

Charles the First

Charles the First

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

KING CHARLES I.

QUEEN HENRIETTA.

LAUD, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

WENTWORTH, EARL OF STRAFFORD.

LORD COTTINGTON.

LORD WESTON.

LORD COVENTRY.

WILLIAMS, BISHOP OF LINCOLN.

SECRETARY LYTTTELTON.

JUXON.

ST. JOHN.

ARCHY, THE COURT FOOL.

HAMPDEN.

PYM.

CROMWELL.

CROMWELL'S DAUGHTER.

SIR HARRY VANE THE YOUNGER.

LEIGHTON.

BASTWICK.

PRYNNE.

GENTLEMEN OF THE INNS OF COURT, CITIZENS, PURSUIVANTS,
MARSHALSMEN, LAW STUDENTS, JUDGES, CLERK.

SCENE 1:

THE MASQUE OF THE INNS OF COURT.

A PURSUIVANT:

Place, for the Marshal of the Masque!

FIRST CITIZEN:

What thinkest thou of this quaint masque which turns,
Like morning from the shadow of the night,
The night to day, and London to a place
Of peace and joy?

SECOND CITIZEN:

And Hell to Heaven. _5
Eight years are gone,
And they seem hours, since in this populous street
I trod on grass made green by summer's rain,
For the red plague kept state within that palace
Where now that vanity reigns. In nine years more _10
The roots will be refreshed with civil blood;
And thank the mercy of insulted Heaven
That sin and wrongs wound, as an orphan's cry,
The patience of the great Avenger's ear.

NOTE:

_10 now that vanity reigns 1870; now reigns vanity 1824.

A YOUTH:

Yet, father, 'tis a happy sight to see, _15
Beautiful, innocent, and unforbidden
By God or man;—'tis like the bright procession
Of skiey visions in a solemn dream
From which men wake as from a Paradise,
And draw new strength to tread the thorns of life. _20
If God be good, wherefore should this be evil?
And if this be not evil, dost thou not draw
Unseasonable poison from the flowers
Which bloom so rarely in this barren world?

SCENE 1:

Charles the First

Oh, kill these bitter thoughts which make the present _25
Dark as the future!—

...

**When Avarice and Tyranny, vigilant Fear,
And open-eyed Conspiracy lie sleeping
As on Hell's threshold; and all gentle thoughts
Waken to worship Him who giveth joys _30
With His own gift.**

SECOND CITIZEN:

How young art thou in this old age of time!
How green in this gray world? Canst thou discern
The signs of seasons, yet perceive no hint
Of change in that stage-scene in which thou art _35
Not a spectator but an actor? or
Art thou a puppet moved by [enginery]?
The day that dawns in fire will die in storms,
Even though the noon be calm. My travel's done,—
Before the whirlwind wakes I shall have found _40
My inn of lasting rest; but thou must still
Be journeying on in this inclement air.
Wrap thy old cloak about thy back;
Nor leave the broad and plain and beaten road,
Although no flowers smile on the trodden dust, _45
For the violet paths of pleasure. This Charles the First
Rose like the equinoctial sun,...
By vapours, through whose threatening ominous veil
Darting his altered influence he has gained
This height of noon—from which he must decline _50
Amid the darkness of conflicting storms,
To dank extinction and to latest night...
There goes
The apostate Strafford; he whose titles
whispered aphorisms _55
From Machiavel and Bacon: and, if Judas
Had been as brazen and as bold as he—

NOTES:

_33–_37 Canst...enginery 1870;
Canst thou not think
Of change in that low scene, in which thou art

SCENE 1:

Charles the First

Not a spectator but an actor?... 1824.
_43–_57 Wrap...bold as he 1870; omitted 1824.

FIRST CITIZEN:

That
Is the Archbishop.

SECOND CITIZEN:

Rather say the Pope:
London will be soon his Rome: he walks
As if he trod upon the heads of men: _60
He looks elate, drunken with blood and gold;—
Beside him moves the Babylonian woman
Invisibly, and with her as with his shadow,
Mitre'd adulterer! he is joined in sin,
Which turns Heaven's milk of mercy to revenge. _65

THIRD CITIZEN [LIFTING UP HIS EYES]:

Good Lord! rain it down upon him!...
Amid her ladies walks the papist queen,
As if her nice feet scorned our English earth.
The Canaanitish Jezebel! I would be
A dog if I might tear her with my teeth! _70
There's old Sir Henry Vane, the Earl of Pembroke,
Lord Essex, and Lord Keeper Coventry,
And others who make base their English breed
By vile participation of their honours
With papists, atheists, tyrants, and apostates. _75
When lawyers masque 'tis time for honest men
To strip the vizard from their purposes.
A seasonable time for masquers this!
When Englishmen and Protestants should sit
dust on their dishonoured heads _80
To avert the wrath of Him whose scourge is felt
For the great sins which have drawn down from Heaven
and foreign overthrow.
The remnant of the martyred saints in Rochefort
Have been abandoned by their faithless allies _85
To that idolatrous and adulterous torturer
Lewis of France,—the Palatinate is lost—
[ENTER LEIGHTON (WHO HAS BEEN BRANDED IN THE FACE) AND BASTWICK.]
Canst thou be—art thou?

SCENE 1:

NOTE:

_73 make 1824; made 1839.

LEIGHTON:

I WAS Leighton: what
I AM thou seest. And yet turn thine eyes,
And with thy memory look on thy friend's mind, _90
Which is unchanged, and where is written deep
The sentence of my judge.

THIRD CITIZEN:

Are these the marks with which
Laud thinks to improve the image of his Maker
Stamped on the face of man? Curses upon him,
The impious tyrant!

SECOND CITIZEN:

It is said besides _95
That lewd and papist drunkards may profane
The Sabbath with their
And has permitted that most heathenish custom
Of dancing round a pole dressed up with wreaths
On May-day. _100
A man who thus twice crucifies his God
May well ... his brother.—In my mind, friend,
The root of all this ill is prelacy.
I would cut up the root.

THIRD CITIZEN:

And by what means?

SECOND CITIZEN:

Smiting each Bishop under the fifth rib. _105

THIRD CITIZEN:

You seem to know the vulnerable place
Of these same crocodiles.

SCENE 1:

SECOND CITIZEN:

I learnt it in
Egyptian bondage, sir. Your worm of Nile
Betrays not with its flattering tears like they;
For, when they cannot kill, they whine and weep. _110
Nor is it half so greedy of men's bodies
As they of soul and all; nor does it wallow
In slime as they in simony and lies
And close lusts of the flesh.

NOTE:

_78–_114 A seasonable...of the flesh 1870; omitted 1824.
_108 bondage cj. Forman; bondages 1870.

A MARSHALSMAN:

Give place, give place!
You torch-bearers, advance to the great gate, _115
And then attend the Marshal of the Masque
Into the Royal presence.

A LAW STUDENT:

What thinkest thou
Of this quaint show of ours, my aged friend?
Even now we see the redness of the torches
Inflame the night to the eastward, and the clarions _120
[Gasp?] to us on the wind's wave. It comes!
And their sounds, floating hither round the pageant,
Rouse up the astonished air.

NOTE:

_119–_123 Even now...air 1870; omitted 1824.

FIRST CITIZEN:

I will not think but that our country's wounds
May yet be healed. The king is just and gracious, _125
Though wicked counsels now pervert his will:
These once cast off—

SECOND CITIZEN:

As adders cast their skins
And keep their venom, so kings often change;
Councils and counsellors hang on one another,
Hiding the loathsome _130
Like the base patchwork of a leper's rags.

THE YOUTH:

Oh, still those dissonant thoughts!—List how the music
Grows on the enchanted air! And see, the torches
Restlessly flashing, and the crowd divided
Like waves before an admiral's prow!

NOTE:

_132 how the 1870; loud 1824.

A MARSHALSMAN:

Give place _135
To the Marshal of the Masque!

A PURSUIVANT:

Room for the King!

NOTE:

_136 A Pursuivant: Room for the King! 1870; omitted 1824.

THE YOUTH:

How glorious! See those thronging chariots
Rolling, like painted clouds before the wind,
Behind their solemn steeds: how some are shaped
Like curved sea-shells dyed by the azure depths _140
Of Indian seas; some like the new-born moon;
And some like cars in which the Romans climbed
(Canopied by Victory's eagle-wings outspread)
The Capitolian—See how gloriously
The mettled horses in the torchlight stir _145
Their gallant riders, while they check their pride,
Like shapes of some diviner element
Than English air, and beings nobler than

SCENE 1:

The envious and admiring multitude.

NOTE:

_138–40 Rolling...depths 1870;
Rolling like painted clouds before the wind
Some are
Like curved shells, dyed by the azure depths 1824.

SECOND CITIZEN:

Ay, there they are— _150
Nobles, and sons of nobles, patentees,
Monopolists, and stewards of this poor farm,
On whose lean sheep sit the prophetic crows,
Here is the pomp that strips the houseless orphan,
Here is the pride that breaks the desolate heart. _155
These are the lilies glorious as Solomon,
Who toil not, neither do they spin,—unless
It be the webs they catch poor rogues withal.
Here is the surfeit which to them who earn
The niggard wages of the earth, scarce leaves _160
The tithe that will support them till they crawl
Back to her cold hard bosom. Here is health
Followed by grim disease, glory by shame,
Waste by lame famine, wealth by squalid want,
And England's sin by England's punishment. _165
And, as the effect pursues the cause foregone,
Lo, giving substance to my words, behold
At once the sign and the thing signified—
A troop of cripples, beggars, and lean outcasts,
Horsed upon stumbling jades, carted with dung, _170
Dragged for a day from cellars and low cabins
And rotten hiding-holes, to point the moral
Of this presentment, and bring up the rear
Of painted pomp with misery!

NOTES:

_162 her 1870; its 1824.
_170 jades 1870; shapes 1824.
_173 presentment 1870; presentiment 1824.

THE YOUTH:

'Tis but
The anti-masque, and serves as discords do _175

SCENE 1:

Charles the First

In sweetest music. Who would love May flowers
If they succeeded not to Winter's flaw;
Or day unchanged by night; or joy itself
Without the touch of sorrow?

SECOND CITIZEN:

I and thou—

A MARSHALSMAN:

Place, give place! _180

NOTE:

_179, _180 I..place! 1870; omitted 1824.

SCENE 2:

A CHAMBER IN WHITEHALL.

ENTER THE KING, QUEEN, LAUD, LORD STRAFTORD,
LORD COTTINGTON, AND OTHER LORDS; ARCHY;
ALSO ST. JOHN, WITH SOME GENTLEMEN OF THE INNS OF COURT.

KING:

Thanks, gentlemen. I heartily accept
This token of your service: your gay masque
Was performed gallantly. And it shows well
When subjects twine such flowers of [observance?]
With the sharp thorns that deck the English crown. _5
A gentle heart enjoys what it confers,
Even as it suffers that which it inflicts,
Though Justice guides the stroke.
Accept my hearty thanks.

NOTE:

_3–9 And...thanks 1870; omitted 1824.

QUEEN:

And gentlemen,
Call your poor Queen your debtor. Your quaint pageant _10
Rose on me like the figures of past years,
Treading their still path back to infancy,
More beautiful and mild as they draw nearer
The quiet cradle. I could have almost wept
To think I was in Paris, where these shows _15
Are well devised—such as I was ere yet
My young heart shared a portion of the burthen,
The careful weight, of this great monarchy.
There, gentlemen, between the sovereign's pleasure
And that which it regards, no clamour lifts _20
Its proud interposition.
In Paris ribald censurers dare not move
Their poisonous tongues against these sinless sports;
And HIS smile
Warms those who bask in it, as ours would do _25
If ... Take my heart's thanks: add them, gentlemen,
To those good words which, were he King of France,
My royal lord would turn to golden deeds.

Charles the First

ST. JOHN:

Madam, the love of Englishmen can make
The lightest favour of their lawful king _30
Outweigh a despot's.—We humbly take our leaves,
Enriched by smiles which France can never buy.

[EXEUNT ST. JOHN AND THE GENTLEMEN OF THE INNS OF COURT.]

KING:

My Lord Archbishop,
Mark you what spirit sits in St. John's eyes?
Methinks it is too saucy for this presence. _35

ARCHY:

Yes, pray your Grace look: for, like an unsophisticated [eye] sees
everything upside down, you who are wise will discern the shadow of an
idiot in lawn sleeves and a rochet setting springes to catch woodcocks
in haymaking time. Poor Archy, whose owl-eyes are tempered to the
error of his age, and because he is a fool, and by special ordinance
of God forbidden ever to see himself as he is, sees now in that deep
eye a blindfold devil sitting on the ball, and weighing words out
between king and subjects. One scale is full of promises, and the
other full of protestations: and then another devil creeps behind the
first out of the dark windings [of a] pregnant lawyer's brain, and
takes the bandage from the other's eyes, and throws a sword into the
left-hand scale, for all the world like my Lord Essex's there. _48

STRAFFORD:

A rod in pickle for the Fool's back!

ARCHY:

Ay, and some are now smiling whose tears will make the brine; for the
Fool sees—

STRAFFORD:

Insolent! You shall have your coat turned and be whipped out of the
palace for this. _53

SCENE 2:

ARCHY:

When all the fools are whipped, and all the Protestant writers, while the knaves are whipping the fools ever since a thief was set to catch a thief. If all turncoats were whipped out of palaces, poor Archy would be disgraced in good company. Let the knaves whip the fools, and all the fools laugh at it. [Let the] wise and godly slit each other's noses and ears (having no need of any sense of discernment in their craft); and the knaves, to marshal them, join in a procession to Bedlam, to entreat the madmen to omit their sublime Platonic contemplations, and manage the state of England. Let all the honest men who lie [pinched?] up at the prisons or the pillories, in custody of the pursuivants of the High-Commission Court, marshal them. _65

NOTE:

_64 pinched marked as doubtful by Rossetti.
1870; Forman, Dowden; penned Woodberry.

[ENTER SECRETARY LYTTTELTON, WITH PAPERS.]

KING [LOOKING OVER THE PAPERS]:

These stiff Scots
His Grace of Canterbury must take order
To force under the Church's yoke.—You, Wentworth,
Shall be myself in Ireland, and shall add
Your wisdom, gentleness, and energy, _70
To what in me were wanting.—My Lord Weston,
Look that those merchants draw not without loss
Their bullion from the Tower; and, on the payment
Of shipmoney, take fullest compensation
For violation of our royal forests, _75
Whose limits, from neglect, have been o'ergrown
With cottages and cornfields. The uttermost
Farthing exact from those who claim exemption
From knighthood: that which once was a reward
Shall thus be made a punishment, that subjects _80
May know how majesty can wear at will
The rugged mood.—My Lord of Coventry,
Lay my command upon the Courts below
That bail be not accepted for the prisoners
Under the warrant of the Star Chamber. _85
The people shall not find the stubbornness
Of Parliament a cheap or easy method

SCENE 2:

Charles the First

Of dealing with their rightful sovereign:
And doubt not this, my Lord of Coventry,
We will find time and place for fit rebuke.— _90
My Lord of Canterbury.

NOTE:

_22–90 In Paris...rebuke 1870; omitted 1824.

ARCHY:

The fool is here.

LAUD:

I crave permission of your Majesty
To order that this insolent fellow be
Chastised: he mocks the sacred character,
Scoffs at the state, and—

NOTE:

_95 state 1870; stake 1824.

KING:

What, my Archy? _95
He mocks and mimics all he sees and hears,
Yet with a quaint and graceful licence—Prithee
For this once do not as Prynne would, were he
Primate of England. With your Grace's leave,
He lives in his own world; and, like a parrot _100
Hung in his gilded prison from the window
Of a queen's bower over the public way,
Blasphemes with a bird's mind:—his words, like arrows
Which know no aim beyond the archer's wit,
Strike sometimes what eludes philosophy.— _105
[TO ARCHY.]
Go, sirrah, and repent of your offence
Ten minutes in the rain; be it your penance
To bring news how the world goes there.
[EXIT ARCHY.]
Poor Archy!
He weaves about himself a world of mirth
Out of the wreck of ours. _110

SCENE 2:

NOTES:

_99 With your Grace's leave 1870; omitted 1824.
_106–_110 Go...ours spoken by THE QUEEN, 1824.

LAUD:

I take with patience, as my Master did,
All scoffs permitted from above.

KING:

My lord,
Pray overlook these papers. Archy's words
Had wings, but these have talons.

QUEEN:

And the lion
That wears them must be tamed. My dearest lord, _115
I see the new-born courage in your eye
Armed to strike dead the Spirit of the Time,
Which spurs to rage the many-headed beast.
Do thou persist: for, faint but in resolve,
And it were better thou hadst still remained _120
The slave of thine own slaves, who tear like curs
The fugitive, and flee from the pursuer;
And Opportunity, that empty wolf,
Flies at his throat who falls. Subdue thy actions
Even to the disposition of thy purpose, _125
And be that tempered as the Ebro's steel;
And banish weak-eyed Mercy to the weak,
Whence she will greet thee with a gift of peace
And not betray thee with a traitor's kiss,
As when she keeps the company of rebels, _130
Who think that she is Fear. This do, lest we
Should fall as from a glorious pinnacle
In a bright dream, and wake as from a dream
Out of our worshipped state.

NOTES:

_116 your 1824; thine 1870.
_118 Which...beast 1870; omitted 1824.

KING:

Beloved friend,
God is my witness that this weight of power, _135
Which He sets me my earthly task to wield
Under His law, is my delight and pride
Only because thou lovest that and me.
For a king bears the office of a God
To all the under world; and to his God _140
Alone he must deliver up his trust,
Unshorn of its permitted attributes.
[It seems] now as the baser elements
Had mutinied against the golden sun
That kindles them to harmony, and quells _145
Their self-destroying rapine. The wild million
Strike at the eye that guides them; like as humours
Of the distempered body that conspire
Against the spirit of life throned in the heart,—
And thus become the prey of one another, _150
And last of death—

STRAFFORD:

That which would be ambition in a subject
Is duty in a sovereign; for on him,
As on a keystone, hangs the arch of life,
Whose safety is its strength. Degree and form, _155
And all that makes the age of reasoning man
More memorable than a beast's, depend on this—
That Right should fence itself inviolably
With Power; in which respect the state of England
From usurpation by the insolent commons _160
Cries for reform.
Get treason, and spare treasure. Fee with coin
The loudest murmurers; feed with jealousies
Opposing factions,—be thyself of none;
And borrow gold of many, for those who lend _165
Will serve thee till thou payest them; and thus
Keep the fierce spirit of the hour at bay,
Till time, and its coming generations
Of nights and days unborn, bring some one chance,

...

Or war or pestilence or Nature's self,— _170
By some distemperature or terrible sign,

SCENE 2:

Charles the First

Be as an arbiter betwixt themselves.
Nor let your Majesty
Doubt here the peril of the unseen event.
How did your brother Kings, coheritors _175
In your high interest in the subject earth,
Rise past such troubles to that height of power
Where now they sit, and awfully serene
Smile on the trembling world? Such popular storms
Philip the Second of Spain, this Lewis of France, _180
And late the German head of many bodies,
And every petty lord of Italy,
Quelled or by arts or arms. Is England poorer
Or feebler? or art thou who wield'st her power
Tamer than they? or shall this island be— _185
[Girdled] by its inviolable waters—
To the world present and the world to come
Sole pattern of extinguished monarchy?
Not if thou dost as I would have thee do.

KING:

Your words shall be my deeds: _190
You speak the image of my thought. My friend
(If Kings can have a friend, I call thee so),
Beyond the large commission which [belongs]
Under the great seal of the realm, take this:
And, for some obvious reasons, let there be _195
No seal on it, except my kingly word
And honour as I am a gentleman.
Be—as thou art within my heart and mind—
Another self, here and in Ireland:
Do what thou judgest well, take amplest licence, _200
And stick not even at questionable means.
Hear me, Wentworth. My word is as a wall
Between thee and this world thine enemy—
That hates thee, for thou lovest me.

STRAFFORD:

I own
No friend but thee, no enemies but thine: _205
Thy lightest thought is my eternal law.
How weak, how short, is life to pay—

KING:

Peace, peace.
Thou ow'st me nothing yet.

SCENE 2:

[TO LAUD.]

My lord, what say
Those papers?

LAUD:

Your Majesty has ever interposed, _210
In lenity towards your native soil,
Between the heavy vengeance of the Church
And Scotland. Mark the consequence of warming
This brood of northern vipers in your bosom.
The rabble, instructed no doubt _215
By London, Lindsay, Hume, and false Argyll
(For the waves never menace heaven until
Scourged by the wind's invisible tyranny),
Have in the very temple of the Lord
Done outrage to His chosen ministers. _220
They scorn the liturgy of the Holy Church,
Refuse to obey her canons, and deny
The apostolic power with which the Spirit
Has filled its elect vessels, even from him
Who held the keys with power to loose and bind, _225
To him who now pleads in this royal presence.—
Let ample powers and new instructions be
Sent to the High Commissioners in Scotland.
To death, imprisonment, and confiscation,
Add torture, add the ruin of the kindred _230
Of the offender, add the brand of infamy,
Add mutilation: and if this suffice not,
Unleash the sword and fire, that in their thirst
They may lick up that scum of schismatics.
I laugh at those weak rebels who, desiring _235
What we possess, still prate of Christian peace,
As if those dreadful arbitrating messengers
Which play the part of God 'twixt right and wrong,
Should be let loose against the innocent sleep
Of templed cities and the smiling fields, _240
For some poor argument of policy
Which touches our own profit or our pride
(Where it indeed were Christian charity
To turn the cheek even to the smiter's hand):
And, when our great Redeemer, when our God, _245
When He who gave, accepted, and retained
Himself in propitiation of our sins,
Is scorned in His immediate ministry,
With hazard of the inestimable loss
Of all the truth and discipline which is _250
Salvation to the extremest generation
Of men innumerable, they talk of peace!
Such peace as Canaan found, let Scotland now:

SCENE 2:

Charles the First

For, by that Christ who came to bring a sword,
Not peace, upon the earth, and gave command _255
To His disciples at the Passover
That each should sell his robe and buy a sword,—
Once strip that minister of naked wrath,
And it shall never sleep in peace again
Till Scotland bend or break.

NOTES:

_134–_232 Beloved...mutilation 1870; omitted 1824.
_237 arbitrating messengers 1870; messengers of wrath 1824.
_239 the 1870; omitted 1524.
_243–_244 Parentheses inserted 1870.
_246, _247 When He...sins 1870; omitted 1824.
_248 ministry 1870; ministers 1824.
_249–52 With...innumerable 1870; omitted 1824.

KING:

My Lord Archbishop, _260
Do what thou wilt and what thou canst in this.
Thy earthly even as thy heavenly King
Gives thee large power in his unquiet realm.
But we want money, and my mind misgives me
That for so great an enterprise, as yet, _265
We are unfurnished.

STRAFFORD:

Yet it may not long
Rest on our wills.

COTTINGTON:

The expenses
Of gathering shipmoney, and of distraining
For every petty rate (for we encounter
A desperate opposition inch by inch _270
In every warehouse and on every farm),
Have swallowed up the gross sum of the imposts;
So that, though felt as a most grievous scourge
Upon the land, they stand us in small stead
As touches the receipt.

STRAFFORD:

'Tis a conclusion _275
Most arithmetical: and thence you infer
Perhaps the assembling of a parliament.
Now, if a man should call his dearest enemies
To sit in licensed judgement on his life,
His Majesty might wisely take that course. _280
[ASIDE TO COTTINGTON.]
It is enough to expect from these lean imposts
That they perform the office of a scourge,
Without more profit.
[ALOUD.]
Fines and confiscations,
And a forced loan from the refractory city,
Will fill our coffers: and the golden love _285
Of loyal gentlemen and noble friends
For the worshipped father of our common country,
With contributions from the catholics,
Will make Rebellion pale in our excess.
Be these the expedients until time and wisdom _290
Shall frame a settled state of government.

LAUD:

And weak expedients they! Have we not drained
All, till the ... which seemed
A mine exhaustless?

STRAFFORD:

And the love which IS,
If loyal hearts could turn their blood to gold. _295

LAUD:

Both now grow barren: and I speak it not
As loving parliaments, which, as they have been
In the right hand of bold bad mighty kings
The scourges of the bleeding Church, I hate.
Methinks they scarcely can deserve our fear. _300

STRAFFORD:

Oh! my dear liege, take back the wealth thou gavest:
With that, take all I held, but as in trust
For thee, of mine inheritance: leave me but
This unprovided body for thy service,

SCENE 2:

Charles the First

And a mind dedicated to no care _305
Except thy safety:—but assemble not
A parliament. Hundreds will bring, like me,
Their fortunes, as they would their blood, before—

KING:

No! thou who judgest them art but one. Alas!
We should be too much out of love with Heaven, _310
Did this vile world show many such as thee,
Thou perfect, just, and honourable man!
Never shall it be said that Charles of England
Stripped those he loved for fear of those he scorns;
Nor will he so much misbecome his throne _315
As to impoverish those who most adorn
And best defend it. That you urge, dear Strafford,
Inclines me rather—

QUEEN:

To a parliament?
Is this thy firmness? and thou wilt preside
Over a knot of ... censurers, _320
To the unswearing of thy best resolves,
And choose the worst, when the worst comes too soon?
Plight not the worst before the worst must come.
Oh, wilt thou smile whilst our ribald foes,
Dressed in their own usurped authority, _325
Sharpen their tongues on Henrietta's fame?
It is enough! Thou lovest me no more!
[WEEPS.]

KING:

Oh, Henrietta!

[THEY TALK APART.]

COTTINGTON [TO LAUD]:

Money we have none:
And all the expedients of my Lord of Strafford
Will scarcely meet the arrears.

SCENE 2:

LAUD:

Without delay _330
An army must be sent into the north;
Followed by a Commission of the Church,
With amplest power to quench in fire and blood,
And tears and terror, and the pity of hell,
The intenser wrath of Heresy. God will give _335
Victory; and victory over Scotland give
The lion England tamed into our hands.
That will lend power, and power bring gold.

COTTINGTON:

Meanwhile
We must begin first where your Grace leaves off.
Gold must give power, or—

LAUD:

I am not averse _340
From the assembling of a parliament.
Strong actions and smooth words might teach them soon
The lesson to obey. And are they not
A bubble fashioned by the monarch's mouth,
The birth of one light breath? If they serve no purpose, _345
A word dissolves them.

STRAFFORD:

The engine of parliaments
Might be deferred until I can bring over
The Irish regiments: they will serve to assure
The issue of the war against the Scots.
And, this game won—which if lost, all is lost— _350
Gather these chosen leaders of the rebels,
And call them, if you will, a parliament.

KING:

Oh, be our feet still tardy to shed blood.
Guilty though it may be! I would still spare
The stubborn country of my birth, and ward _355
From countenances which I loved in youth
The wrathful Church's lacerating hand.
[TO LAUD.]
Have you o'erlooked the other articles?

SCENE 2:

[ENTER ARCHY.]

LAUD:

Hazlerig, Hampden, Pym, young Harry Vane,
Cromwell, and other rebels of less note, _360
Intend to sail with the next favouring wind
For the Plantations.

ARCHY:

Where they think to found
A commonwealth like Gonzalo's in the play,
Gynaecocoenic and pantisocratic.

NOTE:

_363 Gonzalo's 1870; Gonzaga Boscombe manuscript.

KING:

What's that, sirrah?

ARCHY:

New devil's politics. _365
Hell is the pattern of all commonwealths:
Lucifer was the first republican.
Will you hear Merlin's prophecy, how three [posts?]
'In one brainless skull, when the whitethorn is full,
Shall sail round the world, and come back again: _370
Shall sail round the world in a brainless skull,
And come back again when the moon is at full:'—
When, in spite of the Church,
They will hear homilies of whatever length
Or form they please. _375

[COTTINGTON?]:

So please your Majesty to sign this order
For their detention.

SCENE 2:

Charles the First

ARCHY:

If your Majesty were tormented night and day by fever, gout, rheumatism, and stone, and asthma, etc., and you found these diseases had secretly entered into a conspiracy to abandon you, should you think it necessary to lay an embargo on the port by which they meant to dispeople your unquiet kingdom of man? _383

KING:

If fear were made for kings, the Fool mocks wisely;
But in this case—[WRITING]. Here, my lord, take the warrant,
And see it duly executed forthwith.—
That imp of malice and mockery shall be punished. _387

[EXEUNT ALL BUT KING, QUEEN, AND ARCHY.]

ARCHY:

Ay, I am the physician of whom Plato prophesied, who was to be accused by the confectioner before a jury of children, who found him guilty without waiting for the summing-up, and hanged him without benefit of clergy. Thus Baby Charles, and the Twelfth-night Queen of Hearts, and the overgrown schoolboy Cottington, and that little urchin Laud—who would reduce a verdict of 'guilty, death,' by famine, if it were impregnable by composition—all impannelled against poor Archy for presenting them bitter physic the last day of the holidays. _397

QUEEN:

Is the rain over, sirrah?

KING:

When it rains
And the sun shines, 'twill rain again to-morrow:
And therefore never smile till you've done crying. _400

ARCHY:

But 'tis all over now: like the April anger of woman, the gentle sky
has wept itself serene.

SCENE 2:

Charles the First

QUEEN:

What news abroad? how looks the world this morning?

ARCHY:

Gloriously as a grave covered with virgin flowers. There's a rainbow in the sky. Let your Majesty look at it, for

'A rainbow in the morning _407
Is the shepherd's warning;'

and the flocks of which you are the pastor are scattered among the mountain-tops, where every drop of water is a flake of snow, and the breath of May pierces like a January blast. _411

KING:

The sheep have mistaken the wolf for their shepherd, my poor boy; and the shepherd, the wolves for their watchdogs.

QUEEN:

But the rainbow was a good sign, Archy: it says that the waters of the deluge are gone, and can return no more.

ARCHY:

Ay, the salt-water one: but that of tears and blood must yet come down, and that of fire follow, if there be any truth in lies.—The rainbow hung over the city with all its shops,...and churches, from north to south, like a bridge of congregated lightning pieced by the masonry of heaven—like a balance in which the angel that distributes the coming hour was weighing that heavy one whose poise is now felt in the lightest hearts, before it bows the proudest heads under the meanest feet. _424

QUEEN:

Who taught you this trash, sirrah?

SCENE 2:

Charles the First

ARCHY:

A torn leaf out of an old book trampled in the dirt.—But for the rainbow. It moved as the sun moved, and...until the top of the Tower...of a cloud through its left-hand tip, and Lambeth Palace look as dark as a rock before the other. Methought I saw a crown figured upon one tip, and a mitre on the other. So, as I had heard treasures were found where the rainbow quenches its points upon the earth, I set off, and at the Tower—But I shall not tell your Majesty what I found close to the closet-window on which the rainbow had glimmered.

KING:

Speak: I will make my Fool my conscience. _435

ARCHY:

Then conscience is a fool.—I saw there a cat caught in a rat-trap . I heard the rats squeak behind the wainscots: it seemed to me that the very mice were consulting on the manner of her death.

QUEEN:

Archy is shrewd and bitter.

ARCHY:

Like the season, _440

So blow the winds.—But at the other end of the rainbow, where the gray rain was tempered along the grass and leaves by a tender interfusion of violet and gold in the meadows beyond Lambeth, what think you that I found instead of a mitre?

KING:

Vane's wits perhaps. _445

ARCHY:

Something as vain. I saw a gross vapour hovering in a stinking ditch over the carcass of a dead ass, some rotten rags, and broken dishes—the wrecks of what once administered to the stuffing-out and the ornament of a worm of worms. His Grace of Canterbury expects to enter the New Jerusalem some Palm Sunday in triumph on the ghost of

SCENE 2:

this ass. _451

QUEEN:

Enough, enough! Go desire Lady Jane
She place my lute, together with the music
Mari received last week from Italy,
In my boudoir, and—

[EXIT ARCHY.]

KING:

I'll go in.

NOTE:

_254–_455 For by...I'll go in 1870; omitted 1824.

QUEEN:

MY beloved lord, _455
Have you not noted that the Fool of late
Has lost his careless mirth, and that his words
Sound like the echoes of our saddest fears?
What can it mean? I should be loth to think
Some factious slave had tutored him.

KING:

Oh, no! _460
He is but Occasion's pupil. Partly 'tis
That our minds piece the vacant intervals
Of his wild words with their own fashioning,—
As in the imagery of summer clouds,
Or coals of the winter fire, idlers find _465
The perfect shadows of their teeming thoughts:
And partly, that the terrors of the time
Are sown by wandering Rumour in all spirits;
And in the lightest and the least, may best
Be seen the current of the coming wind. _470

SCENE 2:

NOTES:

_460, _461 Oh...pupil 1870; omitted 1824.
_461 Partly 'tis 1870; It partly is 1824.
_465 of 1870; in 1824.

QUEEN:

Your brain is overwrought with these deep thoughts.
Come, I will sing to you; let us go try
These airs from Italy; and, as we pass
The gallery, we'll decide where that Correggio
Shall hang—the Virgin Mother _475
With her child, born the King of heaven and earth,
Whose reign is men's salvation. And you shall see
A cradled miniature of yourself asleep,
Stamped on the heart by never-erring love;
Liker than any Vandyke ever made, _480
A pattern to the unborn age of thee,
Over whose sweet beauty I have wept for joy
A thousand times, and now should weep for sorrow,
Did I not think that after we were dead
Our fortunes would spring high in him, and that _485
The cares we waste upon our heavy crown
Would make it light and glorious as a wreath
Of Heaven's beams for his dear innocent brow.

NOTE:

_473–_477 and, as...salvation 1870; omitted 1824.

KING:

Dear Henrietta!

SCENE 3:

THE STAR CHAMBER.

LAUD, JUXON, STRAFFORD, AND OTHERS, AS JUDGES.

PRYNNE AS A PRISONER, AND THEN BASTWICK.

LAUD:

Bring forth the prisoner Bastwick: let the clerk
Recite his sentence.

CLERK:

'That he pay five thousand
Pounds to the king, lose both his ears, be branded
With red-hot iron on the cheek and forehead,
And be imprisoned within Lancaster Castle _5
During the pleasure of the Court.'

LAUD:

Prisoner,
If you have aught to say wherefore this sentence
Should not be put into effect, now speak.

JUXON:

If you have aught to plead in mitigation,
Speak.

BASTWICK:

Thus, my lords. If, like the prelates, I _10
Were an invader of the royal power
A public scorner of the word of God,
Profane, idolatrous, popish, superstitious,
Impious in heart and in tyrannic act,
Void of wit, honesty, and temperance; _15
If Satan were my lord, as theirs,—our God
Pattern of all I should avoid to do;
Were I an enemy of my God and King
And of good men, as ye are;—I should merit
Your fearful state and guilt prosperity, _20
Which, when ye wake from the last sleep, shall turn

Charles the First

To cowls and robes of everlasting fire.
But, as I am, I bid ye grudge me not
The only earthly favour ye can yield,
Or I think worth acceptance at your hands,— _25
Scorn, mutilation, and imprisonment.
even as my Master did,
Until Heaven's kingdom shall descend on earth,
Or earth be like a shadow in the light
Of Heaven absorbed—some few tumultuous years _30
Will pass, and leave no wreck of what opposes
His will whose will is power.

NOTE:

_27–_32 even...power printed as a fragment, Garnett, 1862; inserted here conjecturally, Rossetti, 1870.

LAUD:

Officer, take the prisoner from the bar,
And be his tongue slit for his insolence.

BASTWICK:

While this hand holds a pen—

LAUD:

Be his hands—

JUXON:

Stop! _35
Forbear, my lord! The tongue, which now can speak
No terror, would interpret, being dumb,
Heaven's thunder to our harm;...
And hands, which now write only their own shame,
With bleeding stumps might sign our blood away. _40

LAUD:

Much more such 'mercy' among men would be,
Did all the ministers of Heaven's revenge
Flinch thus from earthly retribution. I
Could suffer what I would inflict.

SCENE 3:

[EXIT BASTWICK GUARDED.]

Bring up

The Lord Bishop of Lincoln.—

[TO STRATFORD.]

Know you not _45

That, in distraining for ten thousand pounds

Upon his books and furniture at Lincoln,

Were found these scandalous and seditious letters

Sent from one Osbaldistone, who is fled?

I speak it not as touching this poor person; _50

But of the office which should make it holy,

Were it as vile as it was ever spotless.

Mark too, my lord, that this expression strikes

His Majesty, if I misinterpret not.

[ENTER BISHOP WILLIAMS GUARDED.]

STRAFFORD:

'Twere politic and just that Williams taste _55

The bitter fruit of his connection with

The schismatics. But you, my Lord Archbishop,

Who owed your first promotion to his favour,

Who grew beneath his smile—

LAUD:

Would therefore beg

The office of his judge from this High Court,— _60

That it shall seem, even as it is, that I,

In my assumption of this sacred robe,

Have put aside all worldly preference,

All sense of all distinction of all persons,

All thoughts but of the service of the Church.— _65

Bishop of Lincoln!

WILLIAMS:

Peace, proud hierarch!

I know my sentence, and I own it just.

Thou wilt repay me less than I deserve,

In stretching to the utmost

...

SCENE 3:

Charles the First

NOTE:

Scene 3. _1-_69 Bring...utmost 1870; omitted 1824.

SCENE 4:

HAMPDEN, PYM, CROMWELL, HIS DAUGHTER, AND YOUNG SIR HARRY VANE.

HAMPDEN:

England, farewell! thou, who hast been my cradle,
Shalt never be my dungeon or my grave!
I held what I inherited in thee
As pawn for that inheritance of freedom
Which thou hast sold for thy despoiler's smile: _5
How can I call thee England, or my country?—
Does the wind hold?

VANE:

The vanes sit steady
Upon the Abbey towers. The silver lightnings
Of the evening star, spite of the city's smoke,
Tell that the north wind reigns in the upper air. _10
Mark too that flock of fleecy-winged clouds
Sailing athwart St. Margaret's.

NOTE:

_11 flock 1824; fleet 1870.

HAMPDEN:

Hail, fleet herald
Of tempest! that rude pilot who shall guide
Hearts free as his, to realms as pure as thee,
Beyond the shot of tyranny, _15
Beyond the webs of that swoln spider...
Beyond the curses, calumnies, and [lies?]
Of atheist priests! ... And thou
Fair star, whose beam lies on the wide Atlantic,
Athwart its zones of tempest and of calm, _20
Bright as the path to a beloved home
Oh, light us to the isles of the evening land!
Like floating Edens cradled in the glimmer
Of sunset, through the distant mist of years
Touched by departing hope, they gleam! lone regions, _25
Where Power's poor dupes and victims yet have never
Propitiated the savage fear of kings

Charles the First

With purest blood of noblest hearts; whose dew
Is yet unstained with tears of those who wake
To weep each day the wrongs on which it dawns; _30
Whose sacred silent air owns yet no echo
Of formal blasphemies; nor impious rites
Wrest man's free worship, from the God who loves,
To the poor worm who envies us His love!
Receive, thou young ... of Paradise. _35
These exiles from the old and sinful world!

...

This glorious clime, this firmament, whose lights
Dart mitigated influence through their veil
Of pale blue atmosphere; whose tears keep green
The pavement of this moist all-feeding earth; _40
This vaporous horizon, whose dim round
Is bastioned by the circumfluous sea,
Repelling invasion from the sacred towers,
Presses upon me like a dungeon's grate,
A low dark roof, a damp and narrow wall. _45
The boundless universe
Becomes a cell too narrow for the soul
That owns no master; while the loathliest ward
Of this wide prison, England, is a nest
Of cradling peace built on the mountain tops,— _50
To which the eagle spirits of the free,
Which range through heaven and earth, and scorn the storm
Of time, and gaze upon the light of truth,
Return to brood on thoughts that cannot die
And cannot be repelled. _55
Like eaglets floating in the heaven of time,
They soar above their quarry, and shall stoop
Through palaces and temples thunderproof.

NOTES:

- _13 rude 1870; wild 1824.
- _16–_18 Beyond...priests 1870; omitted 1824.
- _25 Touched 1870; Tinged 1824.
- _34 To the poor 1870; Towards the 1824.
- _38 their 1870; the 1824.
- _46 boundless 1870; mighty 1824.
- _48 owns no 1824; owns a 1870. ward 1870; spot 1824.
- _50 cradling 1870; cradled 1824.
- _54, _55 Return...repelled 1870;

Charles the First

Return to brood over the [] thoughts

That cannot die, and may not he repelled 1824.

_56-_58 Like...thunderproof 1870; omitted 1824.

SCENE 5:

ARCHY:

I'll go live under the ivy that overgrows the terrace, and count the tears shed on its old [roots?] as the [wind?] plays the song of

'A widow bird sate mourning
Upon a wintry bough.' _5
[SINGS]
Heigho! the lark and the owl!
One flies the morning, and one lulls the night:—
Only the nightingale, poor fond soul,
Sings like the fool through darkness and light.

'A widow bird sate mourning for her love _10
Upon a wintry bough;
The frozen wind crept on above,
The freezing stream below.

There was no leaf upon the forest bare.
No flower upon the ground, _15
And little motion in the air
Except the mill-wheel's sound.'

NOTE:

Scene 5. _1–_9 I'll...light 1870; omitted 1824.
