watchung Plaza #516, Montclair NJ 07042, USA, +1 (862) 621-9288. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public

support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate.

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg eBooks with only a loose network of

volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.