

LIFE IS A DREAM

CALDERON DE LA BARCA

NOW FIRST TRANSLATED FULLY FROM THE SPANISH IN THE METRE OF THE ORIGINAL.

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

Two of the dramas contained in this volume are the most celebrated of all Calderon's writings. The first, "La Vida es Sueno", has been translated into many languages and performed with success on almost every stage in Europe but that of England. So late as the winter of 1866-7, in a Russian version, it drew crowded houses to the great theatre of Moscow; while a few years earlier, as if to give a signal proof of the reality of its title, and that Life was indeed a Dream, the Queen of Sweden expired in the theatre of Stockholm during the performance of "La Vida es Sueno". In England the play has been much studied for its literary value and the exceeding beauty and lyrical sweetness of some passages; but with the exception of a version by John Oxenford published in "The Monthly Magazine" for 1842, which being in blank verse does not represent the form of the original, no complete translation into English has been attempted. Some scenes translated with considerable elegance in the metre of the original were published by Archbishop Trench in 1856; but these comprised only a portion of the graver division of the drama. The present version of the entire play has been made with the advantages which the author's long experience in the study and interpretation of Calderon has enabled him to apply to this master-piece of the great Spanish poet. All the forms of verse have been preserved; while the closeness of the translation may be inferred from the fact, that not only the whole play but every speech and fragment of a speech are represented in English in the exact number of lines of the original, without the sacrifice, it is to be hoped, of one important idea.

A note by Hartzzenbusch in the last edition of the drama published at Madrid (1872), tells that "La Vida es Sueno", is founded on a story which turns out to be substantially the same as that with which English students are familiar as the foundation of the famous Induction to the "Taming of the Shrew". Calderon found it however in a different work from that in which Shakespeare met with it, or rather his predecessor, the anonymous author of "The Taming of a Shrew", whose work supplied to Shakespeare the materials of his own

comedy.

On this subject Malone thus writes. "The circumstance on which the Induction to the anonymous play, as well as to the present Comedy [Shakespeare's "Taming of the Shrew"], is founded, is related (as Langbaine has observed) by Heuterus, "Rerum Burgund." lib. iv. The earliest English original of this story in prose that I have met with is the following, which is found in Goulart's "Admirable and Memorable Histories", translated by E. Grimstone, quarto, 1607; but this tale (which Goulart translated from Heuterus) had undoubtedly appeared in English, in some other shape, before 1594:

"Philip called the good Duke of Burgundy, in the memory of our ancestors, being at Bruxelles with his Court, and walking one night after supper through the streets, accompanied by some of his favourites, he found lying upon the stones a certaine artisan that was very dronke, and that slept soundly. It pleased the prince in this artisan to make trial of the vanity of our life, whereof he had before discoursed with his familiar friends. He therefore caused this sleeper to be taken up, and carried into his palace; he commands him to be layed in one of the richest beds; a riche night cap to be given him; his foule shirt to be taken off, and to have another put on him of fine holland. When as this dronkard had digested his wine, and began to awake, behold there comes about his bed Pages and Groomes of the Duke's Chamber, who drawe the curteines, make many courtesies, and being bare-headed, aske him if it please him to rise, and what apparell it would please him to put on that day. They bring him rich apparell. This new Monsieur amazed at such courtesie, and doubting whether he dreamt or waked, suffered himselfe to be drest, and led out of the chamber. There came noblemen which saluted him with all honour, and conduct him to the Masse, where with great ceremonie they give him the booke of the Gospell, and the Pixe to kisse, as they did usually to the Duke. From the Masse they bring him back unto the pallace; he washes his hands, and sittes down at the table well furnished. After dinner, the Great Chamberlain commands cards to be brought with a great summe of money. This Duke in imagination playes with the chief of the Court. Then they carry him to walke in the gardein, and to hunt the hare, and to hawke. They bring him back into the pallace, where he sups in state. Candles being light the musitions begin to play; and the tables taken away, the gentlemen and gentlewomen fell to dancing. Then they played a pleasant comedie, after which followed a Banket, whereat they had presently store of Ipocras and pretious wine, with all sorts of confitures, to this prince of the new impression; so as he was dronke, and fell soundlie asleepe. Hereupon the Duke commanded that he should be disrobed of all his riche attire. He was put into his old ragges, and carried into the same place, where he had been found the night before; where he spent that night. Being awake in the morning, he began to remember what had happened before; he knewe not whether it were true indeede, or a dream that had troubled his braine. But in the end, after many discourses, he concludes that ALL WAS BUT A DREAME that had happened unto him; and so entertained his wife, his children, and his neighbours, without any other apprehension."

It is curious to find that the same anecdote which formed the Induction to the original "Taming of a Shrew", and which, from a comic point of view, Shakespeare so wonderfully developed in his own comedy, Calderon invested with such solemn and sublime dignity in "La Vida es Sueno". He found it, as Senor Hartzenbusch points out in the edition of 1872 already quoted, in the very amusing "Viage Entretenido" of Augustin de Rojas, which was

first published in 1603. Hartzzenbusch refers to the modern edition of Rojas, Madrid, 1793, tomo I, pp. 261, 262, 263, but in a copy of the Lerida edition of 1615, in my own possession, I find the anecdote at folios 118, 119, 120. There are some slight differences between the version of Rojas and that of Goulart, but the incidents and the persons are the same. The conclusion to which the artizan arrived at, in the version of Goulart, that all had been a dream, is expressed more strongly by the Duke himself in the story as told by Rojas.

“Y dijo entonces el Duque: ‘veis aqui, amigos, “Lo que es el Mundo: Todo es un Sueno”, pues esto verdaderamente ha pasado por este, como habeis visto, y le parece que lo ha sonado.’” —

The story in all probability came originally from the East. Mr. Lane in his translation of the Thousand and One Nights gives a very interesting narrative which he believes to be founded on an historical fact in which Haroun Al Raschid plays the part of the good Duke of Burgundy, and Abu-l-Hasan the original of Christopher Sly. The gravity of the treatment and certain incidents in this Oriental story recall more strongly Calderon's drama than the Induction to the “Taming of the Shrew”. “La Vida es Sueno” was first published either at the end of 1635 or beginning of 1636.

The “Aprobacion” for its publication along with eleven other dramas (not nine as Archbishop Trench has stated), was signed on the 6th of November in the former year by the official licenser, Juan Bautista de Sossa. The volume was edited by the poet's brother, Don Joseph Calderon. So scarce has this first authorised collection of any of Calderon's dramas become, that a Spanish writer Don Vicente Garcia de la Huerta, in his “Teatro Espanol” (Parte Segunda, tomo 3o), denies the existence of this volume of 1635, and states that it did not appear until 1640. As if to corroborate this view, Barrera in his “Catalogo del Teatro antiguo Espanol” gives the date 1640 to the “Primera parte de comedias de Calderon” edited by his brother Joseph.

There can be no doubt, however, that the volume appeared in 1635 or 1636 as stated. In 1637 Don Joseph Calderon published the “Second Part” of his brother's dramas containing like the former volume twelve plays.* In his dedication of this volume to D. Rodrigo de Mendoza, Joseph Calderon expressly alludes to the First Part of his brother's comedies which he had “printed.” “En la primera Parte, Excellentissimo Senor, de las comedias que imprimi de Don Pedro Calderon de La Barca, mi hermano,” etc. This of course settles the fact of the prior publication of the first Part. It is singular, however, to find that the most famous of all Calderon's dramas should have been frequently ascribed to Lope de Vega. So late as 1857 it is given in an Italian version by Giovanni La Cecilia, under the title of “La Vita e un Sogno”, as a drama of Lope de Vega, with the date 1628. This of course is a mistake, but Senor Hartzzenbusch, who makes no allusion to this circumstance, admits that two dramas of Lope de Vega, which it is presumed preceded the composition of Calderon's play turn on very nearly the same incidents as those of “La Vida es Sueno”. These are “Lo que ha de ser”, and “Barlan y Josafa”. He gives a passage from each of these dramas which seem to be the germ of the fine lament of Sigismund, which the reader will find translated in the present volume.

[footnote] *In the library of the British Museum there is a fine copy of this “Segunda Parte de Comedias de Don Pedro Calderon de la Barca” Madrid, 1637. Mr. Ticknor mentions

(1863) that he too had a copy of this interesting volume.

Senor Hartzenbusch, in the edition of Calderon's "La Vida es Sueno", already referred to (Madrid, 1872), prints the passages from Lope de Vega's two dramas, but in neither of them, he justly remarks, can we find anything that at all corresponds to this "grandioso caracter de Segismundo."

The second drama in this volume, "The Wonderful Magician", is perhaps better known to poetical students in England than even the first, from the spirited fragment Shelley has left us in his "Scenes from Calderon." The preoccupation of a subject by a great master throws immense difficulties in the way of any one who ventures to follow in the same path: but as Shelley allowed himself great licence in his versification, and either from carelessness or an imperfect knowledge of Spanish is occasionally unfaithful to the meaning of his author, it may be hoped in my own version that strict fidelity both as to the form as well as substance of the original may be some compensation for the absence of those higher poetical harmonies to which many of my readers will have been accustomed.

"El Magico Prodigioso" appeared for the first time in the same volume as "La Vida es Sueno", prepared for publication in 1635 by Don Joseph Calderon. The translation is comprised in the same number of lines as the original, and all the preceding remarks on "Life is a Dream", whether in reference to the period of the first publication of the drama in Spain, or the principles I kept in view while attempting this version may be applied to it. As in the Case of "Life is a Dream", "The Wonderful Magician" has previously been translated entire by an English writer, ("Justina", by J.H. 1848); but as Archbishop Trench truly observes, "the writer did not possess that command of the resources of the English language, which none more than Calderon requires."

The Legend on which Calderon founded "El Magico Prodigioso" will be found in Surius, "De probatis Sanctorum historiis", t. V. (Col. Agr. 1574), p. 351: "Vita et Martyrium SS. Cypriani et Justinae, autore Simeone Metaphraste", and in Chapter cxlii, of the "Legenda Aurea" of Jacobus de Voragine "De Sancta Justina virgine".

The martyrdom of the Saints took place in the year 290, and their festival is celebrated by the Church on the 26th of September.

Mr. Ticknor in his History of Spanish Literature, 1863, volume ii. p. 369, says that the Wonder-working Magician is founded on "the same legend on which Milman has founded his 'Martyr of Antioch.'" This is a mistake of the learned writer. "The Martyr of Antioch" is founded not on the history of St. Justina but of Saint Margaret, as Milman himself expressly states. Chapter xciii., "De Sancta Margareta", in the "Legenda Aurea" of Jacobus de Voragine contains her story.

The third translation in this volume is that of "The Purgatory of St. Patrick". This, though perhaps not so famous as the two preceding dramas, is intended to be given by Don P. De la Escosura, in a selection of Calderon's finest "comedias", now being edited by him for the Spanish Academy, as the representative piece of its class — namely, the mystical drama founded on the lives of Saints. Mr. Ticknor prefers it to the more celebrated "Devotion of the Cross," and says that it "is commonly ranked among the best religious plays of the Spanish theatre in the seventeenth century."

In all that relates to the famous cave known through the middle ages as the "Purgatory of

Saint Patrick”, as well as the Story of Luis Enius — the Owain Miles of Ancient English poetry — Calderon was entirely indebted to the little volume published at Madrid, in 1627, by Juan Perez de Montalvan, entitled “Vida y Purgatorio de San Patricio”. This singular work met with immense success. It went through innumerable editions, and continues to be reprinted in Spain as a chap-book, down to the present day. I have the fifth impression “improved and enlarged by the author himself,” Madrid, 1628, the year after its first appearance: also a later edition, Madrid, 1664. As early as 1637 a French translation appeared at Brussels by “F. A. S. Chartreux, a Bruxelles.” In 1642 a second French translation was published at Troyes, by “R. P. Francois Bouillon, de l’Ordre de S. Francois, et Bachelier de Theologie.” Mr. Thomas Wright in his “Essay on St. Patrick’s Purgatory,” London, 1844, makes the singular mistake of supposing that Bouillon’s “Histoire de la Vie et Purgatoire de S. Patrice” was founded on the drama of Calderon, it being simply a translation of Montalvan’s “Vida y Purgatorio,” from which, like itself, Calderon’s play was derived. Among other translations of Montalvan’s work may be mentioned one in Dutch (Brussels, 1668) and one in Portuguese (Lisbon, 1738). It was also translated into German and Italian, but I find no mention of an English version. For this reason I have thought that a few extracts might be interesting, as showing how closely Calderon adhered even to the language of his predecessor.

In all that relates to the Purgatory, Montalvan’s work is itself chiefly compiled from the “Florilegium Insulae Sanctorum, seu vitae et Actae sanctorum Hiberniae,” Paris, 1624, fol. This work, which has now become scarce, was written by Thomas Messingham an Irish priest, the Superior of the Irish Seminary in Paris. No complete English version appears to have been made of it, but a small tract in English containing everything in the original work that referred to St. Patrick’s Purgatory was published at Paris in 1718. As this tract is perhaps more scarce than even the Florilegium itself, the account of the Purgatory as given by Messingham from the MS. of Henry of Saltrey is reprinted in the notes to this drama in the quaint language of the anonymous translator. Of this tract, “printed at Paris in 1718” without the name of author, publisher or printer, I have not been able to trace another copy. In other points of interest connected with Calderon’s drama, particularly to the clearing up of the difficulty hitherto felt as to the confused list of authorities at the end, the reader is also referred to the notes.

The present version of “The Purgatory of Saint Patrick” is, with the exception of a few unimportant lines, an entirely new translation. It is made with the utmost care, imitating all the measures and contained, like the two preceding dramas, in the exact number of lines of the original. One passage of the translation which I published in 1853 is retained in the notes, as a tribute of respect to the memory of the late John Rutter Chorley, it having been mentioned with praise by that eminent Spanish scholar in an elaborate review of my earlier translations from Calderon, which appeared in the “Athenaeum”, Nov. 19 and Nov. 26, 1853.

It only remains to add that the text I have followed is that of Hartsenbusch in his edition of Calderon’s Comedias, Madrid, 1856 (“Biblioteca de Autores Espanoles”). His arrangement of the scenes has been followed throughout, thus enabling the reader in a moment to verify for himself the exactness of the translation by a reference to the original, a crucial test which I rather invite than decline.

CLAPHAM PARK, Easter, 1873.

LIFE IS A DREAM.

TO

DON JUAN EUGENIO HARTZENBUSCH,

POET, DRAMATIST, NOVELIST, AND CRITIC, THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS OF LIVING SPANISH WRITERS,

THIS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH IMITATIVE VERSE OF CALDERON'S MOST FAMOUS DRAMA, IS INSCRIBED, WITH THE ESTEEM AND REGARD OF THE AUTHOR.

PERSONS.

* * * * *

BASILIOUS, King of Poland.
SIGISMUND, his Son.
ASTOLFO, Duke of Muscovy.
CLOTALDO, a Nobleman.
ESTRELLA, a Princess.
ROSAURA, a Lady.
CLARIN, her Servant.
Soldiers.
Guards.
Musicians.
Attendants.
Ladies.
Servants.

* * * * *

The Scene is in the Court of Poland, in a fortress at some distance, and in the open field.

LIFE IS A DREAM.

* * * * *

ACT THE FIRST.

At one side a craggy mountain, at the other a tower, the lower part of which serves as the

prison of Sigismund. The door facing the spectators is half open. The action commences at nightfall.

SCENE I.

ROSAURA, CLARIN.

ROSAURA in man's attire appears on the rocky heights and descends to the plain. She is followed by CLARIN.

ROSAURA. Wild hippogriff swift speeding,
Thou that dost run, the winged winds exceeding,
Bolt which no flash illumines,
Fish without scales, bird without shifting plumes,
And brute awhile bereft
Of natural instinct, why to this wild cleft,
This labyrinth of naked rocks, dost sweep
Unreined, uncurbed, to plunge thee down the steep?
Stay in this mountain wold,
And let the beasts their Phaeton behold.
For I, without a guide,
Save what the laws of destiny decide,
Benighted, desperate, blind.
Take any path whatever that doth wind
Down this rough mountain to its base,
Whose wrinkled brow in heaven frowns in the sun's bright face.
Ah, Poland! in ill mood
Hast thou received a stranger, since in blood
The name thou writest on thy sands
Of her who hardly here fares hardly at thy hands.
My fate may well say so:—
But where shall one poor wretch find pity in her woe?

CLARIN. Say two, if you please;
Don't leave me out when making plaints like these.
For if we are the two
Who left our native country with the view
Of seeking strange adventures, if we be
The two who, madly and in misery,
Have got so far as this, and if we still
Are the same two who tumbled down this hill,
Does it not plainly to a wrong amount,
To put me in the pain and not in the account?

ROSAURA. I do not wish to impart,
Clarín, to thee, the sorrows of my heart;
Mourning for thee would spoil the consolation

Of making for thyself thy lamentation;
For there is such a pleasure in complaining,
That a philosopher I've heard maintaining
One ought to seek a sorrow and be vain of it,
In order to be privileged to complain of it.

CLARIN. That same philosopher
Was an old drunken fool, unless I err:
Oh, that I could a thousand thumps present him,
In order for complaining to content him!
But what, my lady, say,
Are we to do, on foot, alone, our way
Lost in the shades of night?
For see, the sun descends another sphere to light.

ROSAURA. So strange a misadventure who has seen?
But if my sight deceives me not, between
These rugged rocks, half-lit by the moon's ray
And the declining day,
It seems, or is it fancy? that I see
A human dwelling?

CLARIN. So it seems to me,
Unless my wish the longed-for lodging mocks.

ROSAURA. A rustic little palace 'mid the rocks
Uplifts its lowly roof,
Scarce seen by the far sun that shines aloof.
Of such a rude device
Is the whole structure of this edifice,
That lying at the feet
Of these gigantic crags that rise to greet
The sun's first beams of gold,
It seems a rock that down the mountain rolled.

CLARIN. Let us approach more near,
For long enough we've looked at it from here;
Then better we shall see
If those who dwell therein will generously
A welcome give us.

ROSAURA. See an open door
(Funereal mouth 'twere best the name it bore),
From which as from a womb
The night is born, engendered in its gloom.

[The sound of chains is heard within.]

CLARIN. Heavens! what is this I hear?

ROSAURA. Half ice, half fire, I stand transfixed with fear.

CLARIN. A sound of chains, is it not?
Some galley-slave his sentence here hath got;
My fear may well suggest it so may be.

* * * * *

SCENE II.

SIGISMUND, [in the tower.] ROSAURA, CLARIN.

SIGISMUND [within]. Alas! Ah, wretched me! Ah, wretched me!

ROSAURA. Oh what a mournful wail!
Again my pains, again my fears prevail.

CLARIN. Again with fear I die.

ROSAURA. Clarin!

CLARIN. My lady!

ROSAURA. Let us turn and fly
The risks of this enchanted tower.

CLARIN. For one,
I scarce have strength to stand, much less to run.

ROSAURA. Is not that glimmer there afar —
That dying exhalation — that pale star —
A tiny taper, which, with trembling blaze
Flickering 'twixt struggling flames and dying rays,
With ineffectual spark
Makes the dark dwelling place appear more dark?
Yes, for its distant light,
Reflected dimly, brings before my sight
A dungeon's awful gloom,
Say rather of a living corse, a living tomb;
And to increase my terror and surprise,
Drest in the skins of beasts a man there lies:
A piteous sight,
Chained, and his sole companion this poor light.
Since then we cannot fly,
Let us attentive to his words draw nigh,
Whatever they may be.

[The doors of the tower open wide, and SIGISMUND is discovered in chains and clad in the skins of beasts. The light in the tower increases.]

SIGISMUND. Alas! Ah, wretched me! Ah, wretched me!
Heaven, here lying all forlorn,
I desire from thee to know,

Since thou thus dost treat me so,
Why have I provoked thy scorn
By the crime of being born?—
Though for being born I feel
Heaven with me must harshly deal,
Since man's greatest crime on earth
Is the fatal fact of birth —
Sin supreme without appeal.
This alone I ponder o'er,
My strange mystery to pierce through;
Leaving wholly out of view
Germs my hapless birthday bore,
How have I offended more,
That the more you punish me?
Must not other creatures be
Born? If born, what privilege
Can they over me allege
Of which I should not be free?
Birds are born, the bird that sings,
Richly robed by Nature's dower,
Scarcely floats — a feathered flower,
Or a bunch of blooms with wings —
When to heaven's high halls it springs,
Cuts the blue air fast and free,
And no longer bound will be
By the nest's secure control:—
And with so much more of soul,
Must I have less liberty?
Beasts are born, the beast whose skin
Dappled o'er with beauteous spots,
As when the great pencil dots
Heaven with stars, doth scarce begin
From its impulses within—
Nature's stern necessity,
To be schooled in cruelty,—
Monster, waging ruthless war:—
And with instincts better far
Must I have less liberty?
Fish are born, the spawn that breeds
Where the oozy sea-weeds float,
Scarce perceives itself a boat,
Scaled and plated for its needs,
When from wave to wave it speeds,
Measuring all the mighty sea,
Testing its profundity
To its depths so dark and chill:—

And with so much freer will,
Must I have less liberty?
Streams are born, a coiled-up snake
When its path the streamlet finds,
Scarce a silver serpent winds
'Mong the flowers it must forsake,
But a song of praise doth wake,
Mournful though its music be,
To the plain that courteously
Opes a path through which it flies:—
And with life that never dies,
Must I have less liberty?
When I think of this I start,
Aetna-like in wild unrest
I would pluck from out my breast
Bit by bit my burning heart:—
For what law can so depart
From all right, as to deny
One lone man that liberty —
That sweet gift which God bestows
On the crystal stream that flows,
Birds and fish that float or fly?

ROSAURA. Fear and deepest sympathy
Do I feel at every word.

SIGISMUND. Who my sad lament has heard?
What! Clotaldo!

CLARIN [aside to his mistress]. Say 'tis he.

ROSAURA. No, 'tis but a wretch (ah, me!)
Who in these dark caves and cold
Hears the tale your lips unfold.

SIGISMUND. Then you'll die for listening so,
That you may not know I know
That you know the tale I told.

[Seizes her.]

Yes, you'll die for loitering near:
In these strong arms gaunt and grim
I will tear you limb from limb.

CLARIN. I am deaf and couldn't hear:—
No!

ROSAURA. If human heart you bear,
'Tis enough that I prostrate me.
At thy feet, to liberate me!

SIGISMUND. Strange thy voice can so unbend me,
Strange thy sight can so suspend me,
And respect so penetrate me!
Who art thou? for though I see
Little from this lonely room,
This, my cradle and my tomb.
Being all the world to me,
And if birthday it could be,
Since my birthday I have known
But this desert wild and lone,
Where throughout my life's sad course
I have lived, a breathing corse,
I have moved, a skeleton;
And though I address or see
Never but one man alone,
Who my sorrows all hath known,
And through whom have come to me
Notions of earth, sky, and sea;
And though harrowing thee again,
Since thou'lt call me in this den,
Monster fit for bestial feasts,
I'm a man among wild beasts,
And a wild beast amongst men.
But though round me has been wrought
All this woe, from beasts I've learned
Polity, the same discerned
Heeding what the birds had taught,
And have measured in my thought
The fair orbits of the spheres;
You alone, 'midst doubts and fears,
Wake my wonder and surprise —
Give amazement to my eyes,
Admiration to my ears.
Every time your face I see
You produce a new amaze:
After the most steadfast gaze,
I again would gazer be.
I believe some hydropsy
Must affect my sight, I think
Death must hover on the brink
Of those wells of light, your eyes,
For I look with fresh surprise,
And though death result, I drink.
Let me see and die: forgive me;
For I do not know, in faith,
If to see you gives me death,

What to see you not would give me;
Something worse than death would grieve me,
Anger, rage, corroding care,
Death, but double death it were,
Death with tenfold terrors rife,
Since what gives the wretched life,
Gives the happy death, despair!

ROSAURA. Thee to see wakes such dismay,
Thee to hear I so admire,
That I'm powerless to inquire,
That I know not what to say:
Only this, that I to-day,
Guided by a wiser will,
Have here come to cure my ill,
Here consoled my grief to see,
If a wretch consoled can be
Seeing one more wretched still.
Of a sage, who roamed dejected,
Poor, and wretched, it is said,
That one day, his wants being fed
By the herbs which he collected,
"Is there one" (he thus reflected)
"Poorer than I am to-day?"
Turning round him to survey,
He his answer got, detecting
A still poorer sage collecting
Even the leaves he threw away.
Thus complaining to excess,
Mourning fate, my life I led,
And when thoughtlessly I said
To myself, "Does earth possess
One more steeped in wretchedness?"
I in thee the answer find.
Since revolving in my mind,
I perceive that all my pains
To become thy joyful gains
Thou hast gathered and entwined.
And if haply some slight solace
By these pains may be imparted,*
Hear attentively the story
Of my life's supreme disasters.
I am

[footnote] *The metre changes here to the vocal "asonante" in "a—e", and continues to the end of the Fourth Scene.

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SCENE III.

CLOTALDO, Soldiers, SIGISMUND, ROSAURA, CLARIN.

CLOTALDO [within]. Warders of this tower,
Who, or sleeping or faint-hearted,
Give an entrance to two persons
Who herein have burst a passage

ROSAURA. New confusion now I suffer.

SIGISMUND. 'Tis Clotaldo, who here guards me;
Are not yet my miseries ended?

CLOTALDO [within]. Hasten hither, quick! be active!
And before they can defend them,
Kill them on the spot, or capture!

[Voices within.] Treason!

CLARIN. Watchguards of this tower,
Who politely let us pass here,
Since you have the choice of killing
Or of capturing, choose the latter.

[Enter CLOTALDO and Soldiers; he with a pistol, and all with their faces covered.]

CLOTALDO [aside to the Soldiers]. Keep your faces all well covered,
For it is a vital matter
That we should be known by no one,
While I question these two stragglers.

CLARIN. Are there masqueraders here?

CLOTALDO. Ye who in your ignorant rashness
Have passed through the bounds and limits
Of this interdicted valley,
'Gainst the edict of the King,
Who has publicly commanded
None should dare descry the wonder
That among these rocks is guarded,
Yield at once your arms and lives,
Or this pistol, this cold aspic
Formed of steel, the penetrating
Poison of two balls will scatter,
The report and fire of which
Will the air astound and startle.

SIGISMUND. Ere you wound them, ere you hurt them,
Will my life, O tyrant master,
Be the miserable victim
Of these wretched chains that clasp me;

Since in them, I vow to God,
I will tear myself to fragments
With my hands, and with my teeth,
In these rocks here, in these caverns,
Ere I yield to their misfortunes,
Or lament their sad disaster.

CLOTALDO. If you know that your misfortunes,
Sigismund, are unexampled,
Since before being born you died
By Heaven's mystical enactment;
If you know these fetters are
Of your furies oft so rampant
But the bridle that detains them,
But the circle that contracts them.
Why these idle boasts? The door
[To the Soldiers.]
Of this narrow prison fasten;
Leave him there secured.

SIGISMUND. Ah, heavens,
It is wise of you to snatch me
Thus from freedom! since my rage
'Gainst you had become Titanic,
Since to break the glass and crystal
Gold-gates of the sun, my anger
On the firm-fixed rocks' foundations
Would have mountains piled of marble.

CLOTALDO. 'Tis that you should not so pile them
That perhaps these ills have happened,

[Some of the SOLDIERS lead SIGISMUND into his prison, the doors of which are closed upon him.]

* * * * *

SCENE IV.

ROSAURA, CLOTALDO, CLARIN, Soldiers.

ROSAURA. Since I now have seen how pride
Can offend thee, I were hardened
Sure in folly not here humbly
At thy feet for life to ask thee;
Then to me extend thy pity,
Since it were a special harshness
If humility and pride,
Both alike were disregarded.

CLARIN. If Humility and Pride
Those two figures who have acted
Many and many a thousand times
In the “autos sacramentales”,
Do not move you, I, who am neither
Proud nor humble, but a sandwich
Partly mixed of both, entreat you
To extend to us your pardon.

CLOTALDO. Ho!

SOLDIERS. My lord?

CLOTALDO. Disarm the two,
And their eyes securely bandage,
So that they may not be able
To see whither they are carried.

ROSAURA. This is, sir, my sword; to thee
Only would I wish to hand it,
Since in fine of all the others
Thou art chief, and I could hardly
Yield it unto one less noble.

CLARIN. Mine I'll give the greatest rascal
Of your troop: [To a Soldier.] so take it, you.

ROSAURA. And if I must die, to thank thee
For thy pity, I would leave thee
This as pledge, which has its value
From the owner who once wore it;
That thou guard it well, I charge thee,
For although I do not know
What strange secret it may carry,
This I know, that some great mystery
Lies within this golden scabbard,
Since relying but on it
I to Poland here have travelled
To revenge a wrong.

CLOTALDO [aside.] Just heavens!
What is this? Still graver, darker,
Grow my doubts and my confusion,
My anxieties and my anguish.—
Speak, who gave you this?

ROSAURA. A woman.

CLOTALDO. And her name?

ROSAURA. To that my answer
Must be silence.

CLOTALDO. But from what
Do you now infer, or fancy,
That this sword involves a secret?

ROSAURA. She who gave it said: “Depart hence
Into Poland, and by study,
Stratagem, and skill so manage
That this sword may be inspected
By the nobles and the magnates
Of that land, for you, I know,
Will by one of them be guarded,”—
But his name, lest he was dead,
Was not then to me imparted.

CLOTALDO [aside]. Bless me, Heaven! what’s this I hear?
For so strangely has this happened,
That I cannot yet determine
If ‘tis real or imagined.
This is the same sword that I
Left with beauteous Violante,
As a pledge unto its wearer,
Who might seek me out thereafter,
As a son that I would love him,
And protect him as a father.
What is to be done (ah, me!)
In confusion so entangled,
If he who for safety bore it
Bears it now but to dispatch him,
Since condemned to death he cometh
To my feet? How strange a marvel!
What a lamentable fortune!
How unstable! how unhappy!
This must be my son — the tokens
All declare it, superadded
To the flutter of the heart,
That to see him loudly rappeth
At the breast, and not being able
With its throbs to burst its chamber,
Does as one in prison, who,
Hearing tumult in the alley,
Strives to look from out the window;
Thus, not knowing what here passes
Save the noise, the heart uprusheth
To the eyes the cause to examine —
They the windows of the heart,
Out through which in tears it glances.
What is to be done? (O Heavens!)

What is to be done? To drag him
Now before the King were death;
But to hide him from my master,
That I cannot do, according
To my duty as a vassal.
Thus my loyalty and self-love
Upon either side attack me;
Each would win. But wherefore doubt?
Is not loyalty a grander,
Nobler thing than life, than honour?
Then let loyalty live, no matter
That he die; besides, he told me,
If I well recall his language,
That he came to revenge a wrong,
But a wronged man is a lazar,—
No, he cannot be my son,
Not the son of noble fathers.
But if some great chance, which no one
Can be free from, should have happened,
Since the delicate sense of honour
Is a thing so fine, so fragile,
That the slightest touch may break it,
Or the faintest breath may tarnish,
What could he do more, do more,
He whose cheek the blue blood mantles,
But at many risks to have come here
It again to re-establish?
Yes, he is my son, my blood,
Since he shows himself so manly.
And thus then betwixt two doubts
A mid course alone is granted:
'Tis to seek the King, and tell him
Who he is, let what will happen.
A desire to save my honour
May appease my royal master;
Should he spare his life, I then
Will assist him in demanding
His revenge; but if the King
Should, persisting in his anger,
Give him death, then he will die
Without knowing I'm his father.—
[To ROSAURA and CLARIN.]
Come, then, come then with me, strangers.
Do not fear in your disasters
That you will not have companions
In misfortune; for so balanced

Are the gains of life or death,
That I know not which are larger.

[Exeunt.]

* * * * *

SCENE V.

A HALL IN THE ROYAL PALACE.

[Enter at one side ASTOLFO and Soldiers, and at the other the INFANTA ESTRELLA and her Ladies. Military music and salutes within.]

ASTOLFO. Struck at once with admiration
At thy starry eyes outshining,
Mingle many a salutation,
Drums and trumpet-notes combining,
Founts and birds in alternation;
Wondering here to see thee pass,
Music in grand chorus gathers
All her notes from grove and grass:
Here are trumpets formed of feathers,
There are birds that breathe in brass.
All salute thee, fair Senora,
Ordnance as their Queen proclaim thee,
Beauteous birds as their Aurora,
As their Pallas trumpets name thee,
And the sweet flowers as their Flora;
For Aurora sure thou art,
Bright as day that conquers night —
Thine is Flora's peaceful part,
Thou art Pallas in thy might,
And as Queen thou rul'st my heart.

ESTRELLA. If the human voice obeying
Should with human action pair,
Then you have said ill in saying
All these flattering words and fair,
Since in truth they are gainsaying
This parade of victory,
'Gainst which I my standard rear,
Since they say, it seems to me,
Not the flatteries that I hear,
But the rigours that I see.
Think, too, what a base invention
From a wild beast's treachery sprung,—
Fraudful mother of dissension —

Is to flatter with the tongue,
And to kill with the intention.

ASTOLFO. Ill informed you must have been,
Fair Estrella, thus to throw
Doubt on my respectful mien:
Let your ear attentive lean
While the cause I strive show.
King Eustorgius the Fair,
Third so called, died leaving two
Daughters, and Basilius heir;
Of his sisters I and you
Are the children — I forbear
To recall a single scene
Save what's needful. Clorilene,
Your good mother and my aunt,
Who is now a habitant
Of a sphere of sunnier sheen,
Was the elder, of whom you
Are the daughter; Recisunda,
Whom God guard a thousand years,
Her fair sister (Rosamunda
Were she called if names were true)
Wed in Muscovy, of whom
I was born. 'Tis needful now
The commencement to resume.
King Basilius, who doth bow
'Neath the weight of years, the doom
Age imposes, more inclined
To the studies of the mind
Than to women, wifeless, lone,
Without sons, to fill his throne
I and you our way would find.
You, the elder's child, averred,
That the crown you stood more nigh:
I, maintaining that you erred,
Held, though born of the younger, I,
Being a man, should be preferred.
Thus our mutual pretension
To our uncle we related,
Who replied that he would mention
Here, and on this day he stated,
What might settle the dissension.
With this end, from Muscovy
I set out, and with that view,
I to-day fair Poland see,
And not making war on you,

Wait till war you make on me.
Would to love — that God so wise —
That the crowd may be a sure
Astrologue to read the skies,
And this festive truce secure
Both to you and me the prize,
Making you a Queen, but Queen
By my will, our uncle leaving
You the throne we'll share between —
And my love a realm receiving
Dearer than a King's demesne.

ESTRELLA. Well, I must be generous too,
For a gallantry so fine;
This imperial realm you view,
If I wish it to be mine
'Tis to give it unto you.
Though if I the truth confessed,
I must fear your love may fail —
Flattering words are words at best,
For perhaps a truer tale
Tells that portrait on your breast.

ASTOLFO. On that point complete content
Will I give your mind, not here,
For each sounding instrument
[Drums are heard.]
Tells us that the King is near,
With his Court and Parliament.

* * * * *

SCENE VI.

The KING BASILIUS, with his retinue. —
ASTOLFO, ESTRELLA, Ladies, Soldiers.

ESTRELLA. Learned Euclid ...

ASTOLFO. Thales wise . .

ESTRELLA. The vast Zodiac ...

ASTOLFO. The star spaces ...

ESTRELLA. Who dost soar to ...

ASTOLFO. Who dost rise...

ESTRELLA. The sun's orbit ...

ASTOLFO. The stars' places ...

ESTRELLA. To describe ...

ASTOLFO. To map the skies ...

ESTRELLA. Let me humbly interlacing ...

ASTOLFO. Let me lovingly embracing ...

ESTRELLA. Be the tendril of thy tree.

ASTOLFO. Bend respectfully my knee.

BASILIUS. Children, that dear word displacing

Colder names, my arms here bless;

And be sure, since you assented

To my plan, my love's excess

Will leave neither discontented,

Or give either more or less.

And though I from being old

Slowly may the facts unfold,

Hear in silence my narration,

Keep reserved your admiration,

Till the wondrous tale is told.

You already know — I pray you

Be attentive, dearest children,*

Great, illustrious Court of Poland,

Faithful vassals, friends and kinsmen,

You already know — my studies

Have throughout the whole world given me

The high title of "the learned,"

Since 'gainst time and time's oblivion

The rich pencils of Timanthes,

The bright marbles of Lysippus,

Universally proclaim me

Through earth's bounds the great Basilius.

You already know the sciences

That I feel my mind most given to

Are the subtle mathematics,

By whose means my clear prevision

Takes from rumour its slow office,

Takes from time its jurisdiction

Of, each day, new facts disclosing;

Since in algebraic symbols

When the fate of future ages

On my tablets I see written,

I anticipate time in telling

What my science hath predicted.

All those circles of pure snow,

All those canopies of crystal,
Which the sun with rays illumines,
Which the moon cuts in its circles,
All those orbs of twinkling diamond,
All those crystal globes that glisten,
All that azure field of stars
Where the zodiac signs are pictured,
Are the study of my life,
Are the books where heaven has written
Upon diamond-dotted paper,
Upon leaves by sapphires tinted,
With light luminous lines of gold,
In clear characters distinctly
All the events of human life,
Whether adverse or benignant.
These so rapidly I read
That I follow with the quickness
Of my thoughts the swiftest movements
Of their orbits and their circles.
Would to heaven, that ere my mind
To those mystic books addicted
Was the comment of their margins
And of all their leaves the index,
Would to heaven, I say, my life
Had been offered the first victim
Of its anger, that my death-stroke
Had in this way have been given me,
Since the unhappy find even merit
Is the fatal knife that kills them,
And his own self-murderer
Is the man whom knowledge injures!—
I may say so, but my story
So will say with more distinctness,
And to win your admiration
Once again I pray you listen.—
Clorilene, my wife, a son
Bore me, so by fate afflicted
That on his unhappy birthday
All Heaven's prodigies assisted.
Nay, ere yet to life's sweet life
Gave him forth her womb, that living
Sepulchre (for death and life
Have like ending and beginning),
Many a time his mother saw
In her dreams' delirious dimness
From her side a monster break,

Fashioned like a man, but sprinkled
With her blood, who gave her death,
By that human viper bitten.
Round his birthday came at last,
All its auguries fulfilling
(For the presages of evil
Seldom fail or even linger):
Came with such a horoscope,
That the sun rushed blood-red tinted
Into a terrific combat
With the dark moon that resisted;
Earth its mighty lists outspread
As with lessening lights diminished
Strove the twin-lamps of the sky.
'Twas of all the sun's eclipses
The most dreadful that it suffered
Since the hour its bloody visage
Wept the awful death of Christ.
For o'erwhelmed in glowing cinders
The great orb appeared to suffer
Nature's final paroxysm.
Gloom the glowing noontide darkened,
Earthquake shook the mightiest buildings,
Stones the angry clouds rained down,
And with blood ran red the rivers.
In this frenzy of the sun,
In its madness and delirium,
Sigismund was born, thus early
Giving proofs of his condition,
Since his birth his mother slew,
Just as if these words had killed her,
"I am a man, since good with evil
I repay here from the beginning,"—
I, applying to my studies,
Saw in them as 'twere forewritten
This, that Sigismund would be
The most cruel of all princes,
Of all men the most audacious,
Of all monarchs the most wicked;
That his kingdom through his means
Would be broken and partitioned,
The academy of the vices,
And the high school of sedition;
And that he himself, borne onward
By his crimes' wild course resistless,
Would even place his feet on me;

For I saw myself down-stricken,
Lying on the ground before him
(To say this what shame it gives me!)
While his feet on my white hairs
As a carpet were imprinted.
Who discredits threatened ill,
Specially an ill previsioned
By one's study, when self-love
Makes it his peculiar business?—
Thus then crediting the fates
Which far off my science witnessed,
All these fatal auguries
Seen though dimly in the distance,
I resolved to chain the monster
That unhappily life was given to,
To find out if yet the stars
Owned the wise man's weird dominion.
It was publicly proclaimed
That the sad ill-omened infant
Was stillborn. I then a tower
Caused by forethought to be builded
'Mid the rocks of these wild mountains
Where the sunlight scarce can gild it,
Its glad entrance being barred
By these rude shafts obeliscal.
All the laws of which you know,
All the edicts that prohibit
Anyone on pain of death
That secluded part to visit
Of the mountain, were occasioned
By this cause, so long well hidden.
There still lives Prince Sigismund,
Miserable, poor, in prison.
Him alone Clotaldo sees,
Only tends to and speaks with him;
He the sciences has taught him,
He the Catholic religion
Has imparted to him, being
Of his miseries the sole witness.
Here there are three things: the first
I rate highest, since my wishes
Are, O Poland, thee to save
From the oppression, the affliction
Of a tyrant King, because
Of his country and his kingdom
He were no benignant father

Who to such a risk could give it.
Secondly, the thought occurs
That to take from mine own issue
The plain right that every law
Human and divine hath given him
Is not Christian charity;
For by no law am I bidden
To prevent another proving,
Say, a tyrant, or a villain,
To be one myself: supposing
Even my son should be so guilty,
That he should not crimes commit
I myself should first commit them.
Then the third and last point is,
That perhaps I erred in giving
Too implicit a belief
To the facts foreseen so dimly;
For although his inclination
Well might find its precipices,
He might possibly escape them:
For the fate the most fastidious,
For the impulse the most powerful.
Even the planets most malicious
Only make free will incline,
But can force not human wishes.
And thus 'twist these different causes
Vacillating and unfixed,
I a remedy have thought of
Which will with new wonder fill you.
I to-morrow morning purpose,
Without letting it be hinted
That he is my son, and therefore
Your true King, at once to fix him
As King Sigismund (for the name
Still he bears that first was given him)
'Neath my canopy, on my throne,
And in fine in my position,
There to govern and command you,
Where in dutiful submission
You will swear to him allegiance.
My resources thus are triple,
As the causes of disquiet
Were which I revealed this instant.
The first is; that he being prudent,
Careful, cautious and benignant,
Falsifying the wild actions

That of him had been predicted,
You'll enjoy your natural prince,
He who has so long been living
Holding court amid these mountains,
With the wild beasts for his circle.
Then my next resource is this:
If he, daring, wild, and wicked,
Proudly runs with loosened rein
O'er the broad plain of the vicious,
I will have fulfilled the duty
Of my natural love and pity;
Then his righteous deposition
Will but prove my royal firmness,
Chastisement and not revenge
Leading him once more to the prison.
My third course is this: the Prince
Being what my words have pictured,
From the love I owe you, vassals,
I will give you other princes
Worthier of the crown and sceptre;
Namely, my two sisters' children,
Who their separate pretensions
Having happily commingled
By the holy bonds of marriage,
Will then fill their fit position.
This is what a king commands you,
This is what a father bids you,
This is what a sage entreats you,
This is what an old man wishes;
And as Seneca, the Spaniard,
Says, a king for all his riches
Is but slave of his Republic,
This is what a slave petitions.

[footnote] *The metre changes here to the "asonante" in "i—e", or their vocal equivalents, and is kept up for the remainder of the Act.

ASTOLFO. If on me devolves the answer,
As being in this weighty business
The most interested party,
I, of all, express the opinion:—
Let Prince Sigismund appear;
He's thy son, that's all-sufficient.

ALL. Give to us our natural prince,
We proclaim him king this instant!

BASILIOUS. Vassals, from my heart I thank you

For this deference to my wishes:—
Go, conduct to their apartments
These two columns of my kingdom,
On to-morrow you shall see him.

ALL. Live, long live great King Basilius!

[Exeunt all, accompanying ESTRELLA and ASTOLFO;
The King remains.]

* * * * *

SCENE VII.

CLOTALDO, ROSAURA, CLARIN, and BASILIUS.

CLOTALDO. May I speak to you, sire?

BASILIUS. Clotaldo,
You are always welcome with me.

CLOTALDO. Although coming to your feet
Shows how freely I'm admitted,
Still, your majesty, this once,
Fate as mournful as malicious
Takes from privilege its due right,
And from custom its permission.

BASILIUS. What has happened?

CLOTALDO. A misfortune,
Sire, which has my heart afflicted
At the moment when all joy
Should have overflown and filled it.

BASILIUS. Pray proceed.

CLOTALDO. This handsome youth here,
Inadvertently, or driven
By his daring, pierced the tower,
And the Prince discovered in it.
Nay

BASILIUS. Clotaldo, be not troubled
At this act, which if committed
At another time had grieved me,
But the secret so long hidden
Having myself told, his knowledge
Of the fact but matters little.
See me presently, for I
Much must speak upon this business,

And for me you much must do
For a part will be committed
To you in the strangest drama
That perhaps the world e'er witnessed.
As for these, that you may know
That I mean not your remissness
To chastise, I grant their pardon.
[Exit.]

CLOTALDO. Myriad years to my lord be given!

* * * * *

SCENE VIII.

CLOTALDO, ROSAURA, and CLARIN.

CLOTALDO [aside]. Heaven has sent a happier fate;
Since I need not now admit it,
I'll not say he is my son.—
Strangers who have wandered hither,
You are free.

ROSAURA. I give your feet
A thousand kisses.

CLARIN. I say misses,
For a letter more or less
'Twixt two friends is not considered.

ROSAURA. You have given me life, my lord,
And since by your act I'm living,
I eternally will own me
As your slave.

CLOTALDO. The life I've given
Is not really your true life,
For a man by birth uplifted
If he suffers an affront
Actually no longer liveth;
And supposing you have come here
For revenge as you have hinted,
I have not then given you life,
Since you have not brought it with you,
For no life disgraced is life.—
[Aside.] (This I say to arouse his spirit.)

ROSAURA. I confess I have it not,
Though by you it has been given me;
But revenge being wreaked, my honour

I will leave so pure and limpid,
All its perils overcome,
That my life may then with fitness
Seem to be a gift of yours.

CLOTALDO. Take this burnished sword which hither
You brought with you; for I know,
To revenge you, 'tis sufficient,
In your enemy's blood bathed red;
For a sword that once was girded
Round me (I say this the while
That to me it was committed),
Will know how to right you.

ROSAURA. Thus
In your name once more I gird it,
And on it my vengeance swear,
Though the enemy who afflicts me
Were more powerful.

CLOTALDO. Is he so?

ROSAURA. Yes; so powerful, I am hindered
Saying who he is, not doubting
Even for greater things your wisdom
And calm prudence, but through fear
Lest against me your prized pity
Might be turned.

CLOTALDO. 'Twill rather be,
By declaring it, more kindled;
Otherwise you bar the passage
'Gainst your foe of my assistance.—
[Aside.] (Would that I but knew his name!)

ROSAURA. Not to think I set so little
Value on such confidence,
Know my enemy and my victim
Is no less than Prince Astolfo,
Duke of Muscovy.

CLOTALDO [aside]. Resistance
Badly can my grief supply
Since 'tis heavier than I figured.
Let us sift the matter deeper.—
If a Muscovite by birth, then
He who is your natural lord
Could not 'gainst you have committed
Any wrong; reseek your country,
And abandon the wild impulse

That has driven you here.

ROSAURA. I know,
Though a prince, he has committed
'Gainst me a great wrong.

CLOTALDO. He could not,
Even although your face was stricken
By his angry hand. [Aside.] (Oh, heavens!)

ROSAURA. Mine's a wrong more deep and bitter.

CLOTALDO. Tell it, then; it cannot be
Worse than what my fancy pictures.

ROSAURA. I will tell it; though I know not,
With the respect your presence gives me,
With the affection you awaken,
With the esteem your worth elicits,
How with bold face here to tell you
That this outer dress is simply
An enigma, since it is not
What it seems. And from this hint, then,
If I'm not what I appear,
And Astolfo with this princess
Comes to wed, judge how by him
I was wronged: I've said sufficient.

[Exeunt ROSAURA and CLARIN.]

CLOTALDO. Listen! hear me! wait! oh, stay!
What a labyrinthine thicket
Is all this, where reason gives
Not a thread whereby to issue?
My own honour here is wronged,
Powerful is my foe's position,
I a vassal, she a woman;
Heaven reveal some way in pity,
Though I doubt it has the power;
When in such confused abysses,
Heaven is all one fearful presage,
And the world itself a riddle.

* * * * *

ACT THE SECOND.

A HALL IN THE ROYAL PALACE.

* * * * *

SCENE I.

BASILIUS and CLOTALDO.

CLOTALDO. Everything has been effected
As you ordered.

BASILIUS. How all happened*
Let me know, my good Clotaldo.

[footnote] *The metre of this and the following scene is the asonante in a—e.

CLOTALDO. It was done, sire, in this manner.

With the tranquillising draught,
Which was made, as you commanded,
Of confections duly mixed
With some herbs, whose juice extracted
Has a strange tyrannic power,
Has some secret force imparted,
Which all human sense and speech
Robs, deprives, and counteracteth,
And as 'twere a living corpse
leaves the man whose lips have quaffed it
So asleep that all his senses,
All his powers are overmastered
— No need have we to discuss
That this fact can really happen,
Since, my lord, experience gives us
Many a clear and proved example;
Certain 'tis that Nature's secrets
May by medicine be extracted,
And that not an animal,
Not a stone, or herb that's planted,
But some special quality
Doth possess: for if the malice
Of man's heart, a thousand poisons
That give death, hath power to examine,
Is it then so great a wonder
That, their venom being abstracted,
If, as death by some is given,
Sleep by others is imparted?
Putting, then, aside the doubt
That 'tis possible this should happen,
A thing proved beyond all question
Both by reason and example
— With the sleeping draught, in fine,
Made of opium superadded
To the poppy and the henbane,

I to Sigismund's apartment —
Cell, in fact — went down, and with him
Spoke awhile upon the grammar
Of the sciences, those first studies
Which mute Nature's gentle masters,
Silent skies and hills, had taught him;
In which school divine and ample,
The bird's song, the wild beast's roar,
Were a lesson and a language.
Then to raise his spirit more
To the high design you planned here,
I discoursed on, as my theme,
The swift flight, the stare undazzled
Of a pride-plumed eagle bold,
Which with back-averted talons,
Scorning the tame fields of air,
Seeks the sphere of fire, and passes
Through its flame a flash of feathers,
Or a comet's hair untangled.
I extolled its soaring flight,
Saying, "Thou at last art master
Of thy house, thou'rt king of birds,
It is right thou should'st surpass them."
He who needed nothing more
Than to touch upon the matter
Of high royalty, with a bearing
As became him, boldly answered;
For in truth his princely blood
Moves, excites, inflames his ardour
To attempt great things: he said,
"In the restless realm of atoms
Given to birds, that even one
Should swear fealty as a vassal!
I, reflecting upon this,
Am consoled by my disasters,
For, at least, if I obey,
I obey through force: untrammelled,
Free to act, I ne'er will own
Any man on earth my master."—
This, his usual theme of grief,
Having roused him nigh to madness,
I occasion took to proffer
The drugged draught: he drank, but hardly
Had the liquor from the vessel
Passed into his breast, when fastest
Sleep his senses seized, a sweat,

Cold as ice, the life-blood hardened
In his veins, his limbs grew stiff,
So that, knew I not 'twas acted,
Death was there, feigned death, his life
I could doubt not had departed.
Then those, to whose care you trust
This experiment, in a carriage
Brought him here, where all things fitting
The high majesty and the grandeur
Of his person are provided.
In the bed of your state chamber
They have placed him, where the stupor
Having spent its force and vanished,
They, as 'twere yourself, my lord,
Him will serve as you commanded:
And if my obedient service
Seems to merit some slight largess,
I would ask but this alone
(My presumption you will pardon),
That you tell me, with what object
Have you, in this secret manner,
To your palace brought him here?

BASILIOUS. Good Clotaldo, what you ask me
Is so just, to you alone
I would give full satisfaction.
Sigismund, my son, the hard
Influence of his hostile planet
(As you know) doth threat a thousand
Dreadful tragedies and disasters;
I desire to test if Heaven
(An impossible thing to happen)
Could have lied — if having given us
Proofs unnumbered, countless samples
Of his evil disposition,
He might prove more mild, more guarded
At the lest, and self-subdued
By his prudence and true valour
Change his character; for 'tis man
That alone controls the planets.
This it is I wish to test,
Having brought him to this palace,
Where he'll learn he is my son,
And display his natural talents.
If he nobly hath subdued him,
He will reign; but if his manners
Show him tyrannous and cruel,

Then his chains once more shall clasp him.
But for this experiment,
Now you probably will ask me
Of what moment was't to bring him
Thus asleep and in this manner?
And I wish to satisfy you,
Giving all your doubts an answer.
If to-day he learns that he
Is my son, and some hours after
Finds himself once more restored
To his misery and his shackles,
Certain 'tis that from his temper
Blank despair may end in madness —
But once knowing who he is,
Can he be consoled thereafter?
Yes, and thus I wish to leave
One door open, one free passage,
By declaring all he saw
Was a dream. With this advantage
We attain two ends. The first
Is to put beyond all cavil
His condition, for on waking
He will show his thoughts, his fancies:
To console him is the second;
Since, although obeyed and flattered,
He beholds himself awhile,
And then back in prison shackled
Finds him, he will think he dreamed.
And he rightly so may fancy,
For, Clotaldo, in this world
All who live but dream they act here.

CLOTALDO. Reasons fail me not to show
That the experiment may not answer;
But there is no remedy now,
For a sign from the apartment
Tells me that he hath awoken
And even hitherward advances.

BASILIOUS. It is best that I retire;
But do you, so long his master,
Near him stand; the wild confusion
That his waking sense may darken
Dissipate by simple truth.

CLOTALDO. Then your licence you have granted
That I may declare it?

BASILIUUS. Yes;
For it possibly may happen
That admonished of his danger
He may conquer his worst passions.
[Exit]

* * * * *

SCENE II.

CLARIN and CLOTALDO.

CLARIN [aside]. Four good blows are all it cost me
To come here, inflicted smartly
By a red-robed halberdier,
With a beard to match his jacket,
At that price I see the show,
For no window's half so handy
As that which, without entreating
Tickets of the ticket-master,
A man carried with himself;
Since for all the feasts and galas
Cool effrontery is the window
Whence at ease he gazes at them.

CLOTALDO [aside]. This is Clarin, heavens! of her,
Yes, I say, of her the valet,
She, who dealing in misfortunes,
Has my pain to Poland carried:—
Any news, friend Clarin?

CLARIN. News?
Yes, sir, since your great compassion
Is disposed Rosaura's outrage
To revenge, she has changed her habit,
And resumed her proper dress.

CLOTALDO. 'Tis quite right, lest possible scandal
Might arise.

CLARIN. More news: her name
Having changed and wisely bartered
For your niece's name, she now
So in honour has advanced her,
That among Estrella's ladies
She here with her in the palace
Lives.

CLOTALDO. 'Tis right that I once more
Should her honour re-establish.

CLARIN. News; that anxiously she waiteth
For that very thing to happen,
When you may have time to try it.

CLOTALDO. Most discreetly has she acted;
Soon the time will come, believe me,
Happily to end this matter.

CLARIN. News, too; that she's well regaled,
Feasted like a queen, and flattered
On the strength of being your niece.
And the last news, and the saddest,
Is that I who here came with her
Am with hunger almost famished.
None remember me, or think
I am Clarin, clarion rather,
And that if that clarion sounded,
All the Court would know what passes.
For there are two things, to wit,
A brass clarion and a lackey,
That are bad at keeping secrets;
And it so may chance, if haply
I am forced to break my silence,
They of me may sing this passage:
"Never, when the day is near,
Does clarion sound more clear."*

*[footnote] *"Clarin, que rompe el albor, No suena mejor."— This is a quotation by Calderon from his own drama, "En esta vida todo es verdad y todo mentira." — Act 2, sc. x.

CLOTALDO. Your complaint is too well-founded;
I will get you satisfaction,
Meanwhile you may wait on me.

CLARIN. See, sir, Sigismund advances.

* * * * *

SCENE III.

[Music and song.] SIGISMUND enters, lost in amazement. Servants minister to him, presenting costly robes. —CLOTALDO, and CLARIN.

SIGISMUND. Help me, Heaven, what's this I see!
Help me, Heaven, what's this I view!
Things I scarce believe are true,
But, if true, which fright not me.
I in palaces of state?
I 'neath silks and cloth of gold?
I, around me, to behold
Rich-robed servants watch and wait?
I so soft a bed to press

While sweet sleep my senses bowed?
I to wake in such a crowd,
Who assist me even to dress?
‘Twere deceit to say I dream,
Waking I recall my lot,
I am Sigismund, am I not?
Heaven make plain what dark doth seem!
Tell me, what has phantasy —
Wild, misleading, dream-adept —
So effected while I slept,
That I still the phantoms see?
But let that be as it may,
Why perplex myself and brood?
Better taste the present good,
Come what will some other day.

FIRST SERVANT [aside to the’ Second Servant, and to CLARIN]. What a sadness doth oppress him!

SECOND SERVANT. Who in such-like case would be
Less surprised and sad than he?

CLARIN. I for one.

SECOND SERVANT [to the First]. You had best address him.

FIRST SERVANT [to SIGISMUND]. May they sing again?

SIGISMUND. No, no;
I don’t care to hear them sing.

SECOND SERVANT. I conceived the song might bring
To your thought some ease.

SIGISMUND. Not so;
Voiced that but charm the ear
Cannot soothe my sorrow’s pain;
‘Tis the soldier’s martial strain
That alone I love to hear.

CLOTALDO. May your Highness, mighty Prince,
Deign to let me kiss your hand,
I would first of all this land
My profound respect evince.

SIGISMUND [aside]. ‘Tis my gaoler! how can he
Change his harshness and neglect
To this language of respect?
What can have occurred to me?

CLOTALDO. The new state in which I find you
Must create a vague surprise,

Doubts unnumbered must arise
To bewilder and to blind you;
I would make your prospect fair,
Through the maze a path would show,
Thus, my lord, 'tis right you know
That you are the prince and heir
Of this Polish realm: if late
You lay hidden and concealed
'Twas that we were forced to yield
To the stern decrees of fate,
Which strange ills, I know not how,
Threatened on this land to bring
Should the laurel of a king
Ever crown thy princely brow.
Still relying on the power
Of your will the stars to bind,
For a man of resolute mind
Can them bind how dark they lower;
To this palace from your cell
In your life-long turret keep
They have borne you while dull sleep
Held your spirit in its spell.
Soon to see you and embrace
Comes the King, your father, here —
He will make the rest all clear.

SIGISMUND. Why, thou traitor vile and base,
What need I to know the rest,
Since it is enough to know
Who I am my power to show,
And the pride that fills my breast?
Why this treason brought to light
Has thou to thy country done,
As to hide from the King's son,
'Gainst all reason and all right,
This his rank?

CLOTALDO. Oh, destiny!

SIGISMUND. Thou the traitor's part has played
'Gainst the law; the King betrayed,
And done cruel wrong to me;
Thus for each distinct offence
Have the law, the King, and I
Thee condemned this day to die
By my hands.

SECOND SERVANT. Prince

SIGISMUND No pretence
Shall undo the debt I owe you.
Catiff, hence! By Heaven! I say,
If you dare to stop my way
From the window I will throw you.

SECOND SERVANT. Fly, Clotaldo!

CLOTALDO. Woe to thee,
In thy pride so powerful seeming,
Without knowing thou art dreaming!
[Exit.

SECOND SERVANT. Think

SIGISMUND. Away! don't trouble me.

SECOND SERVANT. He could not the King deny.

SIGISMUND. Bade to do a wrongful thing
He should have refused the King;
And, besides, his prince was I.

SECOND SERVANT. 'Twas not his affair to try
If the act was wrong or right.

SIGISMUND. You're indifferent, black or white,
Since so pertly you reply.

CLARIN. What the Prince says is quite true,
What you do is wrong, I say.

SECOND SERVANT. Who gave you this licence, pray?

CLARIN. No one gave; I took it.

SIGISMUND. Who
Art thou, speak?

CLARIN. A meddling fellow,
Prating, prying, fond of scrapes,
General of all jackanapes,
And most merry when most mellow.

SIGISMUND. You alone in this new sphere
Have amused me.

CLARIN. That's quite true, sir,
For I am the great amuser
Of all Sigismunds who are here.

* * * * *

SCENE IV.

ASTOLFO, SIGISMUND, CLARIN, Servants, and Musicians.

ASTOLFO. Thousand tunes be blest the day,
Prince, that gives thee to our sight,
Sun of Poland, whose glad light
Makes this whole horizon gay,
As when from the rosy fountains
Of the dawn the stream-rays run,
Since thou issuest like the sun
From the bosom of the mountains!
And though late do not defer
With thy sovran light to shine;
Round thy brow the laurel twine —
Deathless crown.

SIGISMUND. God guard thee, sir.

ASTOLFO. In not knowing me I o'erlook,
But alone for this defect,
This response that lacks respect,
And due honour. Muscovy's Duke
Am I, and your cousin born,
Thus my equal I regard thee.

SIGISMUND. Did there, when I said "God guard thee,"
Lie concealed some latent scorn? —
Then if so, now having got
Thy big name, and seeing thee vexed,
When thou com'st to see me next
I will say God guard thee not.

SECOND SERVANT [to ASTOLFO]. Think, your Highness, if he errs
Thus, his mountain birth's at fault,
Every word is an assault.
[To SIGISMUND.]
Duke Astolfo, sir, prefers

SIGISMUND. Tut! his talk became a bore,
Nay his act was worse than that,
He presumed to wear his hat.

SECOND SERVANT. As grandee.

SIGISMUND. But I am more.

SECOND SERVANT. Nevertheless respect should be
Much more marked betwixt ye two
Than 'twixt others.

SIGISMUND. And pray who
Asked your meddling thus with me?

* * * * *

SCENE V.

ESTRELLA. — THE SAME.

ESTRELLA. Welcome may your Highness be,
Welcomed oft to this thy throne,
Which long longing for its own
Finds at length its joy in thee;
Where, in spite of bygone fears,
May your reign be great and bright,
And your life in its long flight
Count by ages, not by years.

SIGISMUND (to CLARIN). Tell me, thou, say, who can be
This supreme of loveliness —
Goddess in a woman's dress —
At whose feet divine we see
Heaven its choicest gifts doth lay?—
This sweet maid? Her name declare.

CLARIN. 'Tis your star-named* cousin fair.

[footnote] *'Estrella', which means star in Spanish.

SIGISMUND. Nay, the sun, 'twere best to say.—
[To ESTRELLA.]

Though thy sweet felicitation
Adds new splendour to my throne,
'Tis for seeing thee alone
That I merit gratulation;
Therefore I a prize have drawn
That I scarce deserved to win,
And am doubly blessed therein:—
Star, that in the rosy dawn
Dimmest with transcendent ray
Orbs that brightest gem the blue,
What is left the sun to do,
When thou risest with the day?—
Give me then thy hand to kiss,
In whose cup of snowy whiteness
Drinks the day delicious brightness.

ESTRELLA. What a courtly speech is this?

ASTOLFO [aside]. If he takes her hand I feel
I am lost.

SECOND SERVANT [aside]. Astolfo's grief
I perceive, and bring relief:—
Think, my lord, excuse my zeal,
That perhaps this is too free,
Since Astolfo

SIGISMUND. Did I say
Woe to him that stops my way?—

SECOND SERVANT. What I said was just.

SIGISMUND. To me
This is tiresome and absurd.
Nought is just, or good or ill,
In my sight that balks my will.

SECOND SERVANT. Why, my lord, yourself I heard
Say in any righteous thing
It was proper to obey.

SIGISMUND. You must, too, have heard me say
Him I would from window throw
Who should tease me or defy?

SECOND SERVANT. Men like me perhaps might show
That could not be done, sir.

SIGISMUND. No?
Then, by Heaven, at least, I'll try!
[He seizes him in his arms and rushes to the side. All follow, and
return immediately.]

ASTOLFO. What is this I see? Oh, woe!

ESTRELLA. Oh, prevent him! Follow me!
[Exit.]

SIGISMUND. [returning]. From the window into the sea
He has fallen; I told him so.

ASTOLFO. These strange bursts of savage malice
You should regulate, if you can;
Wild beasts are to civilised man
As rude mountains to a palace.

SIGISMUND. Take a bit of advice for that:
Pause ere such bold words are said,
Lest you may not have a head
Upon which to hang your hat.

[Exit ASTOLFO.]

* * * * *

SCENE VI.

BASILIUS, SIGISMUND, and CLARIN.

BASILIUS. What's all this?

SIGISMUND. A trifling thing:
One who teased and thwarted me
I have just thrown into the sea.

CLARIN [to SIGISMUND]. Know, my lord, it is the King.

BASILIUS. Ere the first day's sun hath set,
Has thy coming cost a life?

SIGISMUND. Why he dared me to the strife,
And I only won the bet.

BASILIUS. Prince, my grief, indeed is great,
Coming here when I had thought
That admonished thou wert taught
To o'ercome the stars and fate,
Still to see such rage abide
In the heart I hoped was free,
That thy first sad act should be
A most fearful homicide.
How could I, by love conducted,
Trust me to thine arms' embracing,
When their haughty interlacing,
Has already been instructed
How to kill? For who could see,
Say, some dagger bare and bloody,
By some wretch's heart made ruddy,
But would fear it? Who is he,
Who may happen to behold
On the ground the gory stain
Where another man was slain
But must shudder? The most bold
Yields at once to Nature's laws;
Thus I, seeing in your arms
The dread weapon that alarms,
And the stain, must fain withdraw;
And though in embraces dear
I would press you to my heart,
I without them must depart,
For, alas! your arms I fear.

SIGISMUND. Well, without them I must stay,
As I've staid for many a year,
For a father so severe,

Who could treat me in this way,
Whose unfeeling heart could tear me
From his side even when a child,
Who, a denizen of the wild,
As a monster there could rear me,
Any by many an artful plan
Sought my death, it cannot grieve me
Much his arms will not receive me
Who has scarcely left me man.

BASILIOUS. Would to God it had not been
Act of mine that name conferred,
Then thy voice I ne'er had heard,
Then thy boldness ne'er had seen.

SIGISMUND. Did you manhood's right retain,
I would then have nought to say,
But to give and take away
Gives me reason to complain;
For although to give with grace
Is the noblest act 'mongst men,
To take back the gift again
Is the basest of the base.

BASILIOUS. This then is thy grateful mood
For my changing thy sad lot
To a prince's!

SIGISMUND. And for what
Should I show my gratitude!
Tyrant of my will o'erthrown,
If thou hoary art and gray,
Dying, what do'st give me? Say,
Do'st thou give what's not mine own?
Thou'rt my father and my King,
Then the pomp these walls present
Comes to me by due descent
As a simple, natural thing.
Yes, this sunshine pleaseth me,
But 'tis not through thee I bask;
Nay, a reckoning I might ask
For the life, love, liberty
That through thee I've lost so long:
Thine 'tis rather to thank me,
That I do not claim from thee
Compensation for my wrong.

BASILIOUS. Still untamed and uncontrolled;—
Heaven fulfils its word I feel,

I to that same court appeal
'Gainst thy taunts, thou vain and bold,
But although the truth thou'st heard,
And now know'st thy name and race,
And do'st see thee in this place,
Where to all thou art preferred,
Yet be warned, and on thee take
Ways more mild and more beseeching,
For perhaps thou art but dreaming,
When it seems that thou'rt awake.
[Exit.]

SIGISMUND. Is this, then, a phantom scene? —
Do I wake in seeming show?—
No, I dream not, since I know
What I am and what I've been.
And although thou should'st repent thee,
Remedy is now too late.
Who I am I know, and fate,
Howsoe'er thou should'st lament thee,
Cannot take from me my right
Of being born this kingdom's heir.
If I saw myself erewhile
Prisoned, bound, kept out of sight,
'Twas that never on my mind
Dawned the truth; but now I know
Who I am — a mingled show
Of the man and beast combined.

* * * * *

SCENE VII.

ROSAURA, in female attire; SIGISMUND, CLARIN, and Servants.

ROSAURA [aside.] To wait upon Estrella I come here,
And lest I meet Astolfo tremble with much fear;
Clotaldo's wishes are
The Duke should know me not, and from afar
See me, if see he must.
My honour is at stake, he says; my trust
Is in Clotaldo's truth.
He will protect my honour and my youth.

CLARIN [to SIGISMUND]. Of all this palace here can boast,
All that you yet have seen, say which has pleased you most?

SIGISMUND. Nothing surprised me, nothing scared,

Because for everything I was prepared;
But if I felt for aught, or more or less
Of admiration, 'twas the loveliness
Of woman; I have read
Somewhere in books on which my spirit fed,
That which caused God the greatest care to plan,
Because in him a little world he formed, was man;
But this were truer said, unless I err,
Of woman, for a little heaven he made in her;
She who in beauty from her birth
Surpasses man as heaven surpasseth earth;
Nay, more, the one I see.

ROSAURA [aside]. The Prince is here; I must this instant flee.

SIGISMUND. Hear, woman! stay;
Nor wed the western with the orient ray,
Flying with rapid tread;
For joined the orient rose and western red,
The light and the cold gloom,
The day will sink untimely to its tomb.
But who is this I see?

ROSAURA [aside]. I doubt and yet believe that it is he.

SIGISMUND [aside]. This beauty I have seen
Some other time.

ROSAURA [aside]. This proud, majestic mien,
This form I once saw bound
Within a narrow cell.

SIGISMUND [aside]. My life I have found.—
Woman, the sweetest name
That man can breathe, or flattering language frame,
Who art thou? for before
I see thee, I believe and I adore;
Faith makes my love sublime,
Persuading me we've met some other time.
Fair woman, speak; my will must be obeyed.

ROSAURA. In bright Estrella's train a hapless maid.—
[Aside.] He must not know my name.

SIGISMUND. The sun, say rather, of that star whose flame,
However bright its blaze
Is but the pale reflection of thy rays.
In the fair land of flowers,
The realm of sweets that lies in odorous bowers,
The goddess rose I have seen
By right divine of beauty reign as queen.

I have seen where brightest shine
Gems, the assembled glories of the mine,
The brilliant throng elect the diamond king
For the superior splendour it doth fling.
Amid the halls of light,
Where the unresting star-crowds meet at night,
I have seen fair Hesper rise
And take the foremost place of all the skies.
And in that higher zone
Where the sun calls the planets round his throne,
I have seen, with sovereign sway,
That he presides the oracle of the day.
How, then, 'mid flowers of earth or stars of air,
'Mid stones or suns, if that which is most fair
The preference gains, canst thou
Before a lesser beauty bend and bow,
When thine own charms compose
Something more bright than sun, stone, star, or rose?

* * * * *

SCENE VIII.

CLOTALDO, who remains at the side-scene; SIGISMUND, CLARIN, and Servants.

CLOTALDO [aside]. To calm Prince Sigismund devolves on me,
Because 'twas I who reared him: — What do I see?

ROSAURA. Thy favour, sir, I prize;
To thee the silence of my speech replies;
For when the reason's dull, the mind depressed,
He best doth speak who keeps his silence best.

SIGISMUND. You must not leave me. Stay:
What! would you rob my senses of the ray
Your beauteous presence gave?

ROSAURA. That licence, from your Highness, I must crave.

SIGISMUND. The violent efforts that you make
Show that you do not ask the leave you take.

ROSAURA. I hope to take it, if it is not given.

SIGISMUND. You rouse my courtesy to rage, by heaven!—
In me resistance, as it were, distils
A cruel poison that my patience kills.

ROSAURA. Then though that poison may be strong,
The source of fury, violence, and wrong,

Potent thy patience to subdue,
It dare not the respect to me that's due.

SIGISMUND. As if to show I may,
You take the terror of your charms away.
For I am but too prone
To attempt the impossible; I to-day have thrown
Out of this window one who said, like you,
I dare not do the thing I said I would do.
Now just to show I can,
I may throw out your honour, as the man.

CLOTALDO [aside]. More obstinate doth he grow;
What course to take, O heavens! I do not know,
When wild desire, nay, crime,
Perils my honour for the second time.

ROSAURA. Not vainly, as I see,
This hapless land was warned thy tyranny
In fearful scandals would eventuate,
In wrath and wrong, in treachery, rage and hate.
But who in truth could claim
Aught from a man who is but a man in name,
Audacious, cruel, cold,
Inhuman, proud, tyrannical and bold,
'Mong beasts a wild beast born?—

SIGISMUND. It was to save me from such words of scorn
So courteously I spoke,
Thinking to bind you by a gentler yoke;
But if I am in aught what you have said,
Then, as God lives, I will be all you dread.
Ho, there! here leave us. See to it at your cost,
The door be locked; let no one in.

[Exeunt CLARIN and the attendants.]

ROSAURA. I'm lost!
Consider

SIGISMUND. I'm a despot, and 'tis vain
You strive to move me, or my will restrain.

CLOTALDO [aside]. Oh, what a moment! what an agony!
I will go forth and stop him though I die.
[He advances.]

My lord, consider, stay

SIGISMUND. A second time you dare to cross my way.
Old dotard: do you hold
My rage in such slight awe you are so bold?

What brought you hither? Speak!

CLOTALDO. The accents of this voice, however weak,
To tell you to restrain
Your passions, if as King you wish to reign,—
Not to be cruel, though you deem
Yourself the lord of all, for all may be a dream.

SIGISMUND. You but provoke my rage
By these old saws, the unwelcome light of age,
In killing you, at least I'll see
If 'tis a dream or truth.

[As he is about to draw his dagger CLOTALDO detains it, and throws himself on his knees.]

CLOTALDO. Sole hope for me
To save my life is thus to humbly kneel.

SIGISMUND. Take your audacious hand from off my steel.

CLOTALDO. Till some kind aid be sent,
Till some one come who may your rage prevent,
I will not loose my hold.

ROSAURA. Oh, Heaven!

SIGISMUND. I say,
Loose it, old dotard, grim and gaunt and gray,
Or by another death

[They struggle.]

I'll crush you in my arms while you have breath.

ROSAURA. Quick! quick! they slay
Clotaldo, help! oh, help!

[ASTOLFO enters at this moment, and CLOTALDO falls at his feet; he stands between them.]

ASTOLFO. This strange affray,
What can it mean, magnanimous Prince? would you
So bright a blade imbrue
In blood that age already doth congeal?
Back to its sheath return the shining steel.

SIGISMUND. Yes, when it is bathed red
In his base blood.

ASTOLFO. This threatened life hath fled
For sanctuary to my feet;
I must protect it in that poor retreat.

SIGISMUND. Protect your own life, then, for in this way,

Striking at it, I will the grudge repay
I owe you for the past.

ASTOLFO. I thus defend
My life; but majesty will not offend.
[ASTOLFO draws his sword and they fight.]

CLOTALDO. Oh! wound him not, my lord.

* * * * *

SCENE IX.

BASILIUS, ESTRELLA and Attendants, SIGISMUND, ASTOLFO, and CLOTALDO.

BASILIUS. Swords flashing here!—

ESTRELLA [aside]. Astolfo is engaged: — Oh, pain severe!

BASILIUS. What caused this quarrel? Speak, say why?

ASTOLFO. 'Tis nothing now, my lord, since thou art by.

SIGISMUND. 'Tis much, although thou now art by, my lord.
I wished to kill this old man with my sword.

BASILIUS. Did you not then respect
These snow-white hairs?

CLOTALDO. My lord will recollect
They scarce deserved it, being mine.

SIGISMUND. Who dares
To ask of me do I respect white hairs?
Your own some day
My feet may trample in the public way,
For I have not as yet revenged my wrong,
Your treatment so unjust and my sad state so long.
[Exit.]

BASILIUS. But ere that dawn doth break,
You must return to sleep, where when you wake
All that hath happened here will seem —
As is the glory of the world — a dream.

[Exeunt The King, CLOTALDO, and Attendants.]

* * * * *

SCENE X.

ESTRELLA and ASTOLFO

ASTOLFO. Ah, how rarely fate doth lie

When it some misfortune threatens!*

Dubious when 'tis good that's promised,
When 'tis evil, ah, too certain!—
What a good astrologer
Would he be, whose art foretelleth
Only cruel things; for, doubtless,
They would turn out true for ever!
This in Sigismund and me
Is exemplified, Estrella,
Since between our separate fortunes
Such a difference is presented.
In his case had been foreseen
Murders, miseries, and excesses,
And in all they turned out true,
Since all happened as expected.
But in mine, here seeing, lady,
Rays so rare and so resplendent
That the sun is but their shadow.
And even heaven a faint resemblance,
When fate promised me good fortune,
Trophies, praises, and all blessings,
It spoke ill and it spoke well;
For it was of both expressive,
When it held out hopes of favour,
But disdain alone effected.

[footnote] *The vocal asonante in e—e here commences, and continues to the end of the Sixteenth Scene.

ESTRELLA. Oh, I doubt not these fine speeches
Are quite true, although intended
Doubtless for that other lady,
She whose portrait was suspended
From your neck, when first, Astolfo,
At this Court here you addressed me.
This being so, 'tis she alone
Who these compliments deserveth.
Go and pay them to herself,
For like bills that are protested
In the counting-house of love,
Are those flatteries and finesses
Which to other kings and ladies
Have been previously presented.

* * * * *

SCENE XI.

ROSAURA, who remains at the side; ESTRELLA, and ASTOLFO.

ROSAURA [aside]. Well, thank God, my miseries
Have attained their lowest level,
Since by her who sees this sight
Nothing worse can be expected.

ASTOLFO. Then that portrait from my breast
Shall be taken, that thy perfect
Beauty there may reign instead.
For where bright Estrella enters
Shadow cannot be, or star
Where the sun; I go to fetch it.—
[Aside.] Pardon, beautiful Rosaura,
This offence; the absent never,
Man or woman, as this shows,
Faith of plighted vows remember.
[Exit.]

[ROSAURA comes forward.]

ROSAURA [aside]. Not a single word I heard,
Being afraid they might observe me.

ESTRELLA. Oh, Astrea!

ROSAURA. My good lady!

ESTRELLA. Nothing could have pleased me better
Than your timely coming here.
I have something confidential
To entrust you with.

ROSAURA. You honour
Far too much my humble service.

ESTRELLA. Brief as is the time, Astrea,
I have known you, you already
Of my heart possess the keys
'Tis for this and your own merits
That I venture to entrust you
With what oft I have attempted
From myself to hide.

ROSAURA. Your slave!

ESTRELLA. Then concisely to express it,
Know, Astolfo, my first cousin
('Tis enough that word to mention,
For some things may best be said
When not spoken but suggested),
Soon expects to wed with me,
If my fate so far relenteth,

As that by one single bliss
All past sorrows may be lessened.
I was troubled, the first day
That we met, to see suspended
From his neck a lady's portrait.
On the point I urged him gently,
He so courteous and polite
Went immediately to get it,
And will bring it here. From him
I should feel quite disconcerted
To receive it. You here stay,
And request him to present it
Unto you. I say no more.
You are beautiful and clever,
You must know too what is love.
[Exit.]

* * * * *

SCENE XII.

ROSAURA. Would I knew it not! O help me
Now, kind heaven! for who could be
So prudential, so collected,
As to know how best to act
In so painful a dilemma?
Is there in the world a being,
Is there one a more inclement
Heaven has marked with more misfortunes,
Has 'mid more of sorrow centred?—
What, bewildered, shall I do,
When 'tis vain to be expected
That my reason can console me,
Or consoling be my helper?
From my earliest misfortune
Everything that I've attempted
Has been but one misery more —
Each the other's sad successor,
All inheritors of themselves.
Thus, the Phoenix they resemble,
One is from the other born,
New life springs where old life endeth,
And the young are warmly cradled
By the ashes of the elder.
Once a wise man called them cowards,
Seeing that misfortunes never

Have been seen to come alone.
But I call them brave, intrepid,
Who go straight unto their end,
And ne'er turn their backs in terror:—
By the man who brings them with him
Everything may be attempted,
Since he need on no occasion
Have the fear of being deserted.
I may say so, since at all times,
Whatsoever life presented,
I, without them, never saw me,
Nor will they grow weary ever,
Till they see me in death's arms,
Wounded by fate's final weapon.
Woe is me! but what to-day
Shall I do in this emergence?—
If I tell my name, Clotaldo,
Unto whom I am indebted
For my very life and honour,
May be with me much offended;
Since he said my reparation
Must in silence be expected.
If I tell not to Astolfo
Who I am, and he detects me
How can I dissemble then?
For although a feigned resemblance
Eyes and voice and tongue might try,
Ah, the truthful heart would tremble,
And expose the lie. But wherefore
Study what to do? 'Tis certain
That however I may study,
Think beforehand how to nerve me,
When at last the occasion comes,
Then alone what grief suggesteth
I will do, for no one holds
In his power the heart's distresses.
And thus what to say or do
As my soul cannot determine,
Grief must only reach to-day
Its last limit, pain be ended,
And at last an exit make
From the doubts that so perplex me
How to act: but until then
Help me, heaven, oh, deign to help me!

* * * * *

SCENE XIII.

ASTOLFO, with the portrait; and ROSAURA.

ASTOLFO. Here then is the portrait, Princess:
But, good God!

ROSAURA. Your Highness trembles;
What has startled, what surprised you?

ASTOLFO. Thee, Rosaura, to see present.

ROSAURA. I Rosaura? Oh, your Highness
Is deceived by some resemblance
Doubtless to some other lady;
I'm Astrea, one who merits
Not the glory of producing
An emotion so excessive.

ASTOLFO. Ah, Rosaura thou mayst feign,
But the soul bears no deception,
And though seeing thee as Astrea,
As Rosaura it must serve thee.

ROSAURA. I, not knowing what your Highness
Speaks of, am of course prevented
From replying aught but this,
That Estrella (the bright Hesper
Of this sphere) was pleased to order
That I here should wait expectant
For that portrait, which to me
She desires you give at present:
For some reason she prefers
It through me should be presented —
So Estrella — say, my star —
Wishes — so a fate relentless
Wills — in things that bring me loss —
So Estrella now expecteth.

ASTOLFO. Though such efforts you attempt,
Still how badly you dissemble,
My Rosaura! Tell the eyes
In their music to keep better
Concert with the voice, because
Any instrument whatever
Would be out of tune that sought
To combine and blend together
The true feelings of the heart
With the false words speech expresses.

ROSAURA. I wait only, as I said,
For the portrait.

ASTOLFO. Since you're bent then
To the end to keep this tone,
I adopt it, and dissemble.
Tell the Princess, then, Astrea,
That I so esteem her message,
That to send to her a copy
Seems to me so slight a present,
How so highly it is valued
By myself, I think it better
To present the original,
And you easily may present it,
Since, in point of fact, you bring it
With you in your own sweet person.

ROSAURA. When it has been undertaken
By a man, bold, brave, determined,
To obtain a certain object,
Though he get perhaps a better,
Still not bringing back the first
He returns despised: I beg, then,
That your highness give the portrait;
I, without it, dare not venture.

ASTOLFO. How, then, if I do not give it
Will you get it?

ROSAURA. I will get it
Thus, ungrateful.
[She attempts to snatch it.]

ASTOLFO. 'Tis in vain.

ROSAURA. It must ne'er be seen, no, never
In another woman's hands.

ASTOLFO. Thou art dreadful.

ROSAURA. Thou deceptive.

ASTOLFO. Oh, enough, Rosaura mine.

ROSAURA. Thine! Thou liest, base deserter.
[Both struggle for the portrait.]

* * * * *

SCENE XIV.

ESTRELLA, ROSAURA, and ASTOLFO.

ESTRELLA. Prince! Astrea! What is this?

ASTOLFO [aside] Heavens! Estrella!

ROSAURA [aside]. Love befriend me;
Give me wit enough my portrait
To regain: — If thou would'st learn then
[To ESTRELLA.]
What the matter is, my lady,
I will tell thee.

ASTOLFO [aside to ROSAURA.] Would'st o'erwhelm me?

ROSAURA. You commanded me to wait here
For the Prince, and representing
You, to get from him a portrait.
I remained alone, expecting,
And, as often by one thought
Is some other thought suggested,
Seeing that you spoke of portraits,
I, reminded thus, remembered
That I had one of myself
In my sleeve: I wished to inspect it,
For a person quite alone
Even by trifles is diverted.
From my hand I let it fall
On the ground; the Prince, who entered
With the other lady's portrait,
Raised up mine, but so rebellious
Was he to what you had asked him
That, instead of his presenting
One, he wished to keep the other.
Since he mine will not surrender
To my prayers and my entreaties:
Angry at this ill-timed jesting
I endeavoured to regain it,
That which in his hand is held there
Is my portrait, if you see it;
You can judge of the resemblance.

ESTRELLA. Duke, at once, give up the portrait.
[She takes it from his hand.]

ASTOLFO. Princess

ESTRELLA. Well, the tints were blended
By no cruel hand, methinks.

ROSAURA. Is it like me?

ESTRELLA. Like! 'Tis perfect.

ROSAURA. Now demand from him the other.

ESTRELLA. Take your own, and leave our presence.

ROSAURA [aside]. I have got my portrait back;
Come what may I am contented.
[Exit.]

* * * * *

SCENE XV.

ESTRELLA and ASTOLFO.

ESTRELLA. Give me now the other portrait;
For — although perhaps I never
May again address or see you —
I desire not, no, to let it
In your hands remain, if only
For my folly in requesting
You to give it.

ASTOLFO [aside]. How escape
From this singular dilemma?—
Though I wish, most beauteous Princess,
To obey thee and to serve thee,
Still I cannot give the portrait
Thou dost ask for, since

ESTRELLA. A wretched
And false-hearted lover art thou.
Now I wish it not presented,
So to give thee no pretext
For reminding me that ever
I had asked it at thy hands.
[Exit.]

ASTOLFO. Hear me! listen! wait! I remember! —
God, what has thou done, Rosaura?
Why, or wherefore, on what errand,
To destroy thyself and me
Hast thou Poland rashly entered?
[Exit.]

* * * * *

SCENE XVI.

PRISON OF THE PRINCE IN THE TOWER.

SIGISMUND, as at the commencement, clothed in skins, chained, and lying on the ground; CLOTALDO, Two Servants, and CLARIN.

CLOTALDO. Leave him here on the ground,
Where his day,— its pride being o'er,—
Finds its end too.

A SERVANT. As before
With the chain his feet are bound.

CLARIN. Never from that sleep profound
Wake, O Sigismund, or rise,
To behold with wondering eyes
All thy glorious life o'erthrown,
Like a shadow that hath flown,
Like a bright brief flame that dies!

CLOTALDO. One who can so wisely make
Such reflections on this case
Should have ample time and space,
Even for the Solon's sake,
[To the Servant.]
To discuss it; him you'll take
To this cell here, and keep bound.
[Pointing to an adjoining room]

CLARIN. But why me?

CLOTALDO. Because 'tis found
Safe, when clarions secrets know,
Clarions to lock up, that so
They may not have power to sound.

CLARIN. Did I, since you treat me thus,
Try to kill my father? No.
Did I from the window throw
That unlucky Icarus?
Is my drink somniferous?
Do I dream? Then why be pent?

CLOTALDO. 'Tis a clarion's punishment.

CLARIN. Then a horn of low degree,
Yea, a cornet I will be,
A safe, silent instrument.
[They take him away, and CLOTALDO remains alone.]

* * * * *

SCENE XVII.

BASILIUS, disguised; CLOTALDO, and SIGISMUND, asleep.

BASILIUS. Hark, Clotaldo!

CLOTALDO. My lord here?
Thus disguised, your majesty?

BASILIUS. Foolish curiosity
Leads me in this lowly gear
To find out, ah, me! with fear,
How the sudden change he bore.

CLOTALDO. There behold him as before
In his miserable state.

BASILIUS. Wretched Prince! unhappy fate!
Birth by baneful stars watched o'er!—
Go and wake him cautiously,
Now that strength and force lie chained
By the opiate he hath drained.

CLOTALDO. Muttering something restlessly,
See he lies.

BASILIUS. Let's listen; he
May some few clear words repeat.

SIGISMUND. [Speaking in his sleep.]
Perfect Prince is he whose heat
Smites the tyrant where he stands,
Yes, Clotaldo dies by my hands,
Yes, my sire shall kiss my feet.

CLOTALDO. Death he threatens in his rage.

BASILIUS. Outrage vile he doth intend.

CLOTALDO. He my life has sworn to end.

BASILIUS. He has vowed to insult my age.

SIGISMUND [still sleeping]. On the mighty world's great stage,
'Mid the admiring nations' cheer,
Valour mine, that has no peer,
Enter thou: the slave so shunned
Now shall reign Prince Sigismund,
And his sire he wrath shall fear.—
[He awakes.]

But, ah me! Where am I? Oh!—

BASILIUS. Me I must not let him see.
[To CLOTALDO.]

Listening I close by will be,
What you have to do you know.
[He retires.]

SIGISMUND. Can it possibly be so?
Is the truth not what it seemed?
Am I chained and unredeemed?
Art not thou my lifelong tome,
Dark old tower? Yes! What a doom!
God! what wondrous things I've dreamed!

CLOTALDO. Now in this delusive play
Must my special part be taken:—
Is it not full time to waken?

SIGISMUND. Yes, to waken well it may.

CLOTALDO. Wilt thou sleep the livelong day?—
Since we gazing from below
Saw the eagle sailing slow,
Soaring through the azure sphere,
All the time thou waited here,
Didst thou never waken?

SIGISMUND. No,
Nor even now am I awake
Since such thoughts my memory fill,
That it seems I'm dreaming still:
Nor is this a great mistake;
Since if dreams could phantoms make
Things of actual substance seen,
I things seen may phantoms deem.
Thus a double harvest reaping,
I can see when I am sleeping,
And when waking I can dream.

CLOTALDO. What you may have dreamed of, say.

SIGISMUND. If I thought it only seemed,
I would tell not what I dreamed,
But what I beheld, I may.
I awoke, and lo! I lay
(Cruel and delusive thing!)
In a bed whose covering,
Bright with blooms from rosy bowers,
Seemed a tapestry of flowers
Woven by the hand of Spring.
Then a crowd of nobles came,
Who addressed me by the name
Of their prince, presenting me

Gems and robes, on bended knee.
Calm soon left me, and my frame
Thrilled with joy to hear thee tell
Of the fate that me befell,
For though now in this dark den,
I was Prince of Poland then.

CLOTALDO. Doubtless you repaid me well?

SIGISMUND. No, not well: for, calling thee
Traitor vile, in furious strife
Twice I strove to take thy life.

CLOTALDO. But why all this rage 'gainst me?

SIGISMUND. I was master, and would be
Well revenged on foe and friend.
Love one woman could defend
That, at least, for truth I deem,
All else ended like a dream,
THAT alone can never end.
[The King withdraws.]

CLOTALDO [aside]. From his place the King hath gone,
Touched by his pathetic words:—
[Aloud]
Speaking of the king of birds
Soaring to ascend his throne,
Thou didst fancy one thine own;
But in dreams, however bright,
Thou shouldst still have kept in sight
How for years I tended thee,
For 'twere well, whoe'er we be,
Even in dreams to do what's right.
[Exit.]

* * * * *

SCENE XVIII.

SIGISMUND. That is true: then let's restrain
This wild rage, this fierce condition
Of the mind, this proud ambition,
Should we ever dream again:
And we'll do so, since 'tis plain,
In this world's uncertain gleam,
That to live is but to dream:
Man dreams what he is, and wakes
Only when upon him breaks

Death's mysterious morning beam.
The king dreams he is a king,
And in this delusive way
Lives and rules with sovereign sway;
All the cheers that round him ring,
Born of air, on air take wing.
And in ashes (mournful fate!)
Death dissolves his pride and state:
Who would wish a crown to take,
Seeing that he must awake
In the dream beyond death's gate?
And the rich man dreams of gold,
Gilding cares it scarce conceals,
And the poor man dreams he feels
Want and misery and cold.
Dreams he too who rank would hold,
Dreams who bears toil's rough-ribbed hands,
Dreams who wrong for wrong demands,
And in fine, throughout the earth,
All men dream, whate'er their birth,
And yet no one understands.
'Tis a dream that I in sadness
Here am bound, the scorn of fate;
'Twas a dream that once a state
I enjoyed of light and gladness.
What is life? 'Tis but a madness.
What is life? A thing that seems,
A mirage that falsely gleams,
Phantom joy, delusive rest,
Since is life a dream at best,
And even dreams themselves are dreams.

* * * * *

ACT THE THIRD.

WITHIN THE TOWER.

* * * * *

SCENE I.

CLARIN. In a strange enchanted tower,
I, for what I know, am prisoned;*
How would ignorance be punished,

If for knowledge they would kill me?
What a thing to die of hunger,
For a man who loves good living!
I compassionate myself;
All will say: "I well believe it";
And it well may be believed,
Because silence is a virtue
Incompatible with my name
Clarín, which of course forbids it.
In this place my sole companions,
It may safely be predicted,
Are the spiders and the mice:
What a pleasant nest of linnets!—
Owing to this last night's dream,
My poor head I feel quite dizzy
From a thousand clarionets,
Shawms, and seraphines and cymbals,
Crucifixes and processions,
Flagellants who so well whipped them,
That as up and down they went,
Some even fainted as they witnessed
How the blood ran down the others.
I, if I the truth may whisper,
Simply fainted from not eating,
For I see me in this prison
All day wondering how this Poland
Such a 'Hungary' look exhibits,
All night reading in the 'Fasti'
By some half-starved poet written.**
In the calendar of saints,
If a new one is admitted,
Then St. Secret be my patron,
For I fast upon his vigil;
Though it must be owned I suffer
Justly for the fault committed,
Since a servant to be silent
Is a sacrilege most sinful.

[A sound of drums and trumpets, with voices within.]

*[footnote] The asonante to the end of Scene IV. is in i—e, or their vocal equivalents.

**[footnote] These four lines are a paraphrase of the original. Clarín's jokes are different, and not much better. He says he spends his days studying philosophy in the works of 'Nicomedes' (or 'Not-eating'), and his nights perusing the decrees of the 'Nicene' Council (Concilio 'Niceno', the Council of 'No-Supper').

* * * * *

SCENE II.

Soldiers and CLARIN.

FIRST SOLDIER [within]. He is here within this tower.
Dash the door from off its hinges;
Enter all

CLARIN: Good God! 'tis certain
That 'tis me they seek so briskly,
Since they say that I am here.
What can they require?

FIRST SOLDIER [within]. Go in there.
[Several Soldiers enter.

SECOND SOLDIER. Here he is.

CLARIN. He's not.

ALL THE SOLDIERS. Great lord!

CLARIN [aside]. Are the fellows mad or tipsy?

FIRST SOLDIER. Thou art our own Prince, and we
Will not have, and won't admit of,
Any but our natural Prince;
We no foreign Prince here wish for.
Let us kneel and kiss thy feet.

THE SOLDIERS. Live, long live our best of Princes!

CLARIN [aside.] 'Gad! the affair grows rather serious.
Is it usual in this kingdom
To take some one out each day,
Make him Prince, and then remit him
To this tower? It must be so,
Since each day that sight I witness.
I must therefore play my part.

SOLDIERS. Thy feet give us!

CLARIN. I can't give them,
As I want them for myself.
For a prince to be a cripple
Would be rather a defect.

SECOND SOLDIER. We have all conveyed our wishes
To your father; we have told him
You alone shall be our Prince here,
Not the Duke.

CLARIN. And were you guilty
'Gainst my sire, of disrespect?

FIRST SOLDIER. 'Twas the loyalty of our spirit.

CLARIN. If 'twas loyalty, I forgive you.

SECOND SOLDIER. Come, regain thy lost dominion.
Long live Sigismund!

ALL. Live the Prince.

CLARIN [aside]. Say they Sigismund? Good. Admitted.
Sigismund must be the name
Given to all pretended princes.

* * * * *

SCENE III.

SIGISMUND, CLARIN, and Soldiers.

SIGISMUND. Who has named here Sigismund?

CLARIN [aside.] Ah, I'm but an addled prince, then!

FIRST SOLDIER. Who is Sigismund?

SIGISMUND. Who? I.

SECOND SOLDIER [to CLARIN]. How, then, didst thou, bold and silly,
Dare to make thee Sigismund?

CLARIN. I a Sigismund? Thou fibbest;
It was you yourselves that thus
Sigismundized me and prined me:
All the silliness and the boldness
Have been by yourselves committed.

FIRST SOLDIER. Great and brave Prince Sigismund
(For thy bearing doth convince us
Thou art he, although on faith
We proclaim thee as our prince here).
King Basilius, thy father,
Fearful of the Heavens fulfilling
A prediction, which declared
He would see himself submitted
At thy victor feet, attempts
To deprive thee of thy birthright,
And to give it to Astolfo,
Muscovy's duke. For this his missives
Summoned all his court: the people
Understanding, by some instinct,
That they had a natural king,
Did not wish a foreign princeling

To rule o'er them. And 'tis thus,
That the fate for thee predicted
Treating with a noble scorn,
They have sought thee where imprisoned
Thou dost live, that issuing forth,
By their powerful arms assisted,
From this tower, thy crown and sceptre
Thou shouldst thus regain, and quit them
Of a stranger and a tyrant.
Forth! then; for among these cliffs here
There is now a numerous army,
Formed of soldiers and banditti,
That invoke thee: freedom waits thee;
To the thousand voices listen.

[Voices within.] Long, long live Prince Sigismund!

SIGISMUND. Once again, O Heaven! wouldst wish me
Once again to dream of greatness
Which may vanish in an instant?
Once again to see the glories,
That a royal throne encircle,
Die in darkness and in gloom,
Like a flame the winds extinguish?
Once again by sad experience
To be taught the dangerous limits
Human power may overleap,
At its birth and while it liveth?
No, it must not, must not be:—
See me now one more submitted
To my fate; and since I know
Life is but a dream, a vision,
Hence, ye phantoms, that assume
To my darkened sense the figure
And the voice of life — although
Neither voice nor form is in them.
I no longer now desire
A feigned majesty, a fictitious
And fantastic pomp — illusions
Which the slightest breath that ripples
The calm ether can destroy,
Even as in the early spring-time,
When the flowering almond tree
Unadvisedly exhibits
All its fleeting bloom of flowers,
The first blast their freshness withers,
And the ornament and grace

Of its rosy locks disfigures.
Now I know ye — know ye all,
And I know the same false glimmer
Cheats the eyes of all who sleep.
Me false shows no more bewilder;
Disabused, I now know well
Life is but a dream — a vision.

SECOND SOLDIER. If thou thinkest we deceive thee,
Turn thine eyes to those proud cliffs here,
See the crowds that wait there, willing,
Eager to obey thee.

SIGISMUND. Yet
Just as clearly and distinctly,
I have seen another time
The same things that now I witness,
And 'twas but a dream.

SECOND SOLDIER. At all times
Great events, my lord, bring with them
Their own omens; and thy dream
But the actual fact prefigured.

SIGISMUND. You say well, it was an omen;
But supposing the bright vision
Even were true, since life is short,
Let us dream, my soul a little,
Once again, remembering now
With all forethought and prevision
That we must once more awake
At the better time not distant;
That being known, the undeceiving,
When it comes, will be less bitter;
For it takes the sting from evil
To anticipate its visit.
And with this conviction, too,
Even its certainty admitting,
That all power being only lent
Must return unto the Giver,
Let us boldly then dare all.—
For the loyalty you exhibit,
Thanks, my lieges. See in me
One who will this land deliver
From a stranger's alien yoke.
Sound to arms; you soon shall witness
What my valour can effect.
'Gainst my father I have lifted

Hostile arms, to see if Heaven
Has of me the truth predicted.
At my feet I am to see him ...
But if I, from dreams delivered,
[Aside.
Wake ere then, and nothing happens,
Silence now were more befitting.
ALL. Long live Sigismund, our king!

* * * * *

SCENE IV.

CLOTALDO, SIGISMUND, CLARIN, and Soldiers.

CLOTALDO. Ha! what tumult, Heavens! has risen?

SIGISMUND. Well, Clotaldo.

CLOTALDO. Sire On me

[Aside.

Will his wrath now fall.

CLARIN [aside]. He'll fling him
Headlong down the steep, I'll bet.

[Exit.

CLOTALDO. At your royal feet submitted
I know how to die.

SIGISMUND. My father,
Rise, I pray, from that position,
Since to you, my guide and polestar,
Are my future acts committed;
All my past life owes you much
For your careful supervision.
Come, embrace me.

CLOTALDO. What do you say?

SIGISMUND. That I dream, and that my wishes
Are to do what's right, since we
Even in dreams should do what's fitting.

CLOTALDO. Then, my prince, if you adopt
Acting rightly as your symbol,
You will pardon me for asking,
So to act, that you permit me.
No advice and no assistance
Can I give against my king.

Better that my lord should kill me
At his feet here.

SIGISMUND. Oh, ungrateful!
Villain! wretch! [Aside.] But Heavens! 'tis fitter
I restrain myself, not knowing
But all this may be a vision.—
The fidelity I envy
Must be honoured and admitted.
Go and serve your lord, the king.
Where the battle rages thickest
We shall meet. — To arms, my friends!

CLOTALDO. Thanks, most generous of princes.
[Exit.]

SIGISMUND. Fortune, we go forth to reign;
Wake me not if this is vision,
Let me sleep not if 'tis true.
But whichever of them is it,
To act right is what imports me.
If 'tis true, because it is so;
If 'tis not, that when I waken
Friends may welcome and forgive me.
[Exeunt all, drums beating.]

* * * * *

SCENE V.

HALL IN THE ROYAL PALACE.

BASILIUS and ASTOLFO.

BASILIUS. Who can expect, Astolfo, to restrain
An untamed steed that wildly turns to flee?
Who can the current of a stream detain,
That swollen with pride sweeps down to seek the sea?
Who can prevent from tumbling to the plain
Some mighty peak the lightning's flash sets free?
Yet each were easier in its separate way,
Than the rude mob's insensate rage to stay.
The several bands that throng each green retreat
This truth proclaim by their parted cries;
Astolfo here the echoing notes repeat,
While there 'tis Sigismund that rends the skies
The place where late the land was glad to greet
The choice we made, a second venture tries;

And soon will be, as Horror o'er it leans,
The fatal theatre of tragic scenes.

ASTOLFO. My lord, let all this joy suspended be,
These plaudits cease, and to another day
Defer the rapture thou hast promised me;
For if this Poland (which I hope to sway)
Resists to-day my right of sovereignty,
'Tis that by merit I should win my way.
Give me a steed; to stem this wild revolt
My pride shall be the flash that bears the bolt.
[Exit.

BASILIOUS. Slight help there is for what is fixed by fate,
And much of danger to foresee the blow;
If it must fall, defence is then too late,
And he who most forestalls doth most foreknow.
Hard law! Stern rule! Dire fact to contemplate!
That he who thinks to fly doth nearer go.
Thus by the very means that I employed,
My country and myself I have destroyed.

* * * * *

SCENE VI.

ESTRELLA and BASILIOUS.

ESTRELLA. If, mighty lord, thy presence, which it braves,
The tumult of the crowd cannot defeat —
The frenzy of the multitude that raves
In hostile bands through every square and street,—
Thou'lt see thy kingdom swim in crimson waves,
A purple sea of blood shall round it beat;
For even already in its dismal doom
All is disaster, tragedy, and gloom.
Such is thy kingdom's ruin, so severe
The hard and bloody trial fate hath sent,
Dazed is the eye, and terrified the ear;
Dark grows the sun, and every wind is spent;
Each stone a mournful obelisk doth rear,
And every flower erects a monument;
A grave seems every house, whence life is gone,—
Each soldier is a living skeleton.

* * * * *

SCENE VII.

CLOTALDO, BASILIUS, and ESTRELLA.

CLOTALDO. Thanks be to God, I reach thy feet alive.

BASILIOUS. What news of Sigismund, Clotaldo, say?

CLOTALDO. The crowd, whom frenzy and blind impulse drive,
Into the tower resistless burst their way,
Released the Prince, who seeing thus revive
The honour he had tasted for one day,
Looked brave, declaring, in a haughty tone,
The truth at last that heaven must now make known.

BASILIOUS. Give me a horse! In person forth I'll ride
To check the pride of this ungrateful son.
Where Science erred let now the sword decide;
By my own valour shall my throne be won!
[Exit.

ESTRELLA. Let me the glory of the fight divide —
A twinkling star beside that royal sun —
Bellona matched with Mars: for I would dare
To scale even heaven to rival Pallas there.

[Exit, and they sound to arms.

* * * * *

SCENE VIII.

ROSAURA, who detains CLOTALDO.

ROSAURA. Though the trumpets from afar
Echo in thy valorous breast,
Hear me, list to my request,
For I know that all is war.
Well thou knowest that I came
Poor to Poland, sad, dejected;
And that graciously protected,
Thou thy pity let me claim.
It was thy command, ah, me!
I should live here thus disguised,
Striving, as thy words advised
(Hiding all my jealousy),
To avoid Astolfo's sight;
But he saw me, and though seeing,
With Estrella, he — false being!—
Converse holds this very night
In a garden bower. The key
I have taken, and will show
Where, by entering, with a blow
Thou canst end my misery.
Thus, then, daring, bold, and strong,
Thou my honour wilt restore;
Strike, and hesitate no more,
Let his death revenge my wrong.

CLOTALDO. It is true, my inclination
Since thou first wert seen by me,
Was to strive and do for thee
(Be thy tears my attestation)

All my life could do to serve thee.
What I first was forced to press,
Was that thou should'st change thy dress;
Lest if chancing to observe thee
Masquerading like a page,
By appearances so strong
Led astray, the Duke might wrong
By a thought thy sex and age.
Meanwhile various projects held me
In suspense, oft pondering o'er
How thy honour to restore;
Though (thy honour so compelled me)
I Astolfo's life should take —
Wild design that soon took wing —
Yet, as he was not my king,
It no terror could awake.

I his death was seeking, when
Sigismund with vengeful aim
Sought for mine; Astolfo came,
And despising what most men
Would a desperate peril deem,
Stood in my defence; his bearing,
Nigh to rashness in its daring,
Showed a valour most extreme.
How then, think, could I, whose breath
Is his gift, in murderous strife,
For his giving me my life,
Strive in turn to give him death?
And thus, grateful, yet aggrieved,
By two opposite feelings driven,
Seeing it to thee have given,
And from him have it received,
Doubting this, and that believing,
Half revenging, half forgiving,
If to thee I'm drawn by giving,
I to him am by receiving;
Thus bewildered and beset,
Vainly seeks my love a way,
Since I have a debt to pay,
Where I must exact a debt

ROSAURA. It is settled, I believe,
As all men of spirit know,
That 'tis glorious to bestow,
But a meanness to receive.
Well, admitting this to be,
Then thy thanks should not be his,

Even supposing that he is
One who gave thy life to thee;
As the gift of life was thine,
And from him the taking came,
In this case the act was shame,
And a glorious act in mine.
Thus by him thou art aggrieved,
And by me even complimented,
Since to me thou hast presented
What from him thou hast received:
Then all hesitation leaving,
Thou to guard my fame shouldst fly,
Since my honour is as high
As is giving to receiving.

CLOTALDO. Thou it seems a generous fever
In a noble heart to give,
Still an equal fire may live
In the heart of the receiver.
Heartlessness is something hateful,
I would boast a liberal name;
Thus I put my highest claim
In the fact of being grateful.
Then to me that title leave,—
Gentle birth breeds gentleness;
For the honour is no less
To bestow than to receive.

ROSAURA. I received my life from thee,
But for thee I now were dead;
Still it was thyself that said
No insulted life could be
Called a life: on that I stand;
Nought have I received from thee,
For the life no life could be
That was given me by thy hand.
But if thou wouldst first be just
Ere being generous in this way
(As I heard thyself once say),
Thou will give me life I trust,
Which thou hast not yet; and thus
Giving will enhance thee more,
For if liberal before,
Thou wilt then be generous.

CLOTALDO. Conquered by thy argument,
Liberal I first will be.
I, Rosaura, will to thee

All my property present;
In a convent live; by me
Has the plan been weighed some time,
For escaping from a crime
Thou wilt there find sanctuary;
For so many ills present them
Through the land on every side,
That being nobly born, my pride
Is to strive and not augment them.
By the choice that I have made,
Loyal to the land I'll be,
I am liberal with thee,
And Astolfo's debt is paid;
Choose then, nay, let honour, rather,
Choose for thee, and for us two,
For, by Heaven! I could not do
More for thee were I thy father!—

ROSAURA. Were that supposition true,
I might strive and bear this blow;
But not being my father, no.

CLOTALDO. What then dost thou mean to do?

ROSAURA. Kill the Duke.

CLOTALDO. A gentle dame,
Who no father's name doth know,
Can she so much valour show?

ROSAURA. Yes.

CLOTALDO. What drives thee on?

ROSAURA. My fame.

CLOTALDO. Think that in the Duke thou'lt see

ROSAURA. Honour all my wrath doth rouse.

CLOTALDO. Soon thy king — Estrella's spouse.

ROSAURA. No, by Heaven! it must not be.

CLOTALDO. It is madness.

ROSAURA. Yes, I see it.

CLOTALDO. Conquer it.

ROSAURA. I can't o'erthrow it.

CLOTALDO. It will cost thee

ROSAURA. Yes, I know it.

CLOTALDO. Life and honour.

ROSAURA. Well, so be it.

CLOTALDO. What wouldst have?

ROSAURA. My death.

CLOTALDO. Take care!

It is spite.

ROSAURA. 'Tis honour's cure.

CLOTALDO. 'Tis wild fire.

ROSAURA. That will endure.

CLOTALDO. It is frenzy.

ROSAURA. Rage, despair.

CLOTALDO. Can there then be nothing done
This blind rage to let pass by?

ROSAURA. No.

CLOTALDO. And who will help thee?

ROSAURA. I.

CLOTALDO. Is there then no remedy?

ROSAURA. None.

CLOTALDO. Think of other means whereby

ROSAURA. Other means would seal my fate.

[Exit.

CLOTALDO. If 'tis so, then, daughter, wait,
For together we shall die.

[Exit.

* * * * *

SCENE IX.

THE OPEN PLAIN.

SIGISMUND, clothed in skins: Soldiers marching. CLARIN.
[Drums are heard.]

SIGISMUND. If Rome could see me on this day
Amid the triumphs of its early sway,
Oh, with what strange delight
It would have seen so singular a sight,

Its mighty armies led
By one who was a savage wild beast bred,
Whose courage soars so high,
That even an easy conquest seems the sky!
But let us lower our flight,
My spirit; 'tis not thus we should invite
This doubtful dream to stay,
Lest when I wake and it has past away,
I learn to my sad cost,
A moment given, 'twas in a moment lost;
Determined not to abuse it,
The less will be my sorrow should I lose it.

[A trumpet sounds.

CLARIN. Upon a rapid steed,
(Excuse my painting it; I can't indeed
Resist the inspiration),
Which seems a moving mass of all creation,
Its body being the earth,
The fire the soul that in its heart hath birth,
Its foam the sea, its panting breath the air,
Chaos confused at which I stand and stare,
Since in its soul, foam, body, breath, to me
It is a monster made of fire, earth, air, and sea;
Its colour dapple grey,
Speckled its skin, and flecked, as well it may,
By the impatient spur its flank that dyes,
For lo! it doth not run, the meteor flies;
As borne upon the wind,
A beauteous woman seeks thee.

SIGISMUND. I'm struck blind!

CLARIN. Good God, it is Rosaura, oh, the pain!
[Retires.

SIGISMUND. Heaven has restored her to my sight again.

* * * * *

SCENE X.

ROSAURA, in a light corselet, with sword and dagger;
SIGISMUND, and Soldiers.

ROSAURA. Noble-hearted Sigismund!
Thou whose hidden light heroic
Issues from its night of shadows

To the great deeds of its morning;
And as heaven's sublimest planet
From the white arms of Aurora
Back restores their beauteous colour
To the wild flowers and the roses,
And upon the seas and mountains,
When endiadem'd with glory,
Scatters light, diffuses splendour,
Braids their foam, their hair makes golden;
Thus thou dawnest on the world
Bright auspicious sun of Poland,
Who will help a hapless woman,
She who at thy feet doth throw her,
Help her, since she is unhappy,
And a woman; two good motives
Quite enough to move a man
Who of valour so doth boast him,
Though even one would be sufficient,
Though even one would be all potent.
Thou hast seen me thrice already,
Thrice thou hast not truly known me,
For each time by different dresses
Was I strangely metamorphosed.
First I seem'd to thee a man,
When within thy sad and sombre
Cell thou sawest me, when thy life
Wiled from me mine own misfortunes.
As a woman next thou sawest me,
Where the splendours of thy throne-room
Vanished like a fleeting vision,
Vain, phantasmal and abortive.
The third time is now, when being
Something monstrous and abnormal,
In a woman's dress thou see'st me
With a warrior's arms adorned.
And to pity and compassion
That thou may'st be moved more strongly,
Listen to the sad succession
Of my tragical misfortunes.
In the Court of Muscovy
I was born of a noble mother,
Who indeed must have been fair
Since unhappiness was her portion.
Fond and too persuading eyes
Fixed on her, a traitor lover,
Whom, not knowing, I don't name,

Though mine own worth hath informed me
What was his: for being his image,
I sometimes regret that fortune
Made me not a pagan born,
That I might, in my wild folly,
Think he must have been some god,
Such as he was, who in golden
Shower wooed Danae, or as swan
Leda loved, as bull, Europa.
When I thought to lengthen out,
Citing these perfidious stories,
My discourse, I find already
That I have succinctly told thee
How my mother, being persuaded
By the flatteries of love's homage,
Was a fair as any fair,
And unfortunate as all are.
That ridiculous excuse
Of a plighted husband's promise
So misled her, that even yet
the remembrance brings her sorrow.
For that traitor, that Aeneas
Flying from his Troy, forgot there,
Or left after him his sword.
By this sheath its blade is covered,
But it shall be naked drawn
Ere this history is over.
From this loosely fastened know
Which binds nothing, which ties nothing,
Call it marriage, call it crime,
Names its nature cannot alter,
I was born, a perfect image,
A true copy of my mother,
In her loveliness, ah, no!
In her miseries and misfortunes.
Therefore there is little need
To say how the hapless daughter,
Heiress of such scant good luck,
Had her own peculiar portion.
All that I will say to thee
Of myself is, that the robber
Of the trophies of my fame,
Of the sweet spoils of my honour,
Is Astolfo Ah! to name him
Stirs and rouses up the choler
Of the heart, a fitting effort

When an enemy's name is spoken,—
Yes, Astolfo was that traitor,
Who, forgetful of his promise
(For when love has passed away,
Even its memory is forgotten),
Came to Poland, hither called.
From so sweet so proud a conquest,
To be married to Estrella,
Of my setting sun the torch light.
Who'll believe that when one star
Oft unites two happy lovers,
Now one star, Estrella, comes
Two to tear from one another?
I offended, I deceived,
Sad remained, remained astonished,
Mad, half dead, remained myself;
That's to say, in so much torment,
That my heart was like a Babel
Of confusion, hell, and horror:
I resolving to be mute,
(For there are some pains and sorrows
That by feelings are expressed,
Better than when words are spoken).
I by silence spoke my pain,
Till one day being with my mother
Violante, she (oh, heavens!)
Burst their prison; like a torrent
Forth they rushed from out my breast,
Streaming wildly o'er each other.
No embarrassment it gave me
To relate them, for the knowing
That the person we confide to
A like weakness must acknowledge
Gives as 'twere to our confusion
A sweet soothing and a solace,
For at times a bad example
Has its use. In fine, my sorrows
She with pity heard, relating
Even her own grief to console me:
When he has himself been guilty
With what ease the judge condoneth!
Knowing from her own experience
That 'twas idle, to slow-moving
Leisure, to swift-fleeting time,
To intrust one's injured honour.
She could not advise me better,

As the cure of my misfortunes,
Than to follow and compel him
By prodigious acts of boldness
To repay my honour's debt:
And that such attempt might cost me
Less, my fortune wished that I
Should a man's strange dress put on me.
She took down an ancient sword,
Which is this I bear: the moment
Now draws nigh I must unsheath it,
Since to her I gave that promise,
When confiding in its marks,
Thus she said, "Depart to Poland,
And so manage that this steel
Shall be seen by the chief nobles
Of that land, for I have hope
That there may be one among them
Who may prove to thee a friend,
An adviser and consoler."
Well, in Poland I arrived;
It is useless to inform thee
What thou knowest already, how
A wild steed resistless bore me
To thy caverned tower, wherein
Thou with wonder didst behold me.
Let us pass too, how Clotaldo
Passionately my cause supported,
How he asked my life of the king
Who to him that boon accorded;
How discovering who I am
He persuaded me my proper
Dress to assume, and on Estrella
To attend as maid of honour,
So to thwart Astolfo's love
And prevent the marriage contract.
Let us, too, pass by, that here
thou didst once again behold me
In a woman's dress, my form
Waking thus a twofold wonder,
And approach the time, Clotaldo
Being convinced it was important
That should wed and reign together
Fair Estrella and Astolfo,
'Gainst my honour, me advised
To forego my rightful project.
But, O valiant Sigismund,

Seeing that the moment cometh
For thy vengeance, since heaven wishes
Thee to-day to burst the portals
Of thy narrow rustic cell,
Where so long immured, thy body
Was to feeling a wild beast,
Was to sufferance what the rock is,
And that 'gainst thy sire and country
Thou hast gallantly revolted,
And ta'en arms, I come to assist thee,
Intermingling the bright corselet
Of Minerva with the trappings
Of Diana, thus enrobing
Silken stuff and shining steel
In a rare but rich adornment.
On, then, on, undaunted champion!
To us both it is important
To prevent and bring to nought
This engagement and betrothal;
First to me, that he, my husband,
Should not falsely wed another,
Then to thee, that their two staffs
Being united, their joined forces
Should with overwhelming power
Leave our doubtful victory hopeless.
Woman, I come here to urge thee
To repair my injured honour,
And as man I come to rouse thee
Crown and sceptre to recover.
Woman I would wake thy pity
Since here at thy feet I throw me,
And as man, my sword and person
In thy service I devote thee.
But remember, if to-day
As a woman thou should'st court me,
I, as man, will give thee death
In the laudable upholding,
Of my honour, since I am
In this strife of love, this contest,
Woman my complaints to tell thee,
And a man to guard my honour.

SIGISMUND [aside]. Heavens! if it is true I dream,
Memory then suspend thy office,
For 'tis vain to hope remembrance
Could retain so many objects.
Help me, God! or teach me how

All these numerous doubts to conquer,
Or to cease to think of any!—
Whoe'er tried such painful problems?
If 'twas but a dream, my grandeur,
How then is it, at this moment,
That this woman can refer me
To some facts that are notorious?
Then 'twas truth, and not a dream;
But if it was truth (another
And no less confusion,) how
Can my life be called in proper
Speech a dream? So like to dreams
Are then all the world's chief glories,
That the true are oft rejected
As the false, the false too often
Are mistaken for the true?
Is there then 'twixt one and the other
Such slight difference, that a question
May arise at any moment
Which is true or which is false?
Are the original and the copy
So alike, that which is which
Oft the doubtful mind must ponder?
If 'tis so, and if must vanish,
As the shades of night at morning,
All of majesty and power,
All of grandeur and of glory,
Let us learn at least to turn
To our profit the brief moment
That is given us, since our joy
Lasteth while our dream lasts only.
In my power Rosaura stands,
Thou, my heart, her charms adoreth,
Let us seize then the occasion;
Let love trample in its boldness
All the laws on which relying
She here at my feet has thrown her.
'Tis a dream; and since 'tis so,
Let us dream of joys, the sorrows
Will come soon enough hereafter.
But with mine own words just spoken,
Let me now confute myself!
If it is a dream that mocks me,
Who for human vanities
Would forego celestial glory?
What past bliss is not a dream?

Who has had his happy fortunes
Who hath said not to himself
As his memory ran o'er them,
"All I saw, beyond a doubt
Was a dream." If this exposeth
My delusion, if I know
That desire is but the glowing
Of a flame that turns to ashes
At the softest wind that bloweth;
Let us seek then the eternal,
The true fame that ne'er reposeth,
Where the bliss is not a dream,
Nor the crown a fleeting glory.
Without honour is Rosaura.
But it is a prince's province
To give honour, not to take it:
Then, by Heaven! it is her honour
That for her I must win back,
Ere this kingdom I can conquer.
Let us fly then this temptation.
[To the Soldiers.

'Tis too strong: To arms! March onward!
For to-day I must give battle,
Ere descending night, the golden
Sunbeams of expiring day
Buries in the dark green ocean.

ROSAURA. Dost thou thus, my lord, withdraw thee?
What! without a word being spoken?
Does my pain deserve no pity?
Does my grief so little move thee?
Can it be, my lord, thou wilt not
Deign to hear, to look upon me?
Dost thou even avert thy face?

SIGISMUND. Ah, Rosaura, 'tis thy honour
That requires this harshness now,
If my pity I would show thee.
Yes, my voice does not respond,
'Tis my honour that respondeth;
True I speak not, for I wish
That my actions should speak for me;
Thee I do not look on, no,
For, alas! it is of moment,
That he must not see thy beauty
Who is pledged to see thy honour.
[Exit followed by the Soldiers.

ROSAURA. What enigmas, O ye skies!
After many a sigh and tear,
Thus in doubt to leave me here
With equivocal replies!

* * * * *

SCENE XI.

CLARIN and ROSAURA.

CLARIN. Madam, is it visiting hour?

ROSAURA. Welcome, Clarin, where have you been?

CLARIN. Only four stout walls between
In an old enchanted tower;
Death was on the cards for me,
But amid the sudden strife
Ere the last trump came, my life
Won the trick and I got free.
I ne'er hoped to sound again.

ROSAURA. Why?

CLARIN. Because alone I know
Who you are: And this being so,
Learn, Clotaldo is This strain
Puts me out.

[Drums are heard.

ROSAURA. What can it be?

CLARIN. From the citadel at hand,
Leagured round, an armed band
As to certain victory
Sallies forth with flags unfurled.

ROSAURA. 'Gainst Prince Sigismund! and I,
Coward that I am, not by
To surprise and awe the world,
When with so much cruelty
Each on each the two hosts spring!
[Exit.

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SCENE XII.

CLARIN; and Soldiers within.

Voices of some. Live, long live our victor King!

Voices of others. Live, long live our liberty!

CLARIN. Live, long live the two, I say!

Me it matters not a pin,

Which doth lose or which doth win,

If I can keep out of the way!—

So aside here I will go,

Acting like a prudent hero,

Even as the Emperor Nero

Took things coolly long ago.

Or if care I cannot shun,

Let it 'bout mine ownself be;

Yes, here hidden I can see

All the fighting and the fun;

What a cosy place I spy

Mid the rock there! so secure,

Death can't find me out I'm sure,

Then a fig for death I say!

[Conceals himself, drums beat and the sound of arms is heard.

* * * * *

SCENE XIII.

BASILIOUS, CLOTALDO, ASTOLFO, flying. — CLARIN concealed.

BASILIOUS. Hapless king! disastrous reign!

Outraged father! guilty son!

CLOTALDO. See thy vanquished forces run

In a panic o'er the plain!

ASTOLFO. And the rebel conqueror's stay,

Proud, defiant.

BASILIOUS. 'Tis decreed

Those are loyal who succeed,

Rebels those who lose the day.

Let us then, Clotaldo, flee,

Since the victory he hath won,

From a proud and cruel son.

[Shots are fired within, and CLARIN falls wounded from his hiding-place.

CLARIN. Heaven protect me!

ASTOLFO. Who can be

This last victim of the fight,
Who is struck down in the retreat,
Falls here bleeding at our feet?

CLARIN. I am an unlucky wight,
Who to shun Death's fearful face
Found the thing I would forget:
Flying from him, him I've met.
For there is no secret place
Hid from death; and therefore I
This conclusion hold as clear,
He 'scapes best who goes more near,
He dies first who first doth fly.
Then return, return and be
In the bloody conflict lost;
Where the battle rages most,
There is more security
Than in hills how desolate,
Since no safety can there be
'Gainst the force of destiny,
And the inclemency of fate;
Therefore 'tis in vain thou flyest
From the death thou draw'st more nigh,
Oh, take heed for thou must die
If it is God's will thou diest!
[Falls within.

BASILIOUS. Oh, take heed for thou must die
If it is God's will thou diest!—
With what eloquence, O heaven!
Does this body that here lieth,
Through the red mouth of a wound
To profoundest thoughts entice us
From our ignorance and our error!
The red current as it glideth
Is a bloody tongue that teaches
All man's diligence is idle,
When against a greater power,
And a higher cause it striveth.
Thus with me, 'gainst strife and murder
When I thought I had provided,
I but brought upon my country
All the ills I would have hindered.

CLOTALDO. Though, my lord, fate knoweth well
Every path, and quickly findeth
Whom it seeks; yet still it strikes me
'Tis not christian-like to say

'Gainst its rage that nought suffices.
That is wrong, a prudent man
Even o'er fate victorious rises;
And if thou art not preserved
From the ills that have surprised thee,
From worse ills thyself preserve.

ASTOLFO. Sire, Clotaldo doth address thee
As a cautious, prudent man,
Whose experience time hath ripened.
I as a bold youth would speak:
Yonder, having lost its rider,
I behold a noble steed
Wandering reinless and unbridled,
Mount and fly with him while I
Guard the open path behind thee.

BASILIOUS. If it is God's will I die,
Or if Death for me here lieth
As in ambush, face to face
I will meet it and defy it.

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SCENE XIV.

SIGISMUND, ESTRELLA, ROSAURA, Soldiers, Attendants, BASILIOUS,
ASTOLFO, and CLOTALDO.

A SOLDIER. 'Mid the thickets of the mountain,
'Neath these dark boughs so united,
The King hides.

SIGISMUND. Pursue him then,
Leave no single shrub unrifled,
Nothing must escape your search,
Not a plant, and not a pine tree.

CLOTALDO. Fly, my lord!

BASILIOUS. And wherefore fly?

ASTOLFO. Come!

BASILIOUS. Astolfo, I'm decided.

CLOTALDO. What to do?

BASILIOUS. To try, Clotaldo,
One sole remedy that surviveth.
[To SIGISMUND.

If 'tis me thou'rt seeking, Prince,
At thy feet behold me lying.
[Kneeling.
Let thy carpet be these hairs
Which the snows of age have whitened.
Tread upon my neck, and trample
On my crown; in base defilement
Treat me with all disrespect;
Let thy deadliest vengeance strike me
Through my honour; as thy slave
Make me serve thee, and in spite of
All precautions let fate be,
Let heaven keep the word it plighted.

SIGISMUND. Princes of the Court of Poland,
Who such numerous surprises
Have astonished seen, attend,
For it is your prince invites ye.
That which heaven has once determined,
That which God's eternal finger
Has upon the azure tablets
Of the sky sublimely written,
Those transparent sheets of sapphire
Superscribed with golden ciphers
Ne'er deceive, and never lie;
The deceiver and the liar
Is he who to use them badly
In a wrongful sense defines them.
Thus, my father, who is present,
To protect him from the wildness
Of my nature, made of me
A fierce brute, a human wild-beast;
So that I, who from my birth,
From the noble blood that trickles
Through my veins, my generous nature,
And my liberal condition,
Might have proved a docile child,
And so grew, it was sufficient
By so strange an education,
By so wild a course of living,
To have made my manners wild;—
What a method to refine them!
If to any man 'twas said,
"It is fated that some wild-beast
will destroy you," would it be
Wise to wake a sleeping tiger
As the remedy of the ill?

If 'twere said, "this sword here hidden
In its sheath, which thou dost wear,
Is the one foredoomed to kill thee,"
Vain precaution it would be
To preserve the threatened victim.
Bare to point it at his breast.
If 'twere said, "these waves that ripple
Calmly here for thee will build
Foam-white sepulchres of silver,"
Wrong it were to trust the sea
When its haughty breast is lifted
Into mountain heights of snow,
Into hills of curling crystal.
Well, this very thing has happened
Unto him, who feared a wild-beast,
And awoke him while he slept;
Or who drew a sharp sword hidden
Naked forth, or dared the sea
When 'twas roused by raging whirlwinds
And though my fierce nature (hear me)
Was as 'twere the sleeping tiger,
A sheathed sword my innate rage
And my wrath a quiet ripple,
Fate should not be forced by means
So unjust and so vindictive,
For they but excite it more;
And thus he who would be victor
O'er his fortune, must succeed
By wise prudence and self-strictness.
Not before an evil cometh
Can it rightly be resisted
Even by him who hath foreseen it,
For although (the fact's admitted)
By an humble resignation
It is possible to diminish
Its effects, it first must happen,
And by no means can be hindered.
Let it serve as an example
This strange sight, this most surprising
Spectacle, this fear, this horror,
This great prodigy; for none higher
E'er was worked than this we see,
After years of vain contriving,
Prostrate at my feet a father,
And a mighty king submitted.
This the sentence of high heaven

Which he did his best to hinder
He could not prevent. Can I,
Who in valour and in science,
Who in years am so inferior,
It avert? My lord, forgive me,
[To the King.
Rise, sir, let me clasp thy hand;
For since heaven has now apprized thee
That thy mode of counteracting
Its decree was wrong, a willing
Sacrifice to thy revenge
Let my prostrate neck be given.

BASILIUS. Son, this noble act of thine
In my heart of hearts reviveth
All my love, thou'rt there reborn.
Thou art Prince; the bay that bindeth
Heroes' brows, the palm, be thine,
Let the crown thine own deeds give thee.

ALL. Long live Sigismund our King!

SIGISMUND. Though my sword must wait a little
Ere great victories it can gain,
I to-day will win the highest,
The most glorious, o'er myself.—
Give, Astolfo, give your plighted
Hand here to Rosaura, since
It is due and I require it.

ASTOLFO. Though 'tis true I owe the debt,
Still 'tis needful to consider
That she knows not who she is;
It were infamous, a stigma
On my name to wed a woman

CLOTALDO. Stay, Astolfo, do not finish;
For Rosaura is as noble
As yourself. My sword will right her
In the field against the world:
She's my daughter, that's sufficient.

ASTOLFO. What do you say?

CLOTALDO. Until I saw her
To a noble spouse united,
I her birth would not reveal.
It were now a long recital,
But the sum is, she's my child.

ASTOLFO. That being so, the word I've plighted

I will keep.

SIGISMUND. And that Estrella
May not now be left afflicted,
Seeing she has lost a prince
Of such valour and distinction,
I propose from mine own hand
As a husband one to give her,
Who, if he does not exceed
Him in worth, perhaps may rival.
Give to me thy hand.

ESTRELLA. I gain
By an honour so distinguished.

SIGISMUND. To Clotaldo, who so truly
Served my father, I can give him
But these open arms wherein
He will find what'er he wishes.

A SOLDIER. If thou honorest those who serve thee,
Thus, to me the first beginner
Of the tumult through the land,
Who from out the tower, thy prison,
Drew thee forth, what wilt thou give?

SIGISMUND. Just that tower: and that you issue
Never from it until death,
I will have you guarded strictly;
For the traitor is not needed
Once the treason is committed.

BASILIUS. So much wisdom makes one wonder.

ASTOLFO. What a change in his condition!

ROSAURA. How discreet! how calm! how prudent!

SIGISMUND. Why this wonder, these surprises,
If my teacher was a dream,
And amid my new aspirings
I am fearful I may wake,
And once more a prisoner find me
In my cell? But should I not,
Even to dream it is sufficient:
For I thus have come to know
That at last all human blisses
Pass and vanish as a dream,
And the time that may be given me
I henceforth would turn to gain:
Asking for our faults forgiveness,

Since to generous, noble hearts
It is natural to forgive them.