

Marino Faliero

George Gordon, Lord Byron

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Marino Faliero

George Gordon, Lord Byron

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Marino Faliero

**MARINO FALIERO,
DOGE OF VENICE;
AN HISTORICAL TRAGEDY, IN FIVE ACTS.**

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.<

Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice.

Bertuccio Faliero, Nephew of the Doge.

Lioni, a Patrician and Senator.

Benintende, Chief of the Council of Ten.

Michel Steno, One of the three Capi of the Forty

Israel Bertuccio, Chief of the Arsenal,

Philip Calendaro, Conspirator.

Dagolino, Conspirator.

Bertram, Conspirator.

Signor of the Night, "Signore di Notte," one of the Officers belonging to the Republic.

First Citizen.

Second Citizen.

Third Citizen.

Vincenzo, Officer belonging to the Ducal Palace.

Pietro, Officer belonging to the Ducal Palace.

Battista, Officer belonging to the Ducal Palace.

Secretary of the Council of Ten.

Guards, Conspirators, Citizens, The Council of Ten, the Giunta, etc., etc.

WOMEN.

Angiolina, Wife to the Doge.

Marianna, her Friend.

Marino Faliero

Female Attendants, etc.

Scene Venice—in the year 1355.

ACT I.

Marino Faliero

Scene I.

—*An Antechamber in the Ducal Palace.*

Pietro speaks, in entering, to Battista.

Pie.

Is not the messenger returned?

Bat.

Not yet;

I have sent frequently, as you commanded,
But still the Signory is deep in council,
And long debate on Steno's accusation.

Pie.

Too long—at least so thinks the Doge.

Bat.

How bears he

These moments of suspense?

Pie.

With struggling patience.

Placed at the Ducal table, covered o'er
With all the apparel of the state—petitions,
Despatches, judgments, acts, reprieves, reports,—
He sits as rapt in duty; but whene'er

He hears the jarring of a distant door,
Or aught that intimates a coming step,
Or murmur of a voice, his quick eye wanders,
And he will start up from his chair, then pause,
And seat himself again, and fix his gaze
Upon some edict; but I have observed
For the last hour he has not turned a leaf.

Bat.

'Tis said he is much moved,—and doubtless 'twas
Foul scorn in Steno to offend so grossly.

Pie.

Aye, if a poor man: Steno's a patrician,
Young, galliard, gay, and haughty.

Bat.

Then you think

He will not be judged hardly?

Pie.

'Twere enough
He be judged justly; but 'tis not for us
To anticipate the sentence of the Forty.

Bat.

And here it comes.—What news, Vincenzo?

Enter Vincenzo.

Marino Faliero

Vin.

'Tis

Decided; but as yet his doom's unknown:

I saw the President in act to seal

The parchment which will bear the Forty's judgment

Unto the Doge, and hasten to inform him.

[Exeunt.]

Marino Faliero

Scene II.

—*The Ducal Chamber.*

Marino Faliero, Doge; and his Nephew, Bertuccio Faliero.

Ber. F.

It cannot be but they will do you justice.

Doge.

Aye, such as the Avogadori did,

Who sent up my appeal unto the Forty
To try him by his peers, his own tribunal.

Ber. F.

His peers will scarce protect him; such an act
Would bring contempt on all authority.

Doge.

Know you not Venice? Know you not the Forty?
But we shall see anon.

Ber. F. (addressing Vincenzo, then entering).

How now—what tidings?

Vin.

I am charged to tell his Highness that the court
Has passed its resolution, and that, soon
As the due forms of judgment are gone through,
The sentence will be sent up to the Doge;
In the mean time the Forty doth salute
The Prince of the Republic, and entreat
His acceptance of their duty.

Doge.

Yes—

They are wond'rous dutiful, and ever humble.
Sentence is passed, you say?

Vin.

It is, your Highness:

The President was sealing it, when I
Was called in, that no moment might be lost
In forwarding the intimation due
Not only to the Chief of the Republic,
But the complainant, both in one united.

Ber. F.

Are you aware, from aught you have perceived,
Of their decision?

Vin.

No, my Lord; you know
The secret custom of the courts in Venice.

Ber. F.

True; but there still is something given to guess,
Which a shrewd gleaner and quick eye would catch at;

Marino Faliero

A whisper, or a murmur, or an air
More or less solemn spread o'er the tribunal.
The Forty are but men—most worthy men,
And wise, and just, and cautious—this I grant—
And secret as the grave to which they doom

The guilty: but with all this, in their aspects—
At least in some, the juniors of the number—
A searching eye, an eye like yours, Vincenzo,
Would read the sentence ere it was pronounced.

Vin.

My Lord, I came away upon the moment,
And had no leisure to take note of that
Which passed among the judges, even in seeming;
My station near the accused too, Michel Steno,

Made me—

Doge (abruptly).

And how looked *he?* deliver that.

Vin.

Calm, but not overcast, he stood resigned
To the decree, whate'er it were;—but lo!
It comes, for the perusal of his Highness.

Enter the Secretary of the Forty.

Sec.

The high tribunal of the Forty sends
Health and respect to the Doge Faliero,
Chief magistrate of Venice, and requests
His Highness to peruse and to approve
The sentence passed on Michel Steno, born
Patrician, and arraigned upon the charge
Contained, together with its penalty,
Within the rescript which I now present.

Doge.

Retire, and wait without.

[Exeunt Secretary and Vincenzo.]

Take thou this paper:
The misty letters vanish from my eyes;
I cannot fix them.

Ber. F.

Patience, my dear Uncle:
Why do you tremble thus?—nay, doubt not, all
Will be as could be wished.

Doge.

Say on.

Ber. F. (reading).

"Decreed

In council, without one dissenting voice,
That Michel Steno, by his own confession,
Guilty on the last night of Carnival

Marino Faliero

Of having graven on the ducal throne
The following words—"

Doge.

Would'st thou repeat them?

Would'st *thou* repeat them—*thou*, a Faliero,
Harp on the deep dishonour of our house,
Dishonoured in its Chief—that Chief the Prince
Of Venice, first of cities?—To the sentence.

Ber. F.

Forgive me, my good Lord; I will obey—
(*Reads*) "That Michel Steno be detained a month
In close arrest."

Doge.

Proceed.

Ber. F.

My Lord, 'tis finished.

Doge.

How say you?—finished! Do I dream?—'tis false—
Give me the paper—(*snatches the paper and reads*)— "'Tis decreed in council
That Michel Steno"—Nephew, thine arm!

Ber. F.

Nay,

Cheer up, be calm; this transport is uncalled for—
Let me seek some assistance.

Doge.

Stop, sir—Stir not—

'Tis past.

Ber. F.

I cannot but agree with you

The sentence is too slight for the offence;
It is not honourable in the Forty
To affix so slight a penalty to that
Which was a foul affront to you, and even

To them, as being your subjects; but 'tis not
Yet without remedy: you can appeal
To them once more, or to the Avogadori,
Who, seeing that true justice is withheld,
Will now take up the cause they once declined,
And do you right upon the bold delinquent.
Think you not thus, good Uncle? why do you stand
So fixed? You heed me not:—I pray you, hear me!

Doge

(*dashing down the ducal bonnet, and offering to trample upon it, exclaims, as he is
withheld by his nephew*).

Oh! that the Saracen were in St. Mark's!

Thus would I do him homage.

Ber. F.

For the sake

Marino Faliero

Of Heaven and all its saints, my Lord—
Doge.

Away!

Oh, that the Genoese were in the port!
Oh, that the Huns whom I o'erthrew at Zara
Were ranged around the palace!

Ber. F.

'Tis not well
In Venice' Duke to say so.

Doge.

Venice' Duke!

Who now is Duke in Venice? let me see him,
That he may do me right.

Ber. F.

If you forget
Your office, and its dignity and duty,
Remember that of man, and curb this passion.

The Duke of Venice—

Doge (interrupting him).

There is no such thing—

It is a word—nay, worse—a worthless by-word:
The most despised, wronged, outraged, helpless wretch,
Who begs his bread, if 'tis refused by one,
May win it from another kinder heart;
But he, who is denied his right by those
Whose place it is to do no wrong, is poorer
Than the rejected beggar—he's a slave—
And that am I—and thou—and all our house,
Even from this hour; the meanest artisan
Will point the finger, and the haughty noble
May spit upon us:—where is our redress?

Ber. F.

The law, my Prince—

Doge (interrupting him).

You see what it has done;

I asked no remedy but from the law—
I sought no vengeance but redress by law—
I called no judges but those named by law—
As Sovereign, I appealed unto my subjects,
The very subjects who had made me Sovereign,
And gave me thus a double right to be so.
The rights of place and choice, of birth and service,
Honours and years, these scars, these hoary hairs,
The travel—toil—the perils—the fatigues—
The blood and sweat of almost eighty years,
Were weighed i' the balance, 'gainst the foulest stain,
The grossest insult, most contemptuous crime
Of a rank, rash patrician—and found wanting!
And this is to be borne!

Ber. F.

Marino Faliero

I say not that:—
In case your fresh appeal should be rejected,
We will find other means to make all even.

Doge.

Appeal again! art thou my brother's son?
A scion of the house of Faliero?
The nephew of a Doge? and of that blood
Which hath already given three dukes to Venice?
But thou say'st well—we must be humble now.

Ber. F.

My princely Uncle! you are too much moved;—
I grant it was a gross offence, and grossly
Left without fitting punishment: but still
This fury doth exceed the provocation,
Or any provocation: if we are wronged,
We will ask justice; if it be denied,
We'll take it; but may do all this in calmness—
Deep Vengeance is the daughter of deep Silence.
I have yet scarce a third part of your years,
I love our house, I honour you, its Chief,
The guardian of my youth, and its instructor—
But though I understand your grief, and enter
In part of your disdain, it doth appal me

To see your anger, like our Adrian waves,
O'ersweep all bounds, and foam itself to air.

Doge.

I tell thee—*must* I tell thee—what thy father
Would have required no words to comprehend?
Hast thou no feeling save the external sense
Of torture from the touch? hast thou no soul—
No pride—no passion—no deep sense of honour?

Ber. F.

'Tis the first time that honour has been doubted,
And were the last, from any other sceptic.

Doge.

You know the full offence of this born villain,
This creeping, coward, rank, acquitted felon,
Who threw his sting into a poisonous libel,
And on the honour of—Oh God! my wife,
The nearest, dearest part of all men's honour,
Left a base slur to pass from mouth to mouth
Of loose mechanics, with all coarse foul comments,
And villainous jests, and blasphemies obscene;
While sneering nobles, in more polished guise,
Whispered the tale, and smiled upon the lie
Which made me look like them—a courteous wittol,
Patient—aye—proud, it may be, of dishonour.

Ber. F.

But still it was a lie—you knew it false,
And so did all men.

Marino Faliero

Doge.

Nephew, the high Roman
Said, "Cæsar's wife must not even be suspected,"
And put her from him.

Ber. F.

True—but in those days—

Doge.

What is it that a Roman would not suffer,
That a Venetian Prince must bear? old Dandolo
Refused the diadem of all the Cæsars,
And wore the ducal cap *I* trample on—

Because 'tis now degraded.

Ber. F.

'Tis even so.

Doge.

It is—it is;—I did not visit on
The innocent creature thus most vilely slandered
Because she took an old man for her lord,
For that he had been long her father's friend
And patron of her house, as if there were
No love in woman's heart but lust of youth
And beardless faces;—I did not for this
Visit the villain's infamy on her,
But craved my country's justice on his head,
The justice due unto the humblest being
Who hath a wife whose faith is sweet to him,
Who hath a home whose hearth is dear to him—
Who hath a name whose honour's all to him,
When these are tainted by the accursing breath
Of Calumny and Scorn.

Ber. F.

And what redress

Did you expect as his fit punishment?

Doge.

Death! Was I not the Sovereign of the state—
Insulted on his very throne, and made
A mockery to the men who should obey me?
Was I not injured as a husband? scorned
As man? reviled, degraded, as a Prince?
Was not offence like his a complication
Of insult and of treason?—and he lives!
Had he instead of on the Doge's throne
Stamped the same brand upon a peasant's stool,
His blood had gilt the threshold; for the carle
Had stabbed him on the instant.

Ber. F.

Do not doubt it,

He shall not live till sunset—leave to me
The means, and calm yourself.

Doge.

Marino Faliero

Hold, nephew: this
Would have sufficed but yesterday; at present
I have no further wrath against this man.

Ber. F.

What mean you? is not the offence redoubled
By this most rank—I will not say—acquittal;
For it is worse, being full acknowledgment
Of the offence, and leaving it unpunished?

Doge.

It is redoubled, but not now by him:

The Forty hath decreed a month's arrest—
We must obey the Forty.

Ber. F.

Obey *them!*

Who have forgot their duty to the Sovereign?

Doge.

Why, yes;—boy, you perceive it then at last:
Whether as fellow citizen who sues
For justice, or as Sovereign who commands it,
They have defrauded me of both my rights
(For here the Sovereign is a citizen);
But, notwithstanding, harm not thou a hair
Of Steno's head—he shall not wear it long.

Ber. F.

Not twelve hours longer, had you left to me
The mode and means; if you had calmly heard me,
I never meant this miscreant should escape,
But wished you to suppress such gusts of passion,
That we more surely might devise together
His taking off.

Doge.

No, nephew, he must live;

At least, just now—a life so vile as his
Were nothing at this hour; in th' olden time
Some sacrifices asked a single victim,
Great expiations had a hecatomb.

Ber. F.

Your wishes are my law: and yet I fain
Would prove to you how near unto my heart
The honour of our house must ever be.

Doge.

Fear not; you shall have time and place of proof:
But be not thou too rash, as I have been.
I am ashamed of my own anger now;
I pray you, pardon me.

Ber. F.

Why, that's my uncle!

The leader, and the statesman, and the chief
Of commonwealths, and sovereign of himself!
I wondered to perceive you so forget

Marino Faliero

All prudence in your fury at these years,
Although the cause—

Doge.

Aye—think upon the cause—
Forget it not:—When you lie down to rest,
Let it be black among your dreams; and when
The morn returns, so let it stand between

The Sun and you, as an ill-omened cloud
Upon a summer-day of festival:
So will it stand to me;—but speak not, stir not,—
Leave all to me; we shall have much to do,
And you shall have a part.—But now retire,
'Tis fit I were alone.

Ber. F. (taking up and placing the ducal bonnet on the table).

Ere I depart,
I pray you to resume what you have spurned,
Till you can change it—haply, for a crown!
And now I take my leave, imploring you
In all things to rely upon my duty,
As doth become your near and faithful kinsman,
And not less loyal citizen and subject.

[Exit Bertuccio Faliero.]

Doge (solus).

Adieu, my worthy nephew.—Hollow bauble!
[Taking up the ducal cap.]

Beset with all the thorns that line a crown,
Without investing the insulted brow
With the all-swaying majesty of Kings;
Thou idle, gilded, and degraded toy,
Let me resume thee as I would a vizor.

[Puts it on.]

How my brain aches beneath thee! and my temples
Throb feverish under thy dishonest weight.
Could I not turn thee to a diadem?
Could I not shatter the Briarean sceptre
Which in this hundred-handed Senate rules,
Making the people nothing, and the Prince
A pageant? In my life I have achieved
Tasks not less difficult—achieved for them,
Who thus repay me! Can I not requite them?
Oh for one year! Oh! but for even a day
Of my full youth, while yet my body served
My soul as serves the generous steed his lord,
I would have dashed amongst them, asking few
In aid to overthrow these swoln patricians;
But now I must look round for other hands
To serve this hoary head; but it shall plan

Marino Faliero

In such a sort as will not leave the task
Herculean, though as yet 'tis but a chaos
Of darkly brooding thoughts: my fancy is

In her first work, more nearly to the light
Holding the sleeping images of things
For the selection of the pausing judgment.—
The troops are few in—

Enter Vincenzo.

Vin.

There is one without
Craves audience of your Highness.

Doge.

I'm unwell—
I can see no one, not even a patrician—
Let him refer his business to the Council.

Vin.

My Lord, I will deliver your reply;
It cannot much import—he's a plebeian,
The master of a galley, I believe.

Doge.

How! did you say the patron of a galley?
That is—I mean—a servant of the state:
Admit him, he may be on public service.

[Exit Vincenzo.]

Doge (solus).

This patron may be sounded; I will try him.
I know the people to be discontented:
They have cause, since Sapienza's adverse day,
When Genoa conquered: they have further cause,
Since they are nothing in the state, and in
The city worse than nothing—mere machines,
To serve the nobles' most patrician pleasure.
The troops have long arrears of pay, oft promised,

And murmur deeply—any hope of change
Will draw them forward: they shall pay themselves
With plunder:—but the priests—I doubt the priesthood
Will not be with us; they have hated me
Since that rash hour, when, maddened with the drone,
I smote the tardy Bishop at Treviso,
Quickening his holy march; yet, ne'ertheless,
They may be won, at least their Chief at Rome,
By some well-timed concessions; but, above
All things, I must be speedy: at my hour
Of twilight little light of life remains.
Could I free Venice, and avenge my wrongs,
I had lived too long, and willingly would sleep
Next moment with my sires; and, wanting this,

Marino Faliero

Better that sixty of my fourscore years
Had been already where—how soon, I care not—
The whole must be extinguished;—better that
They ne'er had been, than drag me on to be
The thing these arch—oppressors fain would make me.
Let me consider—of efficient troops
There are three thousand posted at—

Enter Vincenzo and Israel Bertuccio.

Vin.

May it please
Your Highness, the same patron whom I spake of
Is here to crave your patience.

Doge.

Leave the chamber,
Vincenzo.—

[Exit Vincenzo.]

Sir, you may advance—what would you?

I. Ber.

Redress.

Doge.

Of whom?

I. Ber.

Of God and of the Doge.

Doge.

Alas! my friend, you seek it of the twain
Of least respect and interest in Venice.
You must address the Council.

I. Ber.

'Twere in vain;

For he who injured me is one of them.

Doge.

There's blood upon thy face—how came it there?

I. Ber.

'Tis mine, and not the first I've shed for Venice,
But the first shed by a Venetian hand:

A noble smote me.

Doge.

Doth he live?

I. Ber.

Not long—

But for the hope I had and have, that you,
My Prince, yourself a soldier, will redress
Him, whom the laws of discipline and Venice
Permit not to protect himself:—if not—

I say no more.

Doge.

But something you would do—
Is it not so?

Marino Faliero

I. Ber.

I am a man, my Lord.

Doge.

Why so is he who smote you.

I. Ber.

He is called so;

Nay, more, a noble one—at least, in Venice:

But since he hath forgotten that I am one,
And treats me like a brute, the brute may turn—
'Tis said the worm will.

Doge.

Say—his name and lineage?

I. Ber.

Barbaro.

Doge.

What was the cause? or the pretext?

I. Ber.

I am the chief of the arsenal, employed
At present in repairing certain galleys
But roughly used by the Genoese last year.
This morning comes the noble Barbaro

Full of reproof, because our artisans
Had left some frivolous order of his house,
To execute the state's decree: I dared
To justify the men—he raised his hand;—
Behold my blood! the first time it e'er flowed
Dishonourably.

Doge.

Have you long time served?

I. Ber.

So long as to remember Zara's siege,
And fight beneath the Chief who beat the Huns there,
Sometime my general, now the Doge Faliero.—

Doge.

How! are we comrades?—the State's ducal robes
Sit newly on me, and you were appointed
Chief of the arsenal ere I came from Rome;
So that I recognised you not. Who placed you?

I. Ber.

The late Doge; keeping still my old command
As patron of a galley: my new office
Was given as the reward of certain scars
(So was your predecessor pleased to say):
I little thought his bounty would conduct me
To his successor as a helpless plaintiff;
At least, in such a cause.

Doge.

Are you much hurt?

I. Ber.

Irreparably in my self-esteem.

Marino Faliero

Doge.

Speak out; fear nothing: being stung at heart,
What would you do to be revenged on this man?

I. Ber.

That which I dare not name, and yet will do.

Doge.

Then wherefore came you here?

I. Ber.

I come for justice,
Because my general is Doge, and will not
See his old soldier trampled on. Had any,
Save Faliero filled the ducal throne,
This blood had been washed out in other blood.

Doge.

You come to me for justice—unto *me!*
The Doge of Venice, and I cannot give it;
I cannot even obtain it—'twas denied
To me most solemnly an hour ago!

I. Ber.

How says your Highness?

Doge.

Steno is condemned
To a month's confinement.

I. Ber.

What! the same who dared
To stain the ducal throne with those foul words,
That have cried shame to every ear in Venice?

Doge.

Aye, doubtless they have echoed o'er the arsenal,
Keeping due time with every hammer's clink,
As a good jest to jolly artisans;
Or making chorus to the creaking oar,
In the vile tune of every galley—slave,
Who, as he sung the merry stave, exulted
He was not a shamed dotard like the Doge.

I. Ber.

Is't possible? a month's imprisonment!
No more for Steno?

Doge.

You have heard the offence,
And now you know his punishment; and then
You ask redress of *me!* Go to the Forty,
Who passed the sentence upon Michel Steno;
They'll do as much by Barbaro, no doubt.

I. Ber.

Ah! dared I speak my feelings!

Doge.

Give them breath.
Mine have no further outrage to endure.

I. Ber.

Marino Faliero

Then, in a word, it rests but on your word
To punish and avenge—I will not say
My petty wrong, for what is a mere blow,
However vile, to such a thing as I am?—
But the base insult done your state and person.

Doge.

You overrate my power, which is a pageant.
This Cap is not the Monarch's crown; these robes
Might move compassion, like a beggar's rags;
Nay, more, a beggar's are his own, and these
But lent to the poor puppet, who must play
Its part with all its empire in this ermine.

I. Ber.

Wouldst thou be King?

Doge.

Yes—of a happy people.

I. Ber.

Wouldst thou be sovereign lord of Venice?

Doge.

Aye,

If that the people shared that sovereignty,
So that nor they nor I were further slaves
To this o'ergrown aristocratic Hydra,

The poisonous heads of whose envenomed body
Have breathed a pestilence upon us all.

I. Ber.

Yet, thou wast born, and still hast lived, patrician.

Doge.

In evil hour was I so born; my birth
Hath made me Doge to be insulted: but
I lived and toiled a soldier and a servant
Of Venice and her people, not the Senate;
Their good and my own honour were my guerdon.
I have fought and bled; commanded, aye, and conquered;
Have made and marred peace oft in embassies,
As it might chance to be our country's 'vantage;
Have traversed land and sea in constant duty,
Through almost sixty years, and still for Venice,
My fathers' and my birthplace, whose dear spires,
Rising at distance o'er the blue Lagoon,
It was reward enough for me to view
Once more; but not for any knot of men,
Nor sect, nor faction, did I bleed or sweat!
But would you know why I have done all this?
Ask of the bleeding pelican why she
Hath ripped her bosom? Had the bird a voice,
She'd tell thee 'twas for *all* her little ones.

I. Ber.

And yet they made thee Duke.

Doge.

Marino Faliero

They made me so;
I sought it not, the flattering fetters met me

Returning from my Roman embassy,
And never having hitherto refused
Toil, charge, or duty for the state, I did not,
At these late years, decline what was the highest
Of all in seeming, but of all most base
In what we have to do and to endure:
Bear witness for me thou, my injured subject,
When I can neither right myself nor thee.

I. Ber.

You shall do both, if you possess the will;
And many thousands more not less oppressed,
Who wait but for a signal—will you give it?

Doge.

You speak in riddles.

I. Ber.

Which shall soon be read
At peril of my life—if you disdain not
To lend a patient ear.

Doge.

Say on.

I. Ber.

Not thou,
Nor I alone, are injured and abused,
Contemned and trampled on; but the whole people
Groan with the strong conception of their wrongs:
The foreign soldiers in the Senate's pay
Are discontented for their long arrears;
The native mariners, and civic troops,
Feel with their friends; for who is he amongst them
Whose brethren, parents, children, wives, or sisters,
Have not partook oppression, or pollution,
From the patricians? And the hopeless war
Against the Genoese, which is still maintained
With the plebeian blood, and treasure wrung
From their hard earnings, has inflamed them further:
Even now—but, I forget that speaking thus,
Perhaps I pass the sentence of my death!

Doge.

And suffering what thou hast done—fear'st thou death?
Be silent then, and live on, to be beaten
By those for whom thou hast bled.

I. Ber.

No, I will speak
At every hazard; and if Venice' Doge

Should turn delator, be the shame on him,
And sorrow too; for he will lose far more
Than I.

Marino Faliero

Doge.

From me fear nothing; out with it!

I. Ber.

Know then, that there are met and sworn in secret
A band of brethren, valiant hearts and true;
Men who have proved all fortunes, and have long
Grieved over that of Venice, and have right
To do so; having served her in all climes,
And having rescued her from foreign foes,
Would do the same from those within her walls.
They are not numerous, nor yet too few
For their great purpose; they have arms, and means,
And hearts, and hopes, and faith, and patient courage.

Doge.

For what then do they pause?

I. Ber.

An hour to strike.

Doge (aside).

Saint Mark's shall strike that hour!

I. Ber.

I now have placed
My life, my honour, all my earthly hopes
Within thy power, but in the firm belief
That injuries like ours, sprung from one cause,
Will generate one vengeance: should it be so,
Be our Chief now—our Sovereign hereafter.

Doge.

How many are ye?

I. Ber.

I'll not answer that

Till I am answered.

Doge.

How, sir! do you menace?

I. Ber.

No; I affirm. I have betrayed myself;
But there's no torture in the mystic wells
Which undermine your palace, nor in those
Not less appalling cells, the "leaden roofs,"
To force a single name from me of others.
The Pozzi and the Piombi were in vain;

They might wring blood from me, but treachery never.
And I would pass the fearful "Bridge of Sighs,"
Joyous that mine must be the last that e'er
Would echo o'er the Stygian wave which flows
Between the murderers and the murdered, washing
The prison and the palace walls: there are
Those who would live to think on't, and avenge me.

Doge.

If such your power and purpose, why come here
To sue for justice, being in the course

Marino Faliero

To do yourself due right?

I. Ber.

Because the man,
Who claims protection from authority,
Showing his confidence and his submission
To that authority, can hardly be
Suspected of combining to destroy it.
Had I sate down too humbly with this blow,
A moody brow and muttered threats had made me
A marked man to the Forty's inquisition;
But loud complaint, however angrily
It shapes its phrase, is little to be feared,
And less distrusted. But, besides all this,
I had another reason.

Doge.

What was that?

I. Ber.

Some rumours that the Doge was greatly moved
By the reference of the Avogadori
Of Michel Steno's sentence to the Forty
Had reached me. I had served you, honoured you,
And felt that you were dangerously insulted,
Being of an order of such spirits, as
Requite tenfold both good and evil: 'twas
My wish to prove and urge you to redress.
Now you know all; and that I speak the truth,
My peril be the proof.

Doge.

You have deeply ventured;
But all must do so who would greatly win:
Thus far I'll answer you—your secret's safe.

I. Ber.

And is this all?

Doge.

Unless with all intrusted,
What would you have me answer?

I. Ber.

I would have you
Trust him who leaves his life in trust with you.

Doge.

But I must know your plan, your names, and numbers;
The last may then be doubled, and the former
Matured and strengthened.

I. Ber.

We're enough already;
You are the sole ally we covet now.

Doge.

But bring me to the knowledge of your chiefs.

I. Ber.

That shall be done upon your formal pledge

Marino Faliero

To keep the faith that we will pledge to you.

Doge.

When? where?

I. Ber.

This night I'll bring to your apartment

Two of the principals: a greater number

Were hazardous.

Doge.

Stay, I must think of this.—

What if I were to trust myself amongst you,

And leave the palace?

I. Ber.

You must come alone.

Doge.

With but my nephew.

I. Ber.

Not were he your son!

Doge.

Wretch! darest thou name my son? He died in arms

At Sapienza for this faithless state.

Oh! that he were alive, and I in ashes!

Or that he were alive ere I be ashes!

I should not need the dubious aid of strangers.

I. Ber.

Not one of all those strangers whom thou doubtest,

But will regard thee with a filial feeling,

So that thou keep'st a father's faith with them.

Doge.

The die is cast. Where is the place of meeting?

I. Ber.

At midnight I will be alone and masked

Where'er your Highness pleases to direct me,

To wait your coming, and conduct you where

You shall receive our homage, and pronounce

Upon our project.

Doge.

At what hour arises

The moon?

I. Ber.

Late, but the atmosphere is thick and dusky,

'Tis a sirocco.

Doge.

At the midnight hour, then,

Near to the church where sleep my sires; the same,

Twin-named from the apostles John and Paul;

A gondola, with one oar only, will

Lurk in the narrow channel which glides by.

Be there.

I. Ber.

I will not fail.

Marino Faliero

Doge.

And now retire—

I. Ber.

In the full hope your Highness will not falter
In your great purpose. Prince, I take my leave.

[Exit Israel Bertuccio.]

Doge (solus).

At midnight, by the church Saints John and Paul,
Where sleep my noble fathers, I repair—
To what? to hold a council in the dark
With common ruffians leagued to ruin states!
And will not my great sires leap from the vault,
Where lie two Doges who preceded me,
And pluck me down amongst them? Would they could!

For I should rest in honour with the honoured.

Alas! I must not think of them, but those
Who have made me thus unworthy of a name
Noble and brave as aught of consular
On Roman marbles; but I will redeem it
Back to its antique lustre in our annals,
By sweet revenge on all that's base in Venice,
And freedom to the rest, or leave it black
To all the growing calumnies of Time,
Which never spare the fame of him who fails,
But try the Cæsar, or the Catiline,
By the true touchstone of desert—Success.

ACT II.

Marino Faliero

Scene I.

—*An Apartment in the Ducal Palace.*

Angiolina (wife of the Doge) and Marianna.

Ang.

What was the Doge's answer?

Mar.

That he was

That moment summoned to a conference;
But 'tis by this time ended. I perceived
Not long ago the Senators embarking;
And the last gondola may now be seen
Gliding into the throng of barks which stud
The glittering waters.

Ang.

Would he were returned!

He has been much disquieted of late;
And Time, which has not tamed his fiery spirit,
Nor yet enfeebled even his mortal frame,
Which seems to be more nourished by a soul
So quick and restless that it would consume
Less hardy clay—Time has but little power
On his resentments or his griefs. Unlike
To other spirits of his order, who,
In the first burst of passion, pour away
Their wrath or sorrow, all things wear in him
An aspect of Eternity: his thoughts,
His feelings, passions, good or evil, all
Have nothing of old age; and his bold brow
Bears but the scars of mind, the thoughts of years,
Not their decrepitude: and he of late
Has been more agitated than his wont.
Would he were come! for I alone have power

Upon his troubled spirit.

Mar.

It is true,
His Highness has of late been greatly moved
By the affront of Steno, and with cause:
But the offender doubtless even now
Is doomed to expiate his rash insult with
Such chastisement as will enforce respect
To female virtue, and to noble blood.

Ang.

'Twas a gross insult; but I heed it not
For the rash scorner's falsehood in itself,

Marino Faliero

But for the effect, the deadly deep impression
Which it has made upon Faliero's soul,
The proud, the fiery, the austere—austere
To all save me: I tremble when I think
To what it may conduct.

Mar.

Assuredly
The Doge can not suspect you?

Ang.

Suspect *me!*

Why Steno dared not: when he scrawled his lie,
Groveling by stealth in the moon's glimmering light,
His own still conscience smote him for the act,
And every shadow on the walls frowned shame
Upon his coward calumny.

Mar.

'Twere fit
He should be punished grievously.

Ang.

He is so.

Mar.

What! is the sentence passed? is he condemned?

Ang.

I know not that, but he has been detected.

Mar.

And deem you this enough for such foul scorn?

Ang.

I would not be a judge in my own cause,
Nor do I know what sense of punishment
May reach the soul of ribalds such as Steno;
But if his insults sink no deeper in
The minds of the inquisitors than they
Have ruffled mine, he will, for all acquittance,
Be left to his own shamelessness or shame.

Mar.

Some sacrifice is due to slandered virtue.

Ang.

Why, what is virtue if it needs a victim?
Or if it must depend upon men's words?

The dying Roman said, "'twas but a name:"

It were indeed no more, if human breath
Could make or mar it.

Mar.

Yet full many a dame,
Stainless and faithful, would feel all the wrong
Of such a slander; and less rigid ladies,
Such as abound in Venice, would be loud
And all-inexorable in their cry
For justice.

Ang.

Marino Faliero

This but proves it is the name
And not the quality they prize: the first
Have found it a hard task to hold their honour,
If they require it to be blazoned forth;
And those who have not kept it, seek its seeming
As they would look out for an ornament
Of which they feel the want, but not because
They think it so; they live in others' thoughts,
And would seem honest as they must seem fair.

Mar.

You have strange thoughts for a patrician dame.

Ang.

And yet they were my father's; with his name,
The sole inheritance he left.

Mar.

You want none;
Wife to a Prince, the Chief of the Republic.

Ang.

I should have sought none though a peasant's bride,
But feel not less the love and gratitude
Due to my father, who bestowed my hand
Upon his early, tried, and trusted friend,
The Count Val di Marino, now our Doge.

Mar.

And with that hand did he bestow your heart?

Ang.

He did so, or it had not been bestowed.

Mar.

Yet this strange disproportion in your years,
And, let me add, disparity of tempers,
Might make the world doubt whether such an union
Could make you wisely, permanently happy.

Ang.

The world will think with worldlings; but my heart
Has still been in my duties, which are many,

But never difficult.

Mar.

And do you love him?

Ang.

I love all noble qualities which merit
Love, and I loved my father, who first taught me
To single out what we should love in others,
And to subdue all tendency to lend
The best and purest feelings of our nature
To baser passions. He bestowed my hand
Upon Faliero: he had known him noble,
Brave, generous; rich in all the qualities
Of soldier, citizen, and friend; in all
Such have I found him as my father said.
His faults are those that dwell in the high bosoms

Marino Faliero

Of men who have commanded; too much pride,
And the deep passions fiercely fostered by
The uses of patricians, and a life
Spent in the storms of state and war; and also
From the quick sense of honour, which becomes
A duty to a certain sign, a vice
When overstrained, and this I fear in him.
And then he has been rash from his youth upwards,
Yet tempered by redeeming nobleness
In such sort, that the wariest of republics
Has lavished all its chief employs upon him,
From his first fight to his last embassy,
From which on his return the Dukedom met him.

Mar.

But previous to this marriage, had your heart
Ne'er beat for any of the noble youth,
Such as in years had been more meet to match
Beauty like yours? or, since, have you ne'er seen
One, who, if your fair hand were still to give,
Might now pretend to Loredano's daughter?

Ang.

I answered your first question when I said
I married.

Mar.

And the second?

Ang.

Needs no answer.

Mar.

I pray you pardon, if I have offended.

Ang.

I feel no wrath, but some surprise: I knew not
That wedded bosoms could permit themselves
To ponder upon what they *now* might choose,
Or aught save their past choice.

Mar.

'Tis their past choice
That far too often makes them deem they would
Now choose more wisely, could they cancel it.

Ang.

It may be so. I knew not of such thoughts.

Mar.

Here comes the Doge—shall I retire?

Ang.

It may
Be better you should quit me; he seems rapt
In thought.—How pensively he takes his way!

[Exit Marianna.]

Enter the Doge and Pietro.

Doge (musing).

Marino Faliero

There is a certain Philip Calendaro
Now in the Arsenal, who holds command
Of eighty men, and has great influence
Besides on all the spirits of his comrades:
This man, I hear, is bold and popular,
Sudden and daring, and yet secret; 'twould
Be well that he were won: I needs must hope
That Israel Bertuccio has secured him,
But fain would be—

Pie.

My Lord, pray pardon me
For breaking in upon your meditation;
The Senator Bertuccio, your kinsman,
Charged me to follow and enquire your pleasure
To fix an hour when he may speak with you.

Doge.

At sunset.—Stay a moment—let me see—
Say in the second hour of night.

[Exit Pietro.]

Ang.

My Lord!

Doge.

My dearest child, forgive me—why delay
So long approaching me?—I saw you not.

Ang.

You were absorbed in thought, and he who now
Has parted from you might have words of weight
To bear you from the Senate.

Doge.

From the Senate?

Ang.

I would not interrupt him in his duty
And theirs.

Doge.

The Senate's duty! you mistake;
'Tis we who owe all service to the Senate.

Ang.

I thought the Duke had held command in Venice.

Doge.

He shall.—But let that pass.—We will be jocund.

How fares it with you? have you been abroad?
The day is overcast, but the calm wave
Favours the gondolier's light skimming oar;
Or have you held a levee of your friends?
Or has your music made you solitary?
Say—is there aught that you would will within
The little sway now left the Duke? or aught
Of fitting splendour, or of honest pleasure,
Social or lonely, that would glad your heart,

Marino Faliero

To compensate for many a dull hour, wasted
On an old man oft moved with many cares?
Speak, and 'tis done.

Ang.

You're ever kind to me.

I have nothing to desire, or to request,
Except to see you oftener and calmer.

Doge.

Calmer?

Ang.

Aye, calmer, my good Lord.—Ah, why
Do you still keep apart, and walk alone,
And let such strong emotions stamp your brow,
As not betraying their full import, yet
Disclose too much?

Doge.

Disclose too much!—of what?
What is there to disclose?

Ang.

A heart so ill

At ease.

Doge.

'Tis nothing, child.—But in the state
You know what daily cares oppress all those
Who govern this precarious commonwealth;
Now suffering from the Genoese without,
And malcontents within—'tis this which makes me
More pensive and less tranquil than my wont.

Ang.

Yet this existed long before, and never
Till in these late days did I see you thus.
Forgive me; there is something at your heart
More than the mere discharge of public duties,
Which long use and a talent like to yours
Have rendered light, nay, a necessity,
To keep your mind from stagnating. 'Tis not
In hostile states, nor perils, thus to shake you,—
You, who have stood all storms and never sunk,
And climbed up to the pinnacle of power

And never fainted by the way, and stand
Upon it, and can look down steadily
Along the depth beneath, and ne'er feel dizzy.
Were Genoa's galleys riding in the port,
Were civil fury raging in Saint Mark's,
You are not to be wrought on, but would fall,
As you have risen, with an unaltered brow:
Your feelings now are of a different kind;
Something has stung your pride, not patriotism.

Doge.

Pride! Angiolina? Alas! none is left me.

Marino Faliero

Ang.

Yes—the same sin that overthrew the angels,
And of all sins most easily besets
Mortals the nearest to the angelic nature:
The vile are only vain; the great are proud.

Doge.

I *had* the pride of honour, of *your* honour,
Deep at my heart— But let us change the theme.

Ang.

Ah no!—As I have ever shared your kindness
In all things else, let me not be shut out
From your distress: were it of public import,
You know I never sought, would never seek
To win a word from you; but feeling now
Your grief is private, it belongs to me
To lighten or divide it. Since the day
When foolish Steno's ribaldry detected
Unfixed your quiet, you are greatly changed,
And I would soothe you back to what you were.

Doge.

To what I was!—have you heard Steno's sentence?

Ang.

No.

Doge.

A month's arrest.

Ang.

Is it not enough?

Doge.

Enough!—yes, for a drunken galley slave,
Who, stung by stripes, may murmur at his master;
But not for a deliberate, false, cool villain,
Who stains a Lady's and a Prince's honour
Even on the throne of his authority.

Ang.

There seems to be enough in the conviction
Of a patrician guilty of a falsehood:
All other punishment were light unto
His loss of honour.

Doge.

Such men have no honour;

They have but their vile lives—and these are spared.

Ang.

You would not have him die for this offence?

Doge.

Not *now*:—being still alive, I'd have him live
Long as *he* can; he has ceased to merit death;
The guilty saved hath damned his hundred judges,
And he is pure, for now his crime is theirs.

Ang.

Oh! had this false and flippant libeller

Marino Faliero

Shed his young blood for his absurd lampoon,
Ne'er from that moment could this breast have known
A joyous hour, or dreamless slumber more.

Doge.

Does not the law of Heaven say blood for blood?
And he who *taints* kills more than he who sheds it.
Is it the *pain* of blows, or *shame* of blows,
That makes such deadly to the sense of man?
Do not the laws of man say blood for honour,—
And, less than honour, for a little gold?
Say not the laws of nations blood for treason?
Is't nothing to have filled these veins with poison
For their once healthful current? is it nothing
To have stained your name and mine—the noblest names?
Is't nothing to have brought into contempt
A Prince before his people? to have failed
In the respect accorded by Mankind
To youth in woman, and old age in man?
To virtue in your sex, and dignity
In ours?—But let them look to it who have saved him.

Ang.

Heaven bids us to forgive our enemies.

Doge.

Doth Heaven forgive her own? Is there not Hell
For wrath eternal?

Ang.

Do not speak thus wildly—
Heaven will alike forgive you and your foes.

Doge.

Amen! May Heaven forgive them!

Ang.

And will you?

Doge.

Yes, when they are in Heaven!

Ang.

And not till then?

Doge.

What matters my forgiveness? an old man's,
Worn out, scorned, spurned, abused; what matters then
My pardon more than my resentment, both
Being weak and worthless? I have lived too long;
But let us change the argument.—My child!
My injured wife, the child of Loredano,
The brave, the chivalrous, how little deemed
Thy father, wedding thee unto his friend,
That he was linking thee to shame!—Alas!
Shame without sin, for thou art faultless. Hadst thou
But had a different husband, *any* husband
In Venice save the Doge, this blight, this brand,
This blasphemy had never fallen upon thee.

Marino Faliero

So young, so beautiful, so good, so pure,
To suffer this, and yet be unavenged!

Ang.

I am too well avenged, for you still love me,
And trust, and honour me; and all men know
That you are just, and I am true: what more
Could I require, or you command?

Doge.

'Tis well,
And may be better; but whate'er betide,
Be thou at least kind to my memory.

Ang.

Why speak you thus?

Doge.

It is no matter why;
But I would still, whatever others think,
Have your respect both now and in my grave.

Ang.

Why should you doubt it? has it ever failed?

Doge.

Come hither, child! I would a word with you.
Your father was my friend; unequal Fortune
Made him my debtor for some courtesies
Which bind the good more firmly: when oppressed
With his last malady, he willed our union,
It was not to repay me, long repaid
Before by his great loyalty in friendship;
His object was to place your orphan beauty
In honourable safety from the perils,
Which, in this scorpion nest of vice, assail
A lonely and undowered maid. I did not
Think with him, but would not oppose the thought
Which soothed his death-bed.

Ang.

I have not forgotten

The nobleness with which you bade me speak
If my young heart held any preference
Which would have made me happier; nor your offer
To make my dowry equal to the rank.
Of aught in Venice, and forego all claim
My father's last injunction gave you.

Doge.

Thus,

'Twas not a foolish dotard's vile caprice,
Nor the false edge of aged appetite,
Which made me covetous of girlish beauty,
And a young bride: for in my fieriest youth
I swayed such passions; nor was this my age
Infected with that leprosy of lust
Which taints the hoariest years of vicious men,

Marino Faliero

Making them ransack to the very last
The dregs of pleasure for their vanished joys;
Or buy in selfish marriage some young victim,
Too helpless to refuse a state that's honest,
Too feeling not to know herself a wretch.
Our wedlock was not of this sort; you had
Freedom from me to choose, and urged in answer
Your father's choice.

Ang.

I did so; I would do so
In face of earth and Heaven; for I have never
Repented for my sake; sometimes for yours,
In pondering o'er your late disquietudes.

Doge.

I knew my heart would never treat you harshly;
I knew my days could not disturb you long;
And then the daughter of my earliest friend,
His worthy daughter, free to choose again,
Wealthier and wiser, in the ripest bloom
Of womanhood, more skilful to select
By passing these probationary years,
Inheriting a Prince's name and riches,
Secured, by the short penance of enduring
An old man for some summers, against all
That law's chicane or envious kinsmen might
Have urged against her right; my best friend's child
Would choose more fitly in respect of years,

And not less truly in a faithful heart.

Ang.

My Lord, I looked but to my father's wishes,
Hallowed by his last words, and to my heart
For doing all its duties, and replying
With faith to him with whom I was affianced.
Ambitious hopes ne'er crossed my dreams; and should
The hour you speak of come, it will be seen so.

Doge.

I do believe you; and I know you true:
For Love—romantic Love—which in my youth
I knew to be illusion, and ne'er saw
Lasting, but often fatal, it had been
No lure for me, in my most passionate days,
And could not be so now, did such exist.
But such respect, and mildly paid regard
As a true feeling for your welfare, and
A free compliance with all honest wishes,—
A kindness to your virtues, watchfulness
Not shown, but shadowing o'er such little failings
As Youth is apt in, so as not to check
Rashly, but win you from them ere you knew
You had been won, but thought the change your choice;

Marino Faliero

A pride not in your beauty, but your conduct;
A trust in you; a patriarchal love,
And not a doting homage; friendship, faith,—
Such estimation in your eyes as these
Might claim, I hoped for.

Ang.

And have ever had.

Doge.

I think so. For the difference in our years
You knew it choosing me, and chose; I trusted
Not to my qualities, nor would have faith
In such, nor outward ornaments of nature,
Were I still in my five and twentieth spring;
I trusted to the blood of Loredano
Pure in your veins; I trusted to the soul
God gave you—to the truths your father taught you—
To your belief in Heaven—to your mild virtues—
To your own faith and honour, for my own.

Ang.

You have done well.—I thank you for that trust,

Which I have never for one moment ceased
To honour you the more for.

Doge.

Where is Honour,
Innate and precept—strengthened, 'tis the rock
Of faith connubial: where it is not—where
Light thoughts are lurking, or the vanities
Of worldly pleasure rankle in the heart,
Or sensual throbs convulse it, well I know
'Twere hopeless for humanity to dream
Of honesty in such infected blood,
Although 'twere wed to him it covets most:
An incarnation of the poet's God
In all his marble—chiselled beauty, or
The demi—deity, Alcides, in
His majesty of superhuman Manhood,
Would not suffice to bind where virtue is not;
It is consistency which forms and proves it:
Vice cannot fix, and Virtue cannot change.
The once fall'n woman must for ever fall;
For Vice must have variety, while Virtue
Stands like the Sun, and all which rolls around
Drinks life, and light, and glory from her aspect.

Ang.

And seeing, feeling thus this truth in others,
(I pray you pardon me;) but wherefore yield you
To the most fierce of fatal passions, and
Disquiet your great thoughts with restless hate
Of such a thing as Steno?

Doge.

Marino Faliero

You mistake me.

It is not Steno who could move me thus;
Had it been so, he should—but let that pass.

Ang.

What is't you feel so deeply, then, even now?

Doge.

The violated majesty of Venice,
At once insulted in her Lord and laws.

Ang.

Alas! why will you thus consider it?

Doge.

I have thought on't till—but let me lead you back
To what I urged; all these things being noted,
I wedded you; the world then did me justice
Upon the motive, and my conduct proved
They did me right, while yours was all to praise:
You had all freedom—all respect—all trust

From me and mine; and, born of those who made
Princes at home, and swept Kings from their thrones
On foreign shores, in all things you appeared
Worthy to be our first of native dames.

Ang.

To what does this conduct?

Doge.

To thus much—that
A miscreant's angry breath may blast it all—
A villain, whom for his unbridled bearing,
Even in the midst of our great festival,
I caused to be conducted forth, and taught
How to demean himself in ducal chambers;
A wretch like this may leave upon the wall
The blighting venom of his sweltering heart,
And this shall spread itself in general poison;
And woman's innocence, man's honour, pass
Into a by-word; and the doubly felon
(Who first insulted virgin modesty
By a gross affront to your attendant damsels
Amidst the noblest of our dames in public)
Requite himself for his most just expulsion
By blackening publicly his Sovereign's consort,
And be absolved by his upright compeers.

Ang.

But he has been condemned into captivity.

Doge.

For such as him a dungeon were acquittal;
And his brief term of mock-arrest will pass
Within a palace. But I've done with him;

The rest must be with you.

Ang.

With me, my Lord?

Marino Faliero

Doge.

Yes, Angiolina. Do not marvel; I
Have let this prey upon me till I feel
My life cannot be long; and fain would have you
Regard the injunctions you will find within
This scroll (*giving her a paper*)—Fear not; they are for your advantage:
Read them hereafter at the fitting hour.

Ang.

My Lord, in life, and after life, you shall
Be honoured still by me: but may your days
Be many yet—and happier than the present!
This passion will give way, and you will be
Serene, and what you should be—what you were.

Doge.

I will be what I should be, or be nothing;

But never more—oh! never, never more,
O'er the few days or hours which yet await
The blighted old age of Faliero, shall
Sweet Quiet shed her sunset! Never more
Those summer shadows rising from the past
Of a not ill-spent nor inglorious life,
Mellowing the last hours as the night approaches,
Shall soothe me to my moment of long rest.
I had but little more to ask, or hope,
Save the regards due to the blood and sweat,
And the soul's labour through which I had toiled
To make my country honoured. As her servant—
Her servant, though her chief—I would have gone
Down to my fathers with a name serene
And pure as theirs; but this has been denied me.
Would I had died at Zara!

Ang.

There you saved
The state; then live to save her still. A day,
Another day like that would be the best
Reproof to them, and sole revenge for you.

Doge.

But one such day occurs within an age;
My life is little less than one, and 'tis
Enough for Fortune to have granted *once*,
That which scarce one more favoured citizen
May win in many states and years. But why
Thus speak I? Venice has forgot that day—
Then why should I remember it?—Farewell,
Sweet Angiolina! I must to my cabinet;
There's much for me to do—and the hour hastens.

Ang.

Remember what you were.

Doge.

It were in vain!

Marino Faliero

Joy's recollection is no longer joy,
While Sorrow's memory is a sorrow still.

Ang.

At least, whate'er may urge, let me implore
That you will take some little pause of rest:
Your sleep for many nights has been so turbid,
That it had been relief to have awaked you,
Had I not hoped that Nature would o'erpower

At length the thoughts which shook your slumbers thus.

An hour of rest will give you to your toils
With fitter thoughts and freshened strength.

Doge.

I cannot—
I must not, if I could; for never was
Such reason to be watchful: yet a few—
Yet a few days and dream—perturbéd nights,
And I shall slumber well—but where?—no matter.

Adieu, my Angiolina.

Ang.

Let me be
An instant—yet an instant your companion!
I cannot bear to leave you thus.

Doge.

Come then,
My gentle child—forgive me: thou wert made
For better fortunes than to share in mine,
Now darkling in their close toward the deep vale
Where Death sits robed in his all-sweeping shadow.
When I am gone—it may be sooner than
Even these years warrant, for there is that stirring
Within—above—around, that in this city
Will make the cemeteries populous
As e'er they were by pestilence or war,—
When I *am* nothing, let that which I *was*
Be still sometimes a name on thy sweet lips,
A shadow in thy fancy, of a thing
Which would not have thee mourn it, but remember.
Let us begone, my child—the time is pressing.

Marino Faliero

Scene II.

—*A retired spot near the Arsenal.*

Israel Bertuccio and Philip Calendaro.

Cal.

How sped you, Israel, in your late complaint?

I. Ber.

Why, well.

Cal.

Is't possible! will he be punished?

I. Ber.

Yes.

Cal.

With what? a mulct or an arrest?

I. Ber.

With death!

Cal.

Now you rave, or must intend revenge,
Such as I counselled you, with your own hand.

I. Ber.

Yes; and for one sole draught of hate, forego
The great redress we meditate for Venice,
And change a life of hope for one of exile;
Leaving one scorpion crushed, and thousands stinging
My friends, my family, my countrymen!
No, Calendaro; these same drops of blood,
Shed shamefully, shall have the whole of his
For their requital—But not only his;
We will not strike for private wrongs alone:
Such are for selfish passions and rash men,
But are unworthy a Tyrannicide.

Cal.

You have more patience than I care to boast.
Had I been present when you bore this insult,
I must have slain him, or expired myself
In the vain effort to repress my wrath.

I. Ber.

Thank Heaven you were not—all had else been marred:
As 'tis, our cause looks prosperous still.

Cal.

You saw
The Doge—what answer gave he?

I. Ber.

That there was
No punishment for such as Barbaro.

Cal.

Marino Faliero

I told you so before, and that 'twas idle
To think of justice from such hands.

I. Ber.

At least,
It lulled suspicion, showing confidence.
Had I been silent, not a Sbirro but
Had kept me in his eye, as meditating
A silent, solitary, deep revenge.

Cal.

But wherefore not address you to the Council?

The Doge is a mere puppet, who can scarce
Obtain right for himself. Why speak to *him*?

I. Ber.

You shall know that hereafter.

Cal.

Why not now?

I. Ber.

Be patient but till midnight. Get your musters,
And bid our friends prepare their companies:
Set all in readiness to strike the blow,
Perhaps in a few hours: we have long waited
For a fit time—that hour is on the dial,
It may be, of to-morrow's sun: delay
Beyond may breed us double danger. See
That all be punctual at our place of meeting,
And armed, excepting those of the Sixteen,
Who will remain among the troops to wait
The signal.

Cal.

These brave words have breathed new life
Into my veins; I am sick of these protracted
And hesitating councils: day on day
Crawled on, and added but another link
To our long fetters, and some fresher wrong
Inflicted on our brethren or ourselves,
Helping to swell our tyrants' bloated strength.
Let us but deal upon them, and I care not
For the result, which must be Death or Freedom!
I'm weary to the heart of finding neither.

I. Ber.

We will be free in Life or Death! the grave
Is chainless. Have you all the musters ready?
And are the sixteen companies completed
To sixty?

Cal.

All save two, in which there are
Twenty-five wanting to make up the number.

I. Ber.

No matter; we can do without. Whose are they?

Cal.

Marino Faliero

Bertram's and old Soranzo's, both of whom

Appear less forward in the cause than we are.

I. Ber.

Your fiery nature makes you deem all those
Who are not restless cold; but there exists
Oft in concentrated spirits not less daring
Than in more loud avengers. Do not doubt them.

Cal.

I do not doubt the elder; but in Bertram
There is a hesitating softness, fatal
To enterprise like ours: I've seen that man
Weep like an infant o'er the misery
Of others, heedless of his own, though greater;
And in a recent quarrel I beheld him
Turn sick at sight of blood, although a villain's.

I. Ber.

The truly brave are soft of heart and eyes,
And feel for what their duty bids them do.
I have known Bertram long; there doth not breathe
A soul more full of honour.

Cal.

It may be so:
I apprehend less treachery than weakness;
Yet as he has no mistress, and no wife
To work upon his milkiness of spirit,
He may go through the ordeal; it is well
He is an orphan, friendless save in us:
A woman or a child had made him less
Than either in resolve.

I. Ber.

Such ties are not
For those who are called to the high destinies
Which purify corrupted commonwealths;
We must forget all feelings save the *one*,
We must resign all passions save our purpose,
We must behold no object save our country,
And only look on Death as beautiful,
So that the sacrifice ascend to Heaven,
And draw down Freedom on her evermore.

Cal.

But if we fail—

I. Ber.

They never fail who die
In a great cause: the block may soak their gore:
Their heads may sodden in the sun; their limbs
Be strung to city gates and castle walls—
But still their Spirit walks abroad. Though years
Elapse, and others share as dark a doom,
They but augment the deep and sweeping thoughts

Marino Faliero

Which overpower all others, and conduct
The world at last to Freedom. What were we,
If Brutus had not lived? He died in giving
Rome liberty, but left a deathless lesson—
A name which is a virtue, and a Soul
Which multiplies itself throughout all time,
When wicked men wax mighty, and a state
Turns servile. He and his high friend were styled
"The last of Romans!" Let us be the first
Of true Venetians, sprung from Roman sires.

Cal.

Our fathers did not fly from Attila
Into these isles, where palaces have sprung
On banks redeemed from the rude ocean's ooze,
To own a thousand despots in his place.
Better bow down before the Hun, and call
A Tartar lord, than these swoln silkworms masters!

The first at least was man, and used his sword
As sceptre: these unmanly creeping things
Command our swords, and rule us with a word
As with a spell.

I. Ber.

It shall be broken soon.
You say that all things are in readiness;
To-day I have not been the usual round,
And why thou knowest; but thy vigilance
Will better have supplied my care: these orders
In recent council to redouble now
Our efforts to repair the galleys, have
Lent a fair colour to the introduction
Of many of our cause into the arsenal,
As new artificers for their equipment,
Or fresh recruits obtained in haste to man
The hoped-for fleet.—Are all supplied with arms?

Cal.

All who were deemed trust-worthy: there are some
Whom it were well to keep in ignorance
Till it be time to strike, and then supply them;
When in the heat and hurry of the hour
They have no opportunity to pause,
But needs must on with those who will surround them.

I. Ber.

You have said well. Have you remarked all such?

Cal.

I've noted most; and caused the other chiefs
To use like caution in their companies.
As far as I have seen, we are enough
To make the enterprise secure, if 'tis
Commenced to-morrow; but, till 'tis begun,
Each hour is pregnant with a thousand perils.

Marino Faliero

I. Ber.

Let the Sixteen meet at the wonted hour,
Except Soranzo, Nicoletto Blondo,
And Marco Giuda, who will keep their watch
Within the arsenal, and hold all ready,
Expectant of the signal we will fix on.

Cal.

We will not fail.

I. Ber.

Let all the rest be there;
I have a stranger to present to them.

Cal.

A stranger! doth he know the secret?

I. Ber.

Yes.

Cal.

And have you dared to peril your friends' lives
On a rash confidence in one we know not?

I. Ber.

I have risked no man's life except my own—
Of that be certain: he is one who may
Make our assurance doubly sure, according
His aid; and if reluctant, he no less
Is in our power: he comes alone with me,
And cannot 'scape us; but he will not swerve.

Cal.

I cannot judge of this until I know him:
Is he one of our order?

I. Ber.

Aye, in spirit,
Although a child of Greatness; he is one
Who would become a throne, or overthrow one—
One who has done great deeds, and seen great changes;
No tyrant, though bred up to tyranny;
Valiant in war, and sage in council; noble
In nature, although haughty; quick, yet wary:
Yet for all this, so full of certain passions,
That if once stirred and baffled, as he has been
Upon the tenderest points, there is no Fury
In Grecian story like to that which wrings
His vitals with her burning hands, till he
Grows capable of all things for revenge;
And add too, that his mind is liberal,
He sees and feels the people are oppressed,
And shares their sufferings. Take him all in all,
We have need of such, and such have need of us.

Cal.

And what part would you have him take with us?

I. Ber.

It may be, that of Chief.

Marino Faliero

Cal.

What! and resign
Your own command as leader?

I. Ber.

Even so.

My object is to make your cause end well,
And not to push myself to power. Experience,
Some skill, and your own choice, had marked me out
To act in trust as your commander, till
Some worthier should appear: if I have found such

As you yourselves shall own more worthy, think you
That I would hesitate from selfishness,
And, covetous of brief authority,
Stake our deep interest on my single thoughts,
Rather than yield to one above me in
All leading qualities? No, Calendaro,
Know your friend better; but you all shall judge.
Away! and let us meet at the fixed hour.
Be vigilant, and all will yet go well.

Cal.

Worthy Bertuccio, I have known you ever
Trusty and brave, with head and heart to plan
What I have still been prompt to execute.
For my own part, I seek no other Chief;
What the rest will decide, I know not, but
I am with you, as I have ever been,
In all our undertakings. Now farewell,
Until the hour of midnight sees us meet.

[Exeunt.]

ACT III.

Marino Faliero

Scene I.

—*Scene, the Space between the Canal and the Church of San Giovanni e San Paolo. An equestrian Statue before it.—A Gondola lies in the Canal at some distance.*

Enter the Doge alone, disguised.

Doge (solus).

I am before the hour, the hour whose voice,
Pealing into the arch of night, might strike
These palaces with ominous tottering,
And rock their marbles to the corner-stone,
Waking the sleepers from some hideous dream
Of indistinct but awful augury
Of that which will befall them. Yes, proud city!
Thou must be cleansed of the black blood which makes thee
A lazar-house of tyranny: the task
Is forced upon me, I have sought it not;

And therefore was I punished, seeing this
Patrician pestilence spread on and on,
Until at length it smote me in my slumbers,
And I am tainted, and must wash away
The plague spots in the healing wave. Tall fane!
Where sleep my fathers, whose dim statues shadow
The floor which doth divide us from the dead,
Where all the pregnant hearts of our bold blood,
Mouldered into a mite of ashes, hold
In one shrunk heap what once made many heroes,
When what is now a handful shook the earth—
Fane of the tutelary saints who guard our house!
Vault where two Doges rest—my sires! who died
The one of toil, the other in the field,
With a long race of other lineal chiefs
And sages, whose great labours, wounds, and state
I have inherited,—let the graves gape,
Till all thine aisles be peopled with the dead,
And pour them from thy portals to gaze on me!
I call them up, and them and thee to witness
What it hath been which put me to this task—
Their pure high blood, their blazon-roll of glories,
Their mighty name dishonoured all *in* me,
Not *by* me, but by the ungrateful nobles
We fought to make our equals, not our lords:
And chiefly thou, Ordelafo the brave,
Who perished in the field, where I since conquered,
Battling at Zara, did the hecatombs
Of thine and Venice' foes, there offered up
By thy descendant, merit such acquittance?

Marino Faliero

Spirits! smile down upon me! for my cause
Is yours, in all life now can be of yours,—
Your fame, your name, all mingled up in mine,

And in the future fortunes of our race!
Let me but prosper, and I make this city
Free and immortal, and our House's name
Worthier of what you were—now and hereafter!

Enter Israel Bertuccio.

I. Ber.

Who goes there?

Doge.

A friend to Venice.

I. Ber.

'Tis he.

Welcome, my Lord,—you are before the time.

Doge.

I am ready to proceed to your assembly.

I. Ber.

Have with you.—I am proud and pleased to see
Such confident alacrity. Your doubts
Since our last meeting, then, are all dispelled?

Doge.

Not so—but I have set my little left
Of life upon this cast: the die was thrown
When I first listened to your treason.—Start not!
That is the word; I cannot shape my tongue
To syllable black deeds into smooth names,
Though I be wrought on to commit them. When
I heard you tempt your Sovereign, and forbore
To have you dragged to prison, I became
Your guiltiest accomplice: now you may,
If it so please you, do as much by me.

I. Ber.

Strange words, my Lord, and most unmerited;
I am no spy, and neither are we traitors.

Doge.

We—We!—no matter—you have earned the right
To talk of *us*.—But to the point.—If this
Attempt succeeds, and Venice, rendered free
And flourishing, when we are in our graves,
Conducts her generations to our tombs,
And makes her children with their little hands
Strew flowers o'er her deliverers' ashes, then
The consequence will sanctify the deed,

And we shall be like the two Bruti in
The annals of hereafter; but if not,
If we should fail, employing bloody means
And secret plot, although to a good end,

Marino Faliero

Still we are traitors, honest Israel;—thou
No less than he who was thy Sovereign
Six hours ago, and now thy brother rebel.

I. Ber.

'Tis not the moment to consider thus,
Else I could answer.—Let us to the meeting,
Or we may be observed in lingering here.

Doge.

We *are* observed, and have been.

I. Ber.

We observed!

Let me discover—and this steel—

Doge.

Put up;

Here are no human witnesses: look there—

What see you?

I. Ber.

Only a tall warrior's statue
Bestriding a proud steed, in the dim light
Of the dull moon.

Doge.

That Warrior was the sire
Of my sire's fathers, and that statue was
Decreed to him by the twice rescued city:—
Think you that he looks down on us or no?

I. Ber.

My Lord, these are mere fantasies; there are
No eyes in marble.

Doge.

But there are in Death.

I tell thee, man, there is a spirit in
Such things that acts and sees, unseen, though felt;
And, if there be a spell to stir the dead,
'Tis in such deeds as we are now upon.
Deem'st thou the souls of such a race as mine
Can rest, when he, their last descendant Chief,
Stands plotting on the brink of their pure graves
With stung plebeians?

I. Ber.

It had been as well
To have pondered this before,—ere you embarked
In our great enterprise.—Do you repent?

Doge.

No—but I *feel*, and shall do to the last.
I cannot quench a glorious life at once,
Nor dwindle to the thing I now must be,
And take men's lives by stealth, without some pause:
Yet doubt me not; it is this very feeling,
And knowing *what* has wrung me to be thus,
Which is your best security. There's not

Marino Faliero

A roused mechanic in your busy plot
So wronged as I, so fall'n, so loudly called
To his redress: the very means I am forced
By these fell tyrants to adopt is such,
That I abhor them doubly for the deeds
Which I must do to pay them back for theirs.

I. Ber.

Let us away—hark—the Hour strikes.

Doge.

On—on—

It is our knell, or that of Venice.—On.

I. Ber.

Say rather, 'tis her Freedom's rising peal
Of Triumph. This way—we are near the place.

[Exeunt.]

Marino Faliero

Scene II.

—*The House where the Conspirators meet.*

Dagolino, Doro, Bertram, Fedele Trevisano, Calendaro, Antonio Delle Bende, etc., etc.

Cal. (entering).

Are all here?

Dag.

All with you; except the three
On duty, and our leader Israel,
Who is expected momentarily.

Cal.

Where's Bertram?

Ber.

Here!

Cal.

Have you not been able to complete
The number wanting in your company?

Ber.

I had marked out some: but I have not dared

To trust them with the secret, till assured
That they were worthy faith.

Cal.

There is no need
Of trusting to their faith; *who*, save ourselves
And our more chosen comrades, is aware
Fully of our intent? they think themselves
Engaged in secret to the Signory,
To punish some more dissolute young nobles
Who have defied the law in their excesses;
But once drawn up, and their new swords well fleshed
In the rank hearts of the more odious Senators,
They will not hesitate to follow up
Their blow upon the others, when they see
The example of their chiefs, and I for one
Will set them such, that they for very shame
And safety will not pause till all have perished.

Ber.

How say you? *all!*

Cal.

Whom wouldst thou spare?

Ber.

I spare?

I have no power to spare. I only questioned,
Thinking that even amongst these wicked men
There might be some, whose age and qualities
Might mark them out for pity.

Marino Faliero

Cal.

Yes, such pity
As when the viper hath been cut to pieces,
The separate fragments quivering in the sun,
In the last energy of venomous life,
Deserve and have. Why, I should think as soon
Of pitying some particular fang which made
One in the jaw of the swoln serpent, as
Of saving one of these: they form but links
Of one long chain; one mass, one breath, one body;
They eat, and drink, and live, and breed together,
Revel, and lie, oppress, and kill in concert,—
So let them die as *one!*

Dag.

Should *one* survive,
He would be dangerous as the whole; it is not

Their number, be it tens or thousands, but
The spirit of this Aristocracy
Which must be rooted out; and if there were
A single shoot of the old tree in life,
'Twould fasten in the soil, and spring again
To gloomy verdure and to bitter fruit.
Bertram, we must be firm!

Cal.

Look to it well
Bertram! I have an eye upon thee.

Ber.

Who
Distrusts me?

Cal.

Not I; for if I did so,
Thou wouldst not now be there to talk of trust:
It is thy softness, not thy want of faith,
Which makes thee to be doubted.

Ber.

You should know
Who hear me, who and what I am; a man
Roused like yourselves to overthrow oppression;
A kind man, I am apt to think, as some
Of you have found me; and if brave or no,
You, Calendaro, can pronounce, who have seen me
Put to the proof; or, if you should have doubts,
I'll clear them on your person!

Cal.

You are welcome,
When once our enterprise is o'er, which must not
Be interrupted by a private brawl.

Ber.

I am no brawler; but can bear myself
As far among the foe as any he

Marino Faliero

Who hears me; else why have I been selected
To be of your chief comrades? but no less
I own my natural weakness; I have not
Yet learned to think of indiscriminate murder
Without some sense of shuddering; and the sight
Of blood which spouts through hoary scalps is not
To me a thing of triumph, nor the death
Of man surprised a glory. Well—too well
I know that we must do such things on those
Whose acts have raised up such avengers; but
If there were some of these who could be saved
From out this sweeping fate, for our own sakes
And for our honour, to take off some stain

Of massacre, which else pollutes it wholly,
I had been glad; and see no cause in this
For sneer, nor for suspicion!

Dag.

Calm thee, Bertram,
For we suspect thee not, and take good heart.
It is the cause, and not our will, which asks
Such actions from our hands: we'll wash away
All stains in Freedom's fountain!

Enter Israel Bertuccio, and the Doge, disguised.

Dag.

Welcome, Israel.

Consp.

Most welcome.—Brave Bertuccio, thou art late—
Who is this stranger?

Cal.

It is time to name him.
Our comrades are even now prepared to greet him
In brotherhood, as I have made it known
That thou wouldst add a brother to our cause,
Approved by thee, and thus approved by all,
Such is our trust in all thine actions. Now
Let him unfold himself.

I. Ber.

Stranger, step forth!

[The Doge discovers himself.]

Consp.

To arms!—we are betrayed—it is the Doge!
Down with them both! our traitorous captain, and
The tyrant he hath sold us to.

Cal. (drawing his sword).

Hold! hold!

Who moves a step against them dies. Hold! hear
Bertuccio—What! are you appalled to see
A lone, unguarded, weaponless old man

Marino Faliero

Amongst you?—Israel, speak! what means this mystery?

I. Ber.

Let them advance and strike at their own bosoms,
Ungrateful suicides! for on our lives
Depend their own, their fortunes, and their hopes.

Doge.

Strike!—If I dreaded death, a death more fearful
Than any your rash weapons can inflict,
I should not now be here: Oh, noble Courage!
The eldest born of Fear, which makes you brave

Against this solitary hoary head!
See the bold chiefs, who would reform a state
And shake down senates, mad with wrath and dread
At sight of one patrician! Butcher me!
You can, I care not.—Israel, are these men
The mighty hearts you spoke of? look upon them!

Cal.

Faith! he hath shamed us, and deservedly.
Was this your trust in your true Chief Bertuccio,
To turn your swords against him and his guest?
Sheathe them, and hear him.

I. Ber.

I disdain to speak.
They might and must have known a heart like mine
Incapable of treachery; and the power
They gave me to adopt all fitting means
To further their design was ne'er abused.
They might be certain that who e'er was brought
By me into this Council had been led
To take his choice—as brother, or as victim.

Doge.

And which am I to be? your actions leave
Some cause to doubt the freedom of the choice.

I. Ber.

My Lord, we would have perished here together,
Had these rash men proceeded; but, behold,
They are ashamed of that mad moment's impulse,
And droop their heads; believe me, they are such
As I described them.—Speak to them.

Cal.

Aye, speak;
We are all listening in wonder.
I. Ber. (addressing the conspirators).

You are safe,
Nay, more, almost triumphant—listen then,
And know my words for truth.

Doge.

You see me here,
As one of you hath said, an old, unarmed,
Defenceless man; and yesterday you saw me

Marino Faliero

Presiding in the hall of ducal state,
Apparent Sovereign of our hundred isles,

Robed in official purple, dealing out
The edicts of a power which is not mine,
Nor yours, but of our masters—the patricians.
Why I was there you know, or think you know;
Why I am *here*, he who hath been most wronged,
He who among you hath been most insulted,
Outraged and trodden on, until he doubt
If he be worm or no, may answer for me,
Asking of his own heart what brought him here?
You know my recent story, all men know it,
And judge of it far differently from those
Who sate in judgement to heap scorn on scorn.
But spare me the recital—it is here,
Here at my heart the outrage—but my words,
Already spent in unavailing plaints,
Would only show my feebleness the more,
And I come here to strengthen even the strong,
And urge them on to deeds, and not to war
With woman's weapons; but I need not urge you.
Our private wrongs have sprung from public vices,
In this—I cannot call it commonwealth,
Nor kingdom, which hath neither prince nor people,
But all the sins of the old Spartan state
Without its virtues—temperance and valour.
The Lords of Lacedæmon were true soldiers,
But ours are Sybarites, while we are Helots,
Of whom I am the lowest, most enslaved;
Although dressed out to head a pageant, as
The Greeks of yore made drunk their slaves to form
A pastime for their children. You are met
To overthrow this Monster of a state,
This mockery of a Government, this spectre,
Which must be exorcised with blood,—and then
We will renew the times of Truth and Justice,
Condensing in a fair free commonwealth
Not rash equality but equal rights,
Proportioned like the columns to the temple,
Giving and taking strength reciprocal,

And making firm the whole with grace and beauty,
So that no part could be removed without
Infringement of the general symmetry.
In operating this great change, I claim
To be one of you—if you trust in me;
If not, strike home,—my life is compromised,
And I would rather fall by freemen's hands
Than live another day to act the tyrant
As delegate of tyrants: such I am not,

Marino Faliero

And never have been—read it in our annals;
I can appeal to my past government
In many lands and cities; they can tell you
If I were an oppressor, or a man
Feeling and thinking for my fellow men.
Haply had I been what the Senate sought,
A thing of robes and trinkets, dized out
To sit in state as for a Sovereign's picture;
A popular scourge, a ready sentence—signer,
A stickler for the Senate and "the Forty,"
A sceptic of all measures which had not
The sanction of "the Ten," a council—fawner,
A tool—a fool—a puppet,—they had ne'er
Fostered the wretch who stung me. What I suffer
Has reached me through my pity for the people;
That many know, and they who know not yet
Will one day learn: meantime I do devote,
Whate'er the issue, my last days of life—

My present power such as it is, not that
Of Doge, but of a man who has been great
Before he was degraded to a Doge,
And still has individual means and mind;
I stake my fame (and I had fame)—my breath—
(The least of all, for its last hours are nigh)
My heart—my hope—my soul—upon this cast!
Such as I am, I offer me to you
And to your chiefs; accept me or reject me,—
A Prince who fain would be a Citizen
Or nothing, and who has left his throne to be so.

Cal.

Long live Faliero!—Venice shall be free!

Consp.

Long live Faliero!

I. Ber.

Comrades! did I well?

Is not this man a host in such a cause?

Doge.

This is no time for eulogies, nor place
For exultation. Am I one of you?

Cal.

Aye, and the first among us, as thou hast been
Of Venice—be our General and Chief.

Doge.

Chief!—General!—I was General at Zara,
And Chief in Rhodes and Cyprus, Prince in Venice:

I cannot stoop — that is, I am not fit
To lead a band of — patriots: when I lay
Aside the dignities which I have borne,
'Tis not to put on others, but to be
Mate to my fellows—but now to the point:

Marino Faliero

Israel has stated to me your whole plan—
'Tis bold, but feasible if I assist it,
And must be set in motion instantly.

Cal.

E'en when thou wilt. Is it not so, my friends?
I have disposed all for a sudden blow;
When shall it be then?

Doge.

At sunrise.

Ber.

So soon?

Doge.

So soon?—so late—each hour accumulates
Peril on peril, and the more so now
Since I have mingled with you;—know you not

The Council, and "the Ten?" the spies, the eyes
Of the patricians dubious of their slaves,
And now more dubious of the Prince they have made one?
I tell you, you must strike, and suddenly,
Full to the Hydra's heart—its heads will follow.

Cal.

With all my soul and sword, I yield assent;
Our companies are ready, sixty each,
And all now under arms by Israel's order;
Each at their different place of rendezvous,
And vigilant, expectant of some blow;
Let each repair for action to his post!
And now, my Lord, the signal?

Doge.

When you hear

The great bell of Saint Mark's, which may not be
Struck without special order of the Doge
(The last poor privilege they leave their Prince),
March on Saint Mark's!

I. Ber.

And there?—

Doge.

By different routes

Let your march be directed, every sixty
Entering a separate avenue, and still
Upon the way let your cry be of War
And of the Genoese Fleet, by the first dawn
Discerned before the port; form round the palace,
Within whose court will be drawn out in arms
My nephew and the clients of our house,
Many and martial; while the bell tolls on,
Shout ye, "Saint Mark!—the foe is on our waters!"

Cal.

I see it now—but on, my noble Lord.

Doge.

Marino Faliero

All the patricians flocking to the Council,
(Which they dare not refuse, at the dread signal
Peeling from out their Patron Saint's proud tower,)
Will then be gathered in unto the harvest,
And we will reap them with the sword for sickle.
If some few should be tardy or absent, them,
'Twill be but to be taken faint and single,
When the majority are put to rest.

Cal.

Would that the hour were come! we will not scotch,

But kill.

Ber.

Once more, sir, with your pardon, I
Would now repeat the question which I asked
Before Bertuccio added to our cause
This great ally who renders it more sure,
And therefore safer, and as such admits
Some dawn of mercy to a portion of
Our victims—must all perish in this slaughter?

Cal.

All who encounter me and mine—be sure,
The mercy they have shown, I show.

Consp.

All! all!

Is this a time to talk of pity? when
Have they e'er shown, or felt, or feigned it?

I. Ber.

Bertram,

This false compassion is a folly, and
Injustice to thy comrades and thy cause!
Dost thou not see, that if we single out
Some for escape, they live but to avenge
The fallen? and how distinguish now the innocent
From out the guilty? all their acts are one—
A single emanation from one body,
Together knit for our oppression! 'Tis
Much that we let their children live; I doubt
If all of these even should be set apart:
The hunter may reserve some single cub
From out the tiger's litter, but who e'er
Would seek to save the spotted sire or dam,
Unless to perish by their fangs? however,
I will abide by Doge Faliero's counsel:
Let him decide if any should be saved.

Doge.

Ask me not—tempt me not with such a question—
Decide yourselves.

I. Ber.

You know their private virtues
Far better than we can, to whom alone

Marino Faliero

Their public vices, and most foul oppression,
Have made them deadly; if there be amongst them
One who deserves to be repealed, pronounce.

Doge.

Dolfino's father was my friend, and Lando
Fought by my side, and Marc Cornaro shared

My Genoese embassy: I saved the life
Of Veniero—shall I save it twice?
Would that I could save them and Venice also!
All these men, or their fathers, were my friends
Till they became my subjects; then fell from me
As faithless leaves drop from the o'erblown flower,
And left me a lone blighted thorny stalk,
Which, in its solitude, can shelter nothing;
So, as they let me wither, let them perish!

Cal.

They cannot co-exist with Venice' freedom!

Doge.

Ye, though you know and feel our mutual mass
Of many wrongs, even ye are ignorant
What fatal poison to the springs of Life,
To human ties, and all that's good and dear,
Lurks in the present institutes of Venice:
All these men were my friends; I loved them, they
Requited honourably my regards;
We served and fought; we smiled and wept in concert;
We revelled or we sorrowed side by side;
We made alliances of blood and marriage;
We grew in years and honours fairly,—till
Their own desire, not my ambition, made
Them choose me for their Prince, and then farewell!
Farewell all social memory! all thoughts
In common! and sweet bonds which link old friendships,
When the survivors of long years and actions,
Which now belong to history, soothe the days
Which yet remain by treasuring each other,
And never meet, but each beholds the mirror
Of half a century on his brother's brow,
And sees a hundred beings, now in earth,
Flit round them whispering of the days gone by,
And seeming not all dead, as long as two
Of the brave, joyous, reckless, glorious band,
Which once were one and many, still retain

A breath to sigh for them, a tongue to speak
Of deeds that else were silent, save on marble—

Oimé! Oimé!—and must I do this deed?

I. Ber.

My Lord, you are much moved: it is not now
That such things must be dwelt upon.

Marino Faliero

Doge.

Your patience
A moment—I recede not: mark with me
The gloomy vices of this government.
From the hour they made me Doge, the *Doge* they *made* me—
Farewell the past! I died to all that had been,
Or rather they to me: no friends, no kindness,
No privacy of life—all were cut off:
They came not near me—such approach gave umbrage;
They could not love me—such was not the law;
They thwarted me—'twas the state's policy;
They baffled me—'twas a patrician's duty;
They wronged me, for such was to right the state;
They could not right me—that would give suspicion;
So that I was a slave to my own subjects;
So that I was a foe to my own friends;
Begirt with spies for guards, with robes for power,
With pomp for freedom, gaolers for a council,
Inquisitors for friends, and Hell for life!
I had only one fount of quiet left,
And *that* they poisoned! My pure household gods
Were shivered on my hearth, and o'er their shrine
Sate grinning Ribaldry, and sneering Scorn.

I. Ber.

You have been deeply wronged, and now shall be

Nobly avenged before another night.

Doge.

I had borne all—it hurt me, but I bore it—
Till this last running over of the cup
Of bitterness—until this last loud insult,
Not only unredressed, but sanctioned; then,
And thus, I cast all further feelings from me—
The feelings which they crushed for me, long, long
Before, even in their oath of false allegiance!
Even in that very hour and vow, they abjured
Their friend and made a Sovereign, as boys make
Playthings, to do their pleasure—and be broken!
I from that hour have seen but Senators
In dark suspicious conflict with the Doge,
Brooding with him in mutual hate and fear;
They dreading he should snatch the tyranny
From out their grasp, and he abhorring tyrants.
To me, then, these men have no *private* life,
Nor claim to ties they have cut off from others;
As Senators for arbitrary acts
Amenable, I look on them—as such
Let them be dealt upon.

Cal.

And now to action!
Hence, brethren, to our posts, and may this be

Marino Faliero

The last night of mere words: I'd fain be doing!
Saint Mark's great bell at dawn shall find me wakeful!

I. Ber.

Disperse then to your posts: be firm and vigilant;
Think on the wrongs we bear, the rights we claim.

This day and night shall be the last of peril!

Watch for the signal, and then march. I go
To join my band; let each be prompt to marshal
His separate charge: the Doge will now return
To the palace to prepare all for the blow.
We part to meet in Freedom and in Glory!

Cal.

Doge, when I greet you next, my homage to you
Shall be the head of Steno on this sword!

Doge.

No; let him be reserved unto the last,

Nor turn aside to strike at such a prey,
Till nobler game is quarried: his offence
Was a mere ebullition of the vice,
The general corruption generated
By the foul Aristocracy: he could not—
He dared not in more honourable days
Have risked it. I have merged all private wrath
Against him in the thought of our great purpose.
A slave insults me—I require his punishment
From his proud master's hands; if he refuse it,
The offence grows his, and let him answer it.

Cal.

Yet, as the immediate cause of the alliance
Which consecrates our undertaking more,
I owe him such deep gratitude, that fain
I would repay him as he merits; may I?

Doge.

You would but lop the hand, and I the head;
You would but smite the scholar, I the master;
You would but punish Steno, I the Senate.
I cannot pause on individual hate,
In the absorbing, sweeping, whole revenge,
Which, like the sheeted fire from Heaven, must blast
Without distinction, as it fell of yore,
Where the Dead Sea hath quenched two Cities' ashes.

I. Ber.

Away, then, to your posts! I but remain
A moment to accompany the Doge
To our late place of tryst, to see no spies
Have been upon the scout, and thence I hasten
To where my allotted band is under arms.

Cal.

Farewell, then,—until dawn!

I. Ber.

Marino Faliero

Success go with you!

Consp.

We will not fail—Away! My Lord, farewell!

[The Conspirators salute the Doge and Israel Bertuccio, and retire, headed by Philip Calendaro. The Doge and Israel Bertuccio remain.]

I. Ber.

We have them in the toil—it cannot fail!
Now thou'rt indeed a Sovereign, and wilt make
A name immortal greater than the greatest:
Free citizens have struck at Kings ere now;

Cæsars have fallen, and even patrician hands
Have crushed dictators, as the popular steel
Has reached patricians: but, until this hour,
What Prince has plotted for his people's freedom?
Or risked a life to liberate his subjects?
For ever, and for ever, they conspire
Against the people, to abuse their hands
To chains, but laid aside to carry weapons
Against the fellow nations, so that yoke
On yoke, and slavery and death may whet,
Not glut, the never-gorged Leviathan!
Now, my Lord, to our enterprise;—'tis great,
And greater the reward; why stand you rapt?
A moment back, and you were all impatience!

Doge.

And is it then decided! must they die?

I. Ber.

Who?

Doge.

My own friends by blood and courtesy,
And many deeds and days—the Senators?

I. Ber.

You passed their sentence, and it is a just one.

Doge.

Aye, so it seems, and so it is to *you*;
You are a patriot, a plebeian Gracchus—
The rebel's oracle, the people's tribune—
I blame you not—you act in your vocation;
They smote you, and oppressed you, and despised you;
So they have *me*: but *you* ne'er spake with them;
You never broke their bread, nor shared their salt;
You never had their wine-cup at your lips:
You grew not up with them, nor laughed, nor wept,
Nor held a revel in their company;
Ne'er smiled to see them smile, nor claimed their smile
In social interchange for yours, nor trusted
Nor wore them in your heart of hearts, as I have:
These hairs of mine are grey, and so are theirs,
The elders of the Council: I remember

Marino Faliero

When all our locks were like the raven's wing,
As we went forth to take our prey around
The isles wrung from the false Mahometan;

And can I see them dabbled o'er with blood?
Each stab to them will seem my suicide.

I. Ber.

Doge! Doge! this vacillation is unworthy
A child; if you are not in second childhood,
Call back your nerves to your own purpose, nor
Thus shame yourself and me. By Heavens! I'd rather
Forego even now, or fail in our intent,
Than see the man I venerate subside
From high resolves into such shallow weakness!
You have seen blood in battle, shed it, both
Your own and that of others; can you shrink then
From a few drops from veins of hoary vampires,
Who but give back what they have drained from millions?

Doge.

Bear with me! Step by step, and blow on blow,
I will divide with you; think not I waver:
Ah! no; it is the *certainty* of all
Which I must do doth make me tremble thus.
But let these last and lingering thoughts have way,
To which you only and the night are conscious,
And both regardless; when the Hour arrives,
'Tis mine to sound the knell, and strike the blow,
Which shall unpeople many palaces,
And hew the highest genealogic trees
Down to the earth, strewed with their bleeding fruit,
And crush their blossoms into barrenness:
This will I—must I—have I sworn to do,
Nor aught can turn me from my destiny;
But still I quiver to behold what I
Must be, and think what I have been! Bear with me.

I. Ber.

Re—man your breast; I feel no such remorse,
I understand it not: why should you change?
You acted, and you act, on your free will.

Doge.

Aye, there it is—you feel not, nor do I,
Else I should stab thee on the spot, to save
A thousand lives—and killing, do no murder;
You *feel* not—you go to this butcher—work
As if these high—born men were steers for shambles:
When all is over, you'll be free and merry,
And calmly wash those hands incarnadine;
But I, outgoing thee and all thy fellows
In this surpassing massacre, shall be,

Shall see and feel—oh God! oh God! 'tis true,

Marino Faliero

And thou dost well to answer that it was
"My own free will and act," and yet you err,
For I *will* do this! Doubt not—fear not; I
Will be your most unmerciful accomplice!
And yet I act no more on my free will,
Nor my own feelings—both compel me back;
But there is *Hell* within me and around,
And like the Demon who believes and trembles
Must I abhor and do. Away! away!
Get thee unto thy fellows, I will hie me
To gather the retainers of our house.
Doubt not, St. Mark's great bell shall wake all Venice,
Except her slaughtered Senate: ere the Sun
Be broad upon the Adriatic there
Shall be a voice of weeping, which shall drown
The roar of waters in the cry of blood!
I am resolved—come on.

I. Ber.

With all my soul!
Keep a firm rein upon these bursts of passion;
Remember what these men have dealt to thee,
And that this sacrifice will be succeeded
By ages of prosperity and freedom
To this unshackled city: a true tyrant
Would have depopulated empires, nor
Have felt the strange compunction which hath wrung you
To punish a few traitors to the people.
Trust me, such were a pity more misplaced
Than the late mercy of the state to Steno.

Doge.

Man, thou hast struck upon the chord which jars
All nature from my heart. Hence to our task!

[Exeunt.]

ACT IV.

Marino Faliero

Scene I.

—*Palazzo of the Patrician Lioni. Lioni laying aside the mask and cloak which the Venetian Nobles wore in public, attended by a Domestic.*

Lioni.

I will to rest, right weary of this revel,
The gayest we have held for many moons,
And yet—I know not why—it cheered me not;
There came a heaviness across my heart,
Which, in the lightest movement of the dance,
Though eye to eye, and hand in hand united
Even with the Lady of my Love, oppressed me,
And through my spirit chilled my blood, until
A damp like Death rose o'er my brow; I strove
To laugh the thought away, but 'twould not be;
Through all the music ringing in my ears
A knell was sounding as distinct and clear,
Though low and far, as e'er the Adrian wave
Rose o'er the City's murmur in the night,
Dashing against the outward Lido's bulwark:
So that I left the festival before
It reached its zenith, and will woo my pillow
For thoughts more tranquil, or forgetfulness.
Antonio, take my mask and cloak, and light
The lamp within my chamber.

Ant.

Yes, my Lord:
Command you no refreshment?

Lioni.

Nought, save sleep,
Which will not be commanded. Let me hope it,
[Exit Antonio.]

Though my breast feels too anxious; I will try
Whether the air will calm my spirits: 'tis
A goodly night; the cloudy wind which blew
From the Levant hath crept into its cave,

And the broad Moon hath brightened. What a stillness!
[Goes to an open lattice.]

And what a contrast with the scene I left,
Where the tall torches' glare, and silver lamps'
More pallid gleam along the tapestried walls,
Spread over the reluctant gloom which haunts
Those vast and dimly-latticed galleries
A dazzling mass of artificial light,
Which showed all things, but nothing as they were.

Marino Faliero

There Age essaying to recall the past,
After long striving for the hues of Youth
At the sad labour of the toilet, and
Full many a glance at the too faithful mirror,
Pranked forth in all the pride of ornament,
Forgot itself, and trusting to the falsehood
Of the indulgent beams, which show, yet hide,
Believed itself forgotten, and was fooled.
There Youth, which needed not, nor thought of such
Vain adjuncts, lavished its true bloom, and health,
And bridal beauty, in the unwholesome press
Of flushed and crowded wassailers, and wasted
Its hours of rest in dreaming this was pleasure,
And so shall waste them till the sunrise streams
On sallow cheeks and sunken eyes, which should not
Have worn this aspect yet for many a year.

The music, and the banquet, and the wine,
The garlands, the rose odours, and the flowers,
The sparkling eyes, and flashing ornaments,
The white arms and the raven hair, the braids
And bracelets; swanlike bosoms, and the necklace,
An India in itself, yet dazzling not
The eye like what it circled; the thin robes,
Floating like light clouds 'twixt our gaze and heaven;
The many—twinkling feet so small and sylphlike,
Suggesting the more secret symmetry
Of the fair forms which terminate so well—
All the delusion of the dizzy scene,
Its false and true enchantments—Art and Nature,
Which swam before my giddy eyes, that drank
The sight of beauty as the parched pilgrim's
On Arab sands the false mirage, which offers
A lucid lake to his eluded thirst,
Are gone. Around me are the stars and waters—
Worlds mirrored in the Ocean, goodlier sight
Than torches glared back by a gaudy glass;
And the great Element, which is to space
What Ocean is to Earth, spreads its blue depths,
Softened with the first breathings of the spring;
The high Moon sails upon her beauteous way,
Serenely smoothing o'er the lofty walls
Of those tall piles and sea-girt palaces,
Whose porphyry pillars, and whose costly fronts,
Fraught with the Orient spoil of many marbles,
Like altars ranged along the broad canal,
Seem each a trophy of some mighty deed
Reared up from out the waters, scarce less strangely
Than those more massy and mysterious giants
Of architecture, those Titanian fabrics,
Which point in Egypt's plains to times that have

Marino Faliero

No other record. All is gentle: nought
Stirs rudely; but, congenial with the night,
Whatever walks is gliding like a spirit.

The tinklings of some vigilant guitars
Of sleepless lovers to a wakeful mistress,
And cautious opening of the casement, showing
That he is not unheard; while her young hand,
Fair as the moonlight of which it seems part,
So delicately white, it trembles in
The act of opening the forbidden lattice,
To let in love through music, makes his heart
Thrill like his lyre—strings at the sight; the dash
Phosphoric of the oar, or rapid twinkle
Of the far lights of skimming gondolas,
And the responsive voices of the choir
Of boatmen answering back with verse for verse;
Some dusky shadow checkering the Rialto;
Some glimmering palace roof, or tapering spire,
Are all the sights and sounds which here pervade
The ocean—born and earth—commanding City—
How sweet and soothing is this hour of calm!
I thank thee, Night! for thou hast chased away
Those horrid bodements which, amidst the throng,
I could not dissipate: and with the blessing
Of thy benign and quiet influence,
Now will I to my couch, although to rest
Is almost wronging such a night as this.—
[A knocking is heard from without.]

Hark! what is that? or who at such a moment?

Enter Antonio.

Ant.

My Lord, a man without, on urgent business,
Implores to be admitted.

Lioni.

Is he a stranger?

Ant.

His face is muffled in his cloak, but both
His voice and gestures seem familiar to me;
I craved his name, but this he seemed reluctant
To trust, save to yourself; most earnestly
He sues to be permitted to approach you.

Lioni.

'Tis a strange hour, and a suspicious bearing!
And yet there is slight peril: 'tis not in
Their houses noble men are struck at; still,
Although I know not that I have a foe
In Venice, 'twill be wise to use some caution.
Admit him, and retire; but call up quickly

Marino Faliero

Some of thy fellows, who may wait without.—

Who can this man be?—

[Exit Antonio, and returns with Bertram muffled.]

Ber.

My good Lord Lioni,

I have no time to lose, nor thou,—dismiss
This menial hence; I would be private with you.

Lioni.

It seems the voice of Bertram—Go, Antonio.

[Exit Antonio.]

Now, stranger, what would you at such an hour?

Ber. (discovering himself).

A boon, my noble patron; you have granted
Many to your poor client, Bertram; add
This one, and make him happy.

Lioni.

Thou hast known me
From boyhood, ever ready to assist thee
In all fair objects of advancement, which
Beseem one of thy station; I would promise
Ere thy request was heard, but that the hour,
Thy bearing, and this strange and hurried mode
Of suing, gives me to suspect this visit
Hath some mysterious import—but say on—
What has occurred, some rash and sudden broil?—

A cup too much, a scuffle, and a stab?
Mere things of every day; so that thou hast not
Spilt noble blood, I guarantee thy safety;
But then thou must withdraw, for angry friends
And relatives, in the first burst of vengeance,
Are things in Venice deadlier than the laws.

Ber.

My Lord, I thank you; but—

Lioni.

But what? You have not
Raised a rash hand against one of our order?
If so—withdraw and fly—and own it not;
I would not slay—but then I must not save thee!
He who has shed patrician blood—

Ber.

I come
To save patrician blood, and not to shed it!
And thereunto I must be speedy, for
Each minute lost may lose a life; since Time
Has changed his slow scythe for the two-edged sword,
And is about to take, instead of sand,
The dust from sepulchres to fill; his hour-glass!—
Go not *thou* forth to-morrow!

Marino Faliero

Lioni.

Wherefore not?—
What means this menace?

Ber.

Do not seek its meaning,
But do as I implore thee;—stir not forth,
Whate'er be stirring; though the roar of crowds—
The cry of women, and the shrieks of babes—
The groans of men—the clash of arms—the sound
Of rolling drum, shrill trump, and hollow bell,
Peal in one wide alarum l—Go not forth,
Until the Tocsin's silent, nor even then
Till I return!

Lioni.

Again, what does this mean?

Ber.

Again, I tell thee, ask not; but by all
Thou holdest dear on earth or Heaven—by all
The Souls of thy great fathers, and thy hope
To emulate them, and to leave behind
Descendants worthy both of them and thee—
By all thou hast of blessed in hope or memory—

By all thou hast to fear here or hereafter—
By all the good deeds thou hast done to me,
Good I would now repay with greater good,
Remain within—trust to thy household gods,
And to my word for safety, if thou dost,
As I now counsel—but if not, thou art lost!

Lioni.

I am indeed already lost in wonder;
Surely thou ravest! what have *I* to dread?
Who are my foes? or if there be such, *why*
Art *thou* leagued with them?—*thou!* or, if so leagued,
Why comest thou to tell me at this hour,
And not before?

Ber.

I cannot answer this.
Wilt thou go forth despite of this true warning?

Lioni.

I was not born to shrink from idle threats,
The cause of which I know not: at the hour
Of council, be it soon or late, I shall not
Be found among the absent.

Ber.

Say not so!
Once more, art thou determined to go forth?

Lioni.

I am. Nor is there aught which shall impede me!

Ber.

Then, Heaven have mercy on thy soul!—Farewell!

Marino Faliero

[*Going.*

Lioni.

Stay—there is more in this than my own safety
Which makes me call thee back; we must not part thus:
Bertram, I have known thee long.

Ber.

From childhood, Signor,
You have been my protector: in the days
Of reckless infancy, when rank forgets,
Or, rather, is not yet taught to remember
Its cold prerogative, we played together;
Our sports, our smiles, our tears, were mingled oft;
My father was your father's client, I
His son's scarce less than foster-brother; years
Saw us together—happy, heart-full hours!
Oh God! the difference 'twixt those hours and this!

Lioni.

Bertram, 'tis thou who hast forgotten them.

Ber.

Nor now, nor ever; whatsoe'er betide,
I would have saved you: when to Manhood's growth
We sprung, and you, devoted to the state,
As suits your station, the more humble Bertram
Was left unto the labours of the humble,
Still you forsook me not; and if my fortunes
Have not been towering, 'twas no fault of him
Who oftentimes rescued and supported me,
When struggling with the tides of Circumstance,
Which bear away the weaker: noble blood
Ne'er mantled in a nobler heart than thine
Has proved to me, the poor plebeian Bertram.
Would that thy fellow Senators were like thee!

Lioni.

Why, what hast thou to say against the Senate?

Ber.

Nothing.

Lioni.

I know that there are angry spirits
And turbulent mutterers of stifled treason,
Who lurk in narrow places, and walk out
Muffled to whisper curses to the night;
Disbanded soldiers, discontented ruffians,
And desperate libertines who brawl in taverns;
Thou herdest not with such: 'tis true, of late
I have lost sight of thee, but thou wert wont
To lead a temperate life, and break thy bread
With honest mates, and bear a cheerful aspect.
What hath come to thee? in thy hollow eye
And hueless cheek, and thine unquiet motions,

Marino Faliero

Sorrow and Shame and Conscience seem at war
To waste thee.

Ber.

Rather Shame and Sorrow light
On the accurséd tyranny which rides
The very air in Venice, and makes men
Madden as in the last hours of the plague
Which sweeps the soul deliriously from life!

Lioni.

Some villains have been tampering with thee, Bertram;
This is not thy old language, nor own thoughts;

Some wretch has made thee drunk with disaffection:

But thou must not be lost so; thou wert good
And kind, and art not fit for such base acts
As Vice and Villany would put thee to:
Confess—confide in me—thou know'st my nature.
What is it thou and thine are bound to do,
Which should prevent thy friend, the only son
Of him who was a friend unto thy father,
So that our good-will is a heritage
We should bequeath to our posterity
Such as ourselves received it, or augmented;
I say, what is it thou must do, that I
Should deem thee dangerous, and keep the house
Like a sick girl?

Ber.

Nay, question me no further:

I must be gone.—

Lioni.

And I be murdered!—say,
Was it not thus thou said'st, my gentle Bertram?

Ber.

Who talks of murder? what said I of murder?
'Tis false! I did not utter such a word.

Lioni.

Thou didst not; but from out thy wolfish eye,
So changed from what I knew it, there glares forth
The gladiator. If my life's thine object,
Take it—I am unarmed,—and then away!
I would not hold my breath on such a tenure
As the capricious mercy of such things
As thou and those who have set thee to thy task-work.

Ber.

Sooner than spill thy blood, I peril mine;
Sooner than harm a hair of thine, I place
In jeopardy a thousand heads, and some
As noble, nay, even nobler than thine own.

Lioni.

Aye, is it even so? Excuse me, Bertram;
I am not worthy to be singled out

Marino Faliero

From such exalted hecatombs—who are they
That *are* in danger, and that *make* the danger?

Ber.

Venice, and all that she inherits, are
Divided like a house against itself,
And so will perish ere to-morrow's twilight!

Lioni.

More mysteries, and awful ones! But now,

Or thou, or I, or both, it may be, are
Upon the verge of ruin; speak once out,
And thou art safe and glorious: for 'tis more
Glorious to save than slay, and slay i' the dark too—

Fie, Bertram! that was not a craft for thee!

How would it look to see upon a spear
The head of him whose heart was open to thee!
Borne by thy hand before the shuddering people?

And such may be my doom; for here I swear,

Whate'er the peril or the penalty

Of thy denunciation, I go forth,

Unless thou dost detail the cause, and show

The consequence of all which led thee here!

Ber.

Is there no way to save thee? minutes fly,
And thou art lost!—*thou!* my sole benefactor,

The only being who was constant to me

Through every change. Yet, make me not a traitor!

Let me save thee—but spare my honour!

Lioni.

Where

Can lie the honour in a league of murder?

And who are traitors save unto the State?

Ber.

A league is still a compact, and more binding
In honest hearts when words must stand for law;

And in my mind, there is no traitor like

He whose domestic treason plants the poniard

Within the breast which trusted to his truth.

Lioni.

And *who* will strike the steel to mine?

Ber.

Not I;

I could have wound my soul up to all things
Save this. *Thou* must not die! and think how dear

Thy life is, when I risk so many lives,

Nay, more, the Life of lives, the liberty

Of future generations, *not* to be

The assassin thou miscall'st me:—once, once more

I do adjure thee, pass not o'er thy threshold!

Lioni.

It is in vain—this moment I go forth.

Marino Faliero

Ber.

Then perish Venice rather than my friend!
I will disclose—ensnare—betray—destroy—

Oh, what a villain I become for thee!

Lioni.

Say, rather thy friend's saviour and the State's!—
Speak—pause not—all rewards, all pledges for
Thy safety and thy welfare; wealth such as
The State accords her worthiest servants; nay,
Nobility itself I guarantee thee,
So that thou art sincere and penitent.

Ber.

I have thought again: it must not be—I love thee—
Thou knowest it—that I stand here is the proof,
Not least though last; but having done my duty
By thee, I now must do it by my country!
Farewell—we meet no more in life!—farewell!

Lioni.

What, ho!—Antonio—Pedro—to the door!
See that none pass—arrest this man!—

Enter Antonio and other armed Domestics, who seize Bertram.

Lioni (continues).

Take care

He hath no harm; bring me my sword and cloak,
And man the gondola with four oars—quick—

[Exit Antonio.]

We will unto Giovanni Gradenigo's,
And send for Marc Cornaro:—fear not, Bertram;
This needful violence is for thy safety,
No less than for the general weal.

Ber.

Where wouldst thou
Bear me a prisoner?

Lioni.

Firstly to "the Ten;"
Next to the Doge.

Ber.

To the Doge?

Lioni.

Assuredly:
Is he not Chief of the State?

Ber.

Perhaps at sunrise—

Lioni.

What mean you?—but we'll know anon.

Ber.

Art sure?

Lioni.

Marino Faliero

Sure as all gentle means can make; and if
They fail, you know "the Ten" and their tribunal,
And that St. Mark's has dungeons, and the dungeons
A rack.

Ber.

Apply it then before the dawn
Now hastening into heaven.—One more such word,
And you shall perish piecemeal, by the death
You think to doom to me.

Re-enter Antonio.

Ant.

The bark is ready,
My Lord, and all prepared.

Lioni.

Look to the prisoner.
Bertram, I'll reason with thee as we go
To the Magnifico's, sage Gradenigo.

[Exeunt.]

Marino Faliero

Scene II.

—*The Ducal Palace—The Doge's Apartment.*

The Doge and his Nephew Bertuccio Faliero.

Doge.

Are all the people of our house in muster?

Ber. F.

They are arrayed, and eager for the signal,

Within our palace precincts at San Polo:

I come for your last orders.

Doge.

It had been

As well had there been time to have got together,

From my own fief, Val di Marino, more

Of our retainers—but it is too late.

Ber. F.

Methinks, my Lord, 'tis better as it is:

A sudden swelling of our retinue

Had waked suspicion; and, though fierce and trusty,

The vassals of that district are too rude

And quick in quarrel to have long maintained

The secret discipline we need for such

A service, till our foes are dealt upon.

Doge.

True; but when once the signal has been given,

These are the men for such an enterprise;

These city slaves have all their private bias,

Their prejudice *against* or *for* this noble,

Which may induce them to o'erdo or spare

Where mercy may be madness; the fierce peasants,

Serfs of my county of Val di Marino,

Would do the bidding of their lord without

Distinguishing for love or hate his foes;

Alike to them Marcello or Cornaro,

A Gradenigo or a Foscari;

They are not used to start at those vain names,

Nor bow the knee before a civic Senate;

A chief in armour is their Suzerain,

And not a thing in robes.

Ber. F.

We are enough;

And for the dispositions of our clients

Against the Senate I will answer.

Doge.

Well,

The die is thrown; but for a warlike service,

Marino Faliero

Done in the field, commend me to my peasants:
They made the sun shine through the host of Huns
When sallow burghers slunk back to their tents,
And cowered to hear their own victorious trumpet.

If there be small resistance, you will find
These Citizens all Lions, like their Standard;
But if there's much to do, you'll wish, with me,
A band of iron rustics at our backs.

Ber. F.

Thus thinking, I must marvel you resolve
To strike the blow so suddenly.

Doge.

Such blows
Must be struck suddenly or never. When
I had o'ermastered the weak false remorse
Which yearned about my heart, too fondly yielding
A moment to the feelings of old days,
I was most fain to strike; and, firstly, that
I might not yield again to such emotions;
And, secondly, because of all these men,
Save Israel and Philip Calendaro,
I know not well the courage or the faith:
To-day might find 'mongst them a traitor to us,
As yesterday a thousand to the Senate;
But once in, with their hilts hot in their hands,
They must *on* for their own sakes; one stroke struck,
And the mere instinct of the first-born Cain,
Which ever lurks somewhere in human hearts,

Though Circumstance may keep it in abeyance,
Will urge the rest on like to wolves; the sight
Of blood to crowds begets the thirst of more,
As the first wine-cup leads to the long revel;
And you will find a harder task to quell
Than urge them when they *have* commenced, but *till*
That moment, a mere voice, a straw, a shadow,
Are capable of turning them aside.—
How goes the night?

Ber. F.

Almost upon the dawn.

Doge.

Then it is time to strike upon the bell.
Are the men posted?

Ber. F.

By this time they are;
But they have orders not to strike, until
They have command from you through me in person.

Doge.

'Tis well.—Will the morn never put to rest
These stars which twinkle yet o'er all the heavens?
I am settled and bound up, and being so,

Marino Faliero

The very effort which it cost me to
Resolve to cleanse this Commonwealth with fire,
Now leaves my mind more steady. I have wept,
And trembled at the thought of this dread duty;
But now I have put down all idle passion,
And look the growing tempest in the face,
As doth the pilot of an Admiral Galley:
Yet (wouldst thou think it, kinsman?) it hath been
A greater struggle to me, than when nations
Beheld their fate merged in the approaching fight,
Where I was leader of a phalanx, where
Thousands were sure to perish—Yes, to spill
The rank polluted current from the veins
Of a few bloated despots needed more
To steel me to a purpose such as made
Timoleon immortal, than to face
The toils and dangers of a life of war.

Ber. F.

It gladdens me to see your former wisdom

Subdue the furies which so wrung you ere
You were decided.

Doge.

It was ever thus
With me; the hour of agitation came
In the first glimmerings of a purpose, when
Passion had too much room to sway; but in
The hour of action I have stood as calm
As were the dead who lay around me: this
They knew who made me what I am, and trusted
To the subduing power which I preserved
Over my mood, when its first burst was spent.
But they were not aware that there are things
Which make revenge a virtue by reflection,
And not an impulse of mere anger; though
The laws sleep, Justice wakes, and injured souls
Oft do a public right with private wrong,
And justify their deeds unto themselves.—
Methinks the day breaks—is it not so? look,
Thine eyes are clear with youth;—the air puts on
A morning freshness, and, at least to me,
The sea looks greyer through the lattice.

Ber. F.

True,

The morn is dappling in the sky.

Doge.

Away then!

See that they strike without delay, and with
The first toll from St. Mark's, march on the palace
With all our House's strength; here I will meet you;
The Sixteen and their companies will move

Marino Faliero

In separate columns at the self-same moment:
Be sure you post yourself at the great Gate:
I would not trust "the Ten" except to us—
The rest, the rabble of patricians, may
Glut the more careless swords of those leagued with us.
Remember that the cry is still "Saint Mark!
The Genoese are come—ho! to the rescue!
Saint Mark and Liberty!"—Now—now to action!

Ber. F.

Farewell then, noble Uncle! we will meet
In freedom and true sovereignty, or never!

Doge.

Come hither, my Bertuccio—one embrace;
Speed, for the day grows broader; send me soon
A messenger to tell me how all goes
When you rejoin our troops, and then sound—sound
The storm-bell from St. Mark's!

[Exit Bertuccio Faliero.]

Doge (solus).

He is gone,
And on each footstep moves a life. 'Tis done.
Now the destroying Angel hovers o'er
Venice, and pauses ere he pours the vial,
Even as the eagle overlooks his prey,
And for a moment, poised in middle air,
Suspends the motion of his mighty wings,
Then swoops with his unerring beak. Thou Day!
That slowly walk'st the waters! march—march on—
I would not smite i' the dark, but rather see
That no stroke errs. And you, ye blue sea waves!
I have seen you dyed ere now, and deeply too,
With Genoese, Saracen, and Hunnish gore,
While that of Venice flowed too, but victorious:
Now thou must wear an unmixed crimson; no
Barbaric blood can reconcile us now
Unto that horrible incarnadine,
But friend or foe will roll in civic slaughter.
And have I lived to fourscore years for this?
I, who was named Preserver of the City?
I, at whose name the million's caps were flung
Into the air, and cries from tens of thousands
Rose up, imploring Heaven to send me blessings,
And fame, and length of days—to see this day?
But this day, black within the calendar,
Shall be succeeded by a bright millennium.
Doge Dandolo survived to ninety summers
To vanquish empires, and refuse their crown;
I will resign a crown, and make the State

Marino Faliero

Renew its freedom—but oh! by what means?
The noble end must justify them. What
Are a few drops of human blood? 'tis false,
The blood of tyrants is not human; they,
Like to incarnate Molochs, feed on ours,
Until 'tis time to give them to the tombs
Which they have made so populous.—Oh World!
Oh Men! what are ye, and our best designs,
That we must work by crime to punish crime?
And slay as if Death had but this one gate,
When a few years would make the sword superfluous?
And I, upon the verge of th' unknown realm,
Yet send so many heralds on before me?—
I must not ponder this.

[A pause.]

Hark! was there not
A murmur as of distant voices, and
The tramp of feet in martial unison?
What phantoms even of sound our wishes raise!
It cannot be—the signal hath not rung—
Why pauses it? My nephew's messenger
Should be upon his way to me, and he
Himself perhaps even now draws grating back
Upon its ponderous hinge the steep tower portal,
Where swings the sullen huge oracular bell,
Which never knells but for a princely death,
Or for a state in peril, pealing forth
Tremendous bodements; let it do its office,
And be this peal its awfulest and last

Sound till the strong tower rock!—What! silent still?
I would go forth, but that my post is here,
To be the centre of re-union to
The oft discordant elements which form
Leagues of this nature, and to keep compact
The wavering of the weak, in case of conflict;
For if they should do battle, 'twill be here,
Within the palace, that the strife will thicken:
Then here must be my station, as becomes
The master-mover.—Hark! he comes—he comes,
My nephew, brave Bertuccio's messenger.—
What tidings? Is he marching? hath he sped?
They here!—all's lost—yet will I make an effort.

Enter a Signor of the Night with Guards etc., etc.

Sig.

Doge, I arrest thee of high treason!

Doge.

Me!

Thy Prince, of treason?—Who are they that dare

Marino Faliero

Cloak their own treason under such an order?

Sig. (showing his order).

Behold my order from the assembled Ten.

Doge.

And *where* are they, and *why* assembled? no

Such Council can be lawful, till the Prince

Preside there, and that duty's mine: on thine

I charge thee, give me way, or marshal me

To the Council chamber.

Sig.

Duke! it may not be:

Nor are they in the wonted Hall of Council,

But sitting in the convent of Saint Saviour's.

Doge.

You dare to disobey me, then?

Sig.

I serve

The State, and needs must serve it faithfully;

My warrant is the will of those who rule it.

Doge.

And till that warrant has my signature

It is illegal, and, as *now* applied,

Rebellious. Hast thou weighed well thy life's worth,

That thus you dare assume a lawless function?

Sig.

'Tis not my office to reply, but act—

I am placed here as guard upon thy person,

And not as judge to hear or to decide.

Doge (aside).

I must gain time. So that the storm—bell sound,
All may be well yet. Kinsman, speed—speed—speed!—

Our fate is trembling in the balance, and

Woe to the vanquished! be they Prince and people,

Or slaves and Senate—

[The great bell of St. Mark's tolls.

Lo! it sounds—it tolls!

Doge (aloud).

Hark, Signor of the Night! and you, ye hirelings,

Who wield your mercenary staves in fear,

It is your knell.—Swell on, thou lusty peal!

Now, knaves, what ransom for your lives?

Sig.

Confusion!

Stand to your arms, and guard the door—all's lost

Unless that fearful bell be silenced soon.

The officer hath missed his path or purpose,

Or met some unforeseen and hideous obstacle.

Anselmo, with thy company proceed

Straight to the tower; the rest remain with me.

Marino Faliero

[Exit part of the Guard.]

Doge.

Wretch! if thou wouldst have thy vile life, implore it;

It is not now a lease of sixty seconds.
Aye, send thy miserable ruffians forth;
They never shall return.

Sig.

So let it be!

They die then in their duty, as will I.

Doge.

Fool! the high eagle flies at nobler game
Than thou and thy base myrmidons,—live on,
So thou provok'st not peril by resistance,
And learn (if souls so much obscured can bear
To gaze upon the sunbeams) to be free.

Sig.

And learn thou to be captive. It hath ceased,
[The bell ceases to toll.]

The traitorous signal, which was to have set
The bloodhound mob on their patrician prey—
The knell hath rung, but it is not the Senate's!

Doge (after a pause).

All's silent, and all's lost!

Sig.

Now, Doge, denounce me

As rebel slave of a revolted Council!

Have I not done my duty?

Doge.

Peace, thou thing!

Thou hast done a worthy deed, and earned the price
Of blood, and they who use thee will reward thee.

But thou wert sent to watch, and not to prate,
As thou said'st even now—then do thine office,

But let it be in silence, as behoves thee,
Since, though thy prisoner, I am thy Prince.

Sig.

I did not mean to fail in the respect
Due to your rank: in this I shall obey you.

Doge (aside).

There now is nothing left me save to die;
And yet how near success! I would have fallen,
And proudly, in the hour of triumph, but
To miss it thus!—

Enter other Signors of the Night, with Bertuccio Faliero prisoner.

2nd Sig.

We took him in the act
Of issuing from the tower, where, at his order,

Marino Faliero

As delegated from the Doge, the signal
Had thus begun to sound.

1st Sig.

Are all the passes

Which lead up to the palace well secured?

2nd Sig.

They are—besides, it matters not; the Chiefs
Are all in chains, and some even now on trial—
Their followers are dispersed, and many taken.

Ber. F.

Uncle!

Doge.

It is in vain to war with Fortune;
The glory hath departed from our house.

Ber. F.

Who would have deemed it?—Ah! one moment sooner!

Doge.

That moment would have changed the face of ages;

This gives us to Eternity—We'll meet it

As men whose triumph is not in success,

But who can make their own minds all in all,

Equal to every fortune. Droop not, 'tis

But a brief passage—I would go alone,

Yet if they send us, as 'tis like, together,

Let us go worthy of our sires and selves.

Ber. F.

I shall not shame you, Uncle.

1st Sig.

Lords, our orders

Are to keep guard on both in separate chambers,

Until the Council call ye to your trial.

Doge.

Our trial! will they keep their mockery up

Even to the last? but let them deal upon us,

As we had dealt on them, but with less pomp.

'Tis but a game of mutual homicides,

Who have cast lots for the first death, and they

Have won with false dice.—Who hath been our Judas?

1st Sig.

I am not warranted to answer that.

Ber. F.

I'll answer for thee—'tis a certain Bertram,

Even now deposing to the secret Giunta.

Doge.

Bertram, the Bergamask! With what vile tools

We operate to slay or save! This creature,

Black with a double treason, now will earn

Rewards and honours, and be stamped in story

With the geese in the Capitol, which gabbled

Marino Faliero

Till Rome awoke, and had an annual triumph,
While Manlius, who hurled down the Gauls, was cast
From the Tarpeian.

1st Sig.

He aspired to treason,
And sought to rule the State.

Doge.

He saved the State,
And sought but to reform what he revived—
But this is idle—Come, sirs, do your work.

1st Sig.

Noble Bertuccio, we must now remove you
Into an inner chamber.

Ber. F.

Farewell, Uncle!
If we shall meet again in life I know not,
But they perhaps will let our ashes mingle.

Doge.

Yes, and our spirits, which shall yet go forth,
And do what our frail clay, thus clogged, hath failed in!
They cannot quench the memory of those
Who would have hurled them from their guilty thrones,
And such examples will find heirs, though distant.

ACT V.

Marino Faliero

Scene I.

—*The Hall of the Council of Ten assembled with the additional Senators, who, on the Trials of the Conspirators for the Treason of Marino Faliero, composed what was called the Giunta,—Guards, Officers, etc., etc. Israel Bertuccio and Philip Calendaro as Prisoners. Bertram, Lioni, and Witnesses, etc.*

The Chief of the Ten, Benintende.

Ben.

There now rests, after such conviction of
Their manifold and manifest offences,

But to pronounce on these obdurate men
The sentence of the Law:—a grievous task
To those who hear, and those who speak. Alas!
That it should fall to me! and that my days
Of office should be stigmatised through all
The years of coming time, as bearing record
To this most foul and complicated treason
Against a just and free state, known to all
The earth as being the Christian bulwark 'gainst
The Saracen and the schismatic Greek,
The savage Hun, and not less barbarous Frank;
A City which has opened India's wealth
To Europe; the last Roman refuge from
O'erwhelming Attila; the Ocean's Queen;
Proud Genoa's prouder rival! 'Tis to sap
The throne of such a City, these lost men
Have risked and forfeited their worthless lives—
So let them die the death.

I. Ber.

We are prepared;
Your racks have done that for us. Let us die.

Ben.

If ye have that to say which would obtain
Abatement of your punishment, the Giunta
Will hear you; if you have aught to confess,
Now is your time,—perhaps it may avail ye.

I. Ber.

We stand to hear, and not to speak.

Ben.

Your crimes
Are fully proved by your accomplices,
And all which Circumstance can add to aid them;
Yet we would hear from your own lips complete
Avowal of your treason: on the verge
Of that dread gulf which none repass, the truth
Alone can profit you on earth or Heaven—
Say, then, what was your motive?

Marino Faliero

I. Ber.

Justice!

Ben.

What

Your object?

I. Ber.

Freedom!

Ben.

You are brief, sir.

I. Ber.

So my life grows: I
Was bred a soldier, not a senator.

Ben.

Perhaps you think by this blunt brevity
To brave your judges to postpone the sentence?

I. Ber.

Do you be brief as I am, and believe me,
I shall prefer that mercy to your pardon.

Ben.

Is this your sole reply to the Tribunal?

I. Ber.

Go, ask your racks what they have wrung from us,
Or place us there again; we have still some blood left,
And some slight sense of pain in these wrenched limbs:

But this ye dare not do; for if we die there—

And you have left us little life to spend
Upon your engines, gorged with pangs already—

Ye lose the public spectacle, with which
You would appal your slaves to further slavery!

Groans are not words, nor agony assent,
Nor affirmation Truth, if Nature's sense
Should overcome the soul into a lie,
For a short respite—must we bear or die?

Ben.

Say, who were your accomplices?

I. Ber.

The Senate.

Ben.

What do you mean?

I. Ber.

Ask of the suffering people,
Whom your patrician crimes have driven to crime.

Ben.

You know the Doge?

I. Ber.

I served with him at Zara
In the field, when *you* were pleading here your way
To present office; we exposed our lives,
While you but hazarded the lives of others,
Alike by accusation or defence;

Marino Faliero

And for the rest, all Venice knows her Doge,
Through his great actions, and the Senate's insults.

Ben.

You have held conference with him?

I. Ber.

I am weary—
Even wearier of your questions than your tortures:
I pray you pass to judgment.

Ben.

It is coming.
And you, too, Philip Calendaro, what
Have you to say why you should not be doomed?

Cal.

I never was a man of many words,
And now have few left worth the utterance.

Ben.

A further application of yon engine
May change your tone.

Cal.

Most true, it *will* do so;
A former application did so; but
It will not change my words, or, if it did—

Ben.

What then?

Cal.

Will my avowal on yon rack
Stand good in law?

Ben.

Assuredly.

Cal.

Whoe'er
The culprit be whom I accuse of treason?

Ben.

Without doubt, he will be brought up to trial.

Cal.

And on this testimony would he perish?

Ben.

So your confession be detailed and full,
He will stand here in peril of his life.

Cal.

Then look well to thy proud self, President!
For by the Eternity which yawns before me,
I swear that *thou*, and only thou, shalt be
The traitor I denounce upon that rack,
If I be stretched there for the second time.

One of the Giunta.

Lord President, 'twere best proceed to judgment;
There is no more to be drawn from these men.

Ben.

Unhappy men! prepare for instant death.

Marino Faliero

The nature of your crime—our law—and peril
The State now stands in, leave not an hour's respite.
Guards! lead them forth, and upon the balcony
Of the red columns, where, on festal Thursday,
The Doge stands to behold the chase of bulls,
Let them be justified: and leave exposed
Their wavering relics, in the place of judgment,
To the full view of the assembled people!

And Heaven have mercy on their souls!

The Giunta.

Amen!

I. Ber.

Signors, farewell! we shall not all again
Meet in one place.

Ben.

And lest they should essay
To stir up the distracted multitude—
Guards! let their mouths be gagged even in the act
Of execution. Lead them hence!

Cal.

What! must we
Not even say farewell to some fond friend,
Nor leave a last word with our confessor?

Ben.

A priest is waiting in the antechamber;
But, for your friends, such interviews would be
Painful to them, and useless all to you.

Cal.

I knew that we were gagged in life; at least
All those who had not heart to risk their lives
Upon their open thoughts; but still I deemed
That in the last few moments, the same idle
Freedom of speech accorded to the dying,
Would not now be denied to us; but since—

I. Ber.

Even let them have their way, brave Calendaro!
What matter a few syllables? let's die
Without the slightest show of favour from them;
So shall our blood more readily arise
To Heaven against them, and more testify
To their atrocities, than could a volume
Spoken or written of our dying words!
They tremble at our voices—nay, they dread
Our very silence—let them live in fear!
Leave them unto their thoughts, and let us now
Address our own above!—Lead on; we are ready.

Cal.

Israel, hadst thou but hearkened unto me
It had not now been thus; and yon pale villain,
The coward Bertram, would—

Marino Faliero

I. Ber.

Peace, Calendaro!
What brooks it now to ponder upon this?

Bert.

Alas! I fain you died in peace with me:
I did not seek this task; 'twas forced upon me:
Say, you forgive me, though I never can

Retrieve my own forgiveness—frown not thus!

I. Ber.

I die and pardon thee!

Cal. (spitting at him).

I die and scorn thee!

[Exeunt Israel Bertuccio and Philip Calendaro, Guards, etc.]

Ben.

Now that these criminals have been disposed of,
'Tis time that we proceed to pass our sentence
Upon the greatest traitor upon record
In any annals, the Doge Faliero!
The proofs and process are complete; the time
And crime require a quick procedure: shall
He now be called in to receive the award?

The Giunta.

Aye, aye.

Ben.

Avogadori, order that the Doge
Be brought before the Council.

One of the Giunta.

And the rest,

When shall they be brought up?

Ben.

When all the Chiefs
Have been disposed of. Some have fled to Chiozza;
But there are thousands in pursuit of them,
And such precaution ta'en on terra firma,
As well as in the islands, that we hope
None will escape to utter in strange lands
His libellous tale of treasons 'gainst the Senate.

Enter the Doge as Prisoner, with Guards, etc., etc.

Ben.

Doge—for such still you are, and by the law
Must be considered, till the hour shall come
When you must doff the Ducal Bonnet from
That head, which could not wear a crown more noble
Than Empires can confer, in quiet honour,
But it must plot to overthrow your peers,
Who made you what you are, and quench in blood
A City's glory—we have laid already
Before you in your chamber at full length,

Marino Faliero

By the Avogadori, all the proofs
Which have appeared against you; and more ample
Ne'er reared their sanguinary shadows to
Confront a traitor. What have you to say
In your defence?

Doge.

What shall I say to ye,
Since my defence must be your condemnation?
You are at once offenders and accusers,
Judges and Executioners!—Proceed
Upon your power.

Ben.

Your chief accomplices
Having confessed, there is no hope for you.

Doge.

And who be they?

Ben.

In number many; but
The first now stands before you in the court,
Bertram of Bergamo,—would you question him?

Doge (looking at him contemptuously).

No.

Ben.

And two others, Israel Bertuccio,
And Philip Calendaro, have admitted
Their fellowship in treason with the Doge!

Doge.

And where are they?

Ben.

Gone to their place, and now
Answering to Heaven for what they did on earth.

Doge.

Ah! the plebeian Brutus, is he gone?
And the quick Cassius of the arsenal?—
How did they meet their doom?

Ben.

Think of your own:
It is approaching. You decline to plead, then?

Doge.

I cannot plead to my inferiors, nor

Can recognise your legal power to try me.
Show me the law!

Ben.

On great emergencies,
The law must be remodelled or amended:
Our fathers had not fixed the punishment
Of such a crime, as on the old Roman tables
The sentence against parricide was left
In pure forgetfulness; they could not render
That penal, which had neither name nor thought

Marino Faliero

In their great bosoms; who would have foreseen
That Nature could be filed to such a crime
As sons 'gainst sires, and princes 'gainst their realms?
Your sin hath made us make a law which will
Become a precedent 'gainst such haught traitors,
As would with treason mount to tyranny;
Not even contented with a sceptre, till
They can convert it to a two-edged sword!
Was not the place of Doge sufficient for ye?
What's nobler than the signory of Venice?

Doge.

The signory of Venice! You betrayed me—
You—you, who sit there, traitors as ye are!
From my equality with you in birth,
And my superiority in action,
You drew me from my honourable toils
In distant lands—on flood, in field, in cities—
You singled me out like a victim to
Stand crowned, but bound and helpless, at the altar
Where you alone could minister. I knew not,
I sought not, wished not, dreamed not the election,
Which reached me first at Rome, and I obeyed;
But found on my arrival, that, besides
The jealous vigilance which always led you
To mock and mar your Sovereign's best intents,
You had, even in the interregnum of

My journey to the capital, curtailed
And mutilated the few privileges
Yet left the Duke: all this I bore, and would
Have borne, until my very hearth was stained
By the pollution of your ribaldry,
And he, the ribald, whom I see amongst you—
Fit judge in such tribunal!—

Ben. (interrupting him.)

Michel Steno

Is here in virtue of his office, as
One of the Forty; "the Ten" having craved
A Giunta of patricians from the Senate
To aid our judgment in a trial arduous
And novel as the present: he was set
Free from the penalty pronounced upon him,
Because the Doge, who should protect the law,
Seeking to abrogate all law, can claim
No punishment of others by the statutes
Which he himself denies and violates!

Doge.

His punishment! I rather see him *there*,
Where he now sits, to glut him with my death,
Than in the mockery of castigation,
Which your foul, outward, juggling show of justice

Marino Faliero

Decreed as sentence! Base as was his crime,
'Twas purity compared with your protection.

Ben.

And can it be, that the great Doge of Venice,
With three parts of a century of years
And honours on his head, could thus allow
His fury, like an angry boy's, to master
All Feeling, Wisdom, Faith and Fear, on such
A provocation as a young man's petulance?

Doge.

A spark creates the flame—'tis the last drop
Which makes the cup run o'er, and mine was full
Already: you oppressed the Prince and people;
I would have freed both, and have failed in both:
The price of such success would have been glory,
Vengeance, and victory, and such a name
As would have made Venetian history
Rival to that of Greece and Syracuse

When they were freed, and flourished ages after,
And mine to Gelon and to Thrasybulus:
Failing, I know the penalty of failure
Is present infamy and death—the future
Will judge, when Venice is no more, or free;
Till then, the truth is in abeyance. Pause not;
I would have shown no mercy, and I seek none;
My life was staked upon a mighty hazard,
And being lost, take what I would have taken!
I would have stood alone amidst your tombs:
Now you may flock round mine, and trample on it,
As you have done upon my heart while living.

Ben.

You do confess then, and admit the justice
Of our Tribunal?

Doge.

I confess to have failed;
Fortune is female: from my youth her favours
Were not withheld, the fault was mine to hope
Her former smiles again at this late hour.

Ben.

You do not then in aught arraign our equity?

Doge.

Noble Venetians! stir me not with questions.
I am resigned to the worst; but in me still
Have something of the blood of brighter days,
And am not over-patient. Pray you, spare me
Further interrogation, which boots nothing,
Except to turn a trial to debate.
I shall but answer that which will offend you,
And please your enemies—a host already;
'Tis true, these sullen walls should yield no echo:

Marino Faliero

But walls have ears—nay, more, they have tongues; and if
There were no other way for Truth to o'erleap them,
You who condemn me, you who fear and slay me,
Yet could not bear in silence to your graves
What you would hear from me of Good or Evil;
The secret were too mighty for your souls:

Then let it sleep in mine, unless you court
A danger which would double that you escape.
Such my defence would be, had I full scope
To make it famous; for true *words* are *things*,
And dying men's are things which long outlive,
And oftentimes avenge them; bury mine,
If ye would fain survive me: take this counsel,
And though too oft ye make me live in wrath,
Let me die calmly; you may grant me this;
I deny nothing—defend nothing—nothing
I ask of you, but silence for myself,
And sentence from the Court!

Ben.

This full admission
Spares us the harsh necessity of ordering
The torture to elicit the whole truth.

Doge.

The torture! you have put me there already,
Daily since I was Doge; but if you will
Add the corporeal rack, you may: these limbs
Will yield with age to crushing iron; but
There's that within my heart shall strain your engines.

Enter an Officer.

Officer.

Noble Venetians! Duchess Faliero
Requests admission to the Giunta's presence.

Ben.

Say, Conscript Fathers, shall she be admitted?

One of the Giunta.

She may have revelations of importance
Unto the state, to justify compliance
With her request.

Ben.

Is this the general will?

All.

It is.

Doge.

Oh, admirable laws of Venice!
Which would admit the wife, in the full hope

That she might testify against the husband.
What glory to the chaste Venetian dames!
But such blasphemers 'gainst all Honour, as

Marino Faliero

Sit here, do well to act in their vocation.
Now, villain Steno! if this woman fail,
I'll pardon thee thy lie, and thy escape,
And my own violent death, and thy vile life.

The Duchess enters.

Ben.

Lady! this just Tribunal has resolved,
Though the request be strange, to grant it, and
Whatever be its purport, to accord
A patient hearing with the due respect
Which fits your ancestry, your rank, and virtues:
But you turn pale—ho! there, look to the Lady!
Place a chair instantly.

Ang.

A moment's faintness—
'Tis past; I pray you pardon me,—I sit not
In presence of my Prince and of my husband,
While he is on his feet.

Ben.

Your pleasure, Lady?

Ang.

Strange rumours, but most true, if all I hear
And see be sooth, have reached me, and I come
To know the worst, even at the worst; forgive
The abruptness of my entrance and my bearing.
Is it—I cannot speak—I cannot shape
The question—but you answer it ere spoken,
With eyes averted, and with gloomy brows—
Oh God! this is the silence of the grave!

Ben. (after a pause).

Spare us, and spare thyself the repetition
Of our most awful, but inexorable
Duty to Heaven and man!

Ang.

Yet speak; I cannot—
I cannot—no—even now believe these things.
Is *he* condemned?

Ben.

Alas!

Ang.

And was he guilty?

Ben.

Lady! the natural distraction of
Thy thoughts at such a moment makes the question

Merit forgiveness; else a doubt like this
Against a just and paramount tribunal
Were deep offence. But question even the Doge,
And if he can deny the proofs, believe him
Guiltless as thy own bosom.

Marino Faliero

Ang.

Is it so?

My Lord, my Sovereign, my poor father's friend,
The mighty in the field, the sage in Council,
Unsay the words of this man!—thou art silent!

Ben.

He hath already owned to his own guilt,
Nor, as thou see'st, doth he deny it now.

Ang.

Aye, but he must not die! Spare his few years,
Which Grief and Shame will soon cut down to days!
One day of baffled crime must not efface
Near sixteen lustres crownéd with brave acts.

Ben.

His doom must be fulfilled without remission
Of time or penalty—'tis a decree.

Ang.

He hath been guilty, but there may be mercy.

Ben.

Not in this case with justice.

Ang.

Alas! Signor,

He who is only just is cruel; who
Upon the earth would live were all judged justly?

Ben.

His punishment is safety to the State.

Ang.

He was a subject, and hath served the State;
He was your General, and hath saved the State;
He is your Sovereign, and hath ruled the State.

One of the Council.

He is a traitor, and betrayed the State.

Ang.

And, but for him, there now had been no State
To save or to destroy; and you, who sit
There to pronounce the death of your deliverer,
Had now been groaning at a Moslem oar,
Or digging in the Hunnish mines in fetters!

One of the Council.

No, Lady, there are others who would die
Rather than breathe in slavery!

Ang.

If there are so

Within *these* walls, *thou* art not of the number:
The truly brave are generous to the fallen!—
Is there no hope?

Ben.

Lady, it cannot be.

Ang. (turning to the Doge).

Then die, Faliero! since it must be so;

Marino Faliero

But with the spirit of my father's friend.
Thou hast been guilty of a great offence,
Half cancelled by the harshness of these men.
I would have sued to them, have prayed to them,
Have begged as famished mendicants for bread,
Have wept as they will cry unto their God
For mercy, and be answered as they answer,—
Had it been fitting for thy name or mine,
And if the cruelty in their cold eyes
Had not announced the heartless wrath within.
Then, as a Prince, address thee to thy doom!

Doge.

I have lived too long not to know how to die!
Thy suing to these men were but the bleating
Of the lamb to the butcher, or the cry
Of seamen to the surge: I would not take
A life eternal, granted at the hands
Of wretches, from whose monstrous villanies
I sought to free the groaning nations!

Michel Steno.

Doge,
A word with thee, and with this noble lady,
Whom I have grievously offended. Would
Sorrow, or shame, or penance on my part,
Could cancel the inexorable past!
But since that cannot be, as Christians let us
Say farewell, and in peace: with full contrition
I crave, not pardon, but compassion from you,
And give, however weak, my prayers for both.

Ang.

Sage Benintende, now chief Judge of Venice,
I speak to thee in answer to yon Signor.
Inform the ribald Steno, that his words
Ne'er weighed in mind with Loredano's daughter,
Further than to create a moment's pity
For such as he is: would that others had
Despised him as I pity! I prefer
My honour to a thousand lives, could such

Be multiplied in mine, but would not have
A single life of others lost for that
Which nothing human can impugn—the sense
Of Virtue, looking not to what is called
A good name for reward, but to itself.
To me the scorner's words were as the wind
Unto the rock: but as there are—alas!
Spirits more sensitive, on which such things
Light as the Whirlwind on the waters; souls
To whom dishonour's shadow is a substance
More terrible than Death, here and hereafter;
Men whose vice is to start at Vice's scoffing,

Marino Faliero

And who, though proof against all blandishments
Of pleasure, and all pangs of Pain, are feeble
When the proud name on which they pinnacled
Their hopes is breathed on, jealous as the eagle
Of her high aiery; let what we now
Behold, and feel, and suffer, be a lesson
To wretches how they tamper in their spleen
With beings of a higher order. Insects
Have made the lion mad ere now; a shaft
I' the heel o'erthrew the bravest of the brave;
A wife's Dishonour was the bane of Troy;
A wife's Dishonour unkinged Rome for ever;
An injured husband brought the Gauls to Clusium,
And thence to Rome, which perished for a time;
An obscene gesture cost Caligula
His life, while Earth yet bore his cruelties;
A virgin's wrong made Spain a Moorish province;
And Steno's lie, couched in two worthless lines,
Hath decimated Venice, put in peril
A Senate which hath stood eight hundred years,
Discrowned a Prince, cut off his crownless head,
And forged new fetters for a groaning people!

Let the poor wretch, like to the courtesan
Who fired Persepolis, be proud of this,
If it so please him—'twere a pride fit for him!
But let him not insult the last hours of
Him, who, whate'er he now is, *was* a Hero,
By the intrusion of his very prayers;
Nothing of good can come from such a source,
Nor would we aught with him, nor now, nor ever:
We leave him to himself, that lowest depth
Of human baseness. Pardon is for men,
And not for reptiles—we have none for Steno,
And no resentment: things like him must sting,
And higher beings suffer; 'tis the charter
Of Life. The man who dies by the adder's fang
May have the crawler crushed, but feels no anger:
'Twas the worm's nature; and some men are worms
In soul, more than the living things of tombs.

Doge (to Ben.).

Signor! complete that which you deem your duty.

Ben.

Before we can proceed upon that duty,
We would request the Princess to withdraw;
'Twill move her too much to be witness to it.

Ang.

I know it will, and yet I must endure it,
For 'tis a part of mine—I will not quit,
Except by force, my husband's side—Proceed!
Nay, fear not either shriek, or sigh, or tear;

Marino Faliero

Though my heart burst, it shall be silent.—Speak!
I have that within which shall o'ermaster all.

Ben.

Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice,
Count of Val di Marino, Senator,
And some time General of the Fleet and Army,
Noble Venetian, many times and oft
Intrusted by the state with high employments,
Even to the highest, listen to the sentence.
Convict by many witnesses and proofs,
And by thine own confession, of the guilt
Of Treachery and Treason, yet unheard of
Until this trial—the decree is Death—
Thy goods are confiscate unto the State,
Thy name is razed from out her records, save
Upon a public day of thanksgiving
For this our most miraculous deliverance,
When thou art noted in our calendars
With earthquakes, pestilence, and foreign foes,
And the great Enemy of man, as subject
Of grateful masses for Heaven's grace in snatching
Our lives and country from thy wickedness.
The place wherein as Doge thou shouldst be painted
With thine illustrious predecessors, is
To be left vacant, with a death-black veil
Flung over these dim words engraved beneath,—
"This place is of Marino Faliero,
Decapitated for his crimes."

Doge.

"His *crimes!*"

But let it be so:—it will be in vain.
The veil which blackens o'er this blighted name,
And hides, or seems to hide, these lineaments,
Shall draw more gazers than the thousand portraits
Which glitter round it in their pictured trappings—
Your delegated slaves—the people's tyrants!
"Decapitated for his crimes!"—*What* crimes?
Were it not better to record the facts,
So that the contemplator might approve,
Or at the least learn *whence* the crimes arose?
When the beholder knows a Doge conspired,
Let him be told the cause—it is your history.

Ben.

Time must reply to that; our sons will judge
Their fathers' judgment, which I now pronounce.
As Doge, clad in the ducal robes and Cap,
Thou shalt be led hence to the Giants' Staircase,
Where thou and all our Princes are invested;
And there, the Ducal Crown being first resumed

Marino Faliero

Upon the spot where it was first assumed,
Thy head shall be struck off; and Heaven have mercy
Upon thy soul!

Doge.

Is this the Giunta's sentence?

Ben.

It is.

Doge.

I can endure it.—And the time?

Ben.

Must be immediate.—Make thy peace with God:
Within an hour thou must be in His presence.

Doge.

I am *already*; and my blood will rise
To Heaven before the souls of those who shed it.
Are all my lands confiscated?

Ben.

They are;

And goods, and jewels, and all kind of treasure,
Except two thousand ducats—these dispose of.

Doge.

That's harsh.—I would have fain reserved the lands
Near to Treviso, which I hold by investment

From Laurence the Count—bishop of Ceneda,
In fief perpetual to myself and heirs,
To portion them (leaving my city spoil,
My palace and my treasures, to your forfeit)
Between my consort and my kinsmen.

Ben.

These

Lie under the state's ban—their Chief, thy nephew,
In peril of his own life; but the Council
Postpones his trial for the present. If
Thou will'st a state unto thy widowed Princess,
Fear not, for we will do her justice.

Ang.

Signors,

I share not in your spoil! From henceforth, know
I am devoted unto God alone,
And take my refuge in the cloister.

Doge.

Come!

The hour may be a hard one, but 'twill end.
Have I aught else to undergo save Death?

Ben.

You have nought to do, except confess and die.
The priest is robed, the scimitar is bare,
And both await without.—But, above all,
Think not to speak unto the people; they
Are now by thousands swarming at the gates,

Marino Faliero

But these are closed: the Ten, the Avogadori,
The Giunta, and the chief men of the Forty,
Alone will be beholders of thy doom,
And they are ready to attend the Doge.

Doge.

The Doge!

Ben.

Yes, Doge, thou hast lived and thou shalt die
A Sovereign; till the moment which precedes
The separation of that head and trunk,
That ducal crown and head shall be united.
Thou hast forgot thy dignity in deigning
To plot with petty traitors; not so we,
Who in the very punishment acknowledge
The Prince. Thy vile accomplices have died

The dog's death, and the wolf's; but thou shalt fall
As falls the lion by the hunters, girt
By those who feel a proud compassion for thee,
And mourn even the inevitable death
Provoked by thy wild wrath, and regal fierceness.
Now we remit thee to thy preparation:
Let it be brief, and we ourselves will be
Thy guides unto the place where first we were
United to thee as thy subjects, and
Thy Senate; and must now be parted from thee
As such for ever, on the self-same spot.
Guards! form the Doge's escort to his chamber.

[Exeunt.]

Marino Faliero

Scene II.

—*The Doge's Apartment.*

The Doge as Prisoner, and the Duchess attending him.

Doge.

Now, that the priest is gone, 'twere useless all
To linger out the miserable minutes;
But one pang more, the pang of parting from thee,
And I will leave the few last grains of sand,
Which yet remain of the accorded hour,
Still falling—I have done with Time.

Ang.

Alas!

And I have been the cause, the unconscious cause;
And for this funeral marriage, this black union,
Which thou, compliant with my father's wish,
Didst promise at *his* death, thou hast sealed thine own.

Doge.

Not so: there was that in my spirit ever
Which shaped out for itself some great reverse;
The marvel is, it came not until now—
And yet it was foretold me.

Ang.

How foretold you?

Doge.

Long years ago—so long, they are a doubt
In memory, and yet they live in annals:
When I was in my youth, and served the Senate
And Signory as Podesta and Captain
Of the town of Treviso, on a day

Of festival, the sluggish Bishop who
Conveyed the Host aroused my rash young anger,
By strange delay, and arrogant reply
To my reproof: I raised my hand and smote him,
Until he reeled beneath his holy burthen;
And as he rose from earth again, he raised
His tremulous hands in pious wrath towards Heaven.
Thence pointing to the Host, which had fallen from him,
He turned to me, and said, "The Hour will come
When he thou hast o'erthrown shall overthrow thee:
The Glory shall depart from out thy house,
The Wisdom shall be shaken from thy soul,
And in thy best maturity of Mind
A madness of the heart shall seize upon thee;
Passion shall tear thee when all passions cease
In other men, or mellow into virtues;

Marino Faliero

And Majesty which decks all other heads,
Shall crown to leave thee headless; honours shall
But prove to thee the heralds of Destruction,
And hoary hairs of Shame, and both of Death,
But not such death as fits an aged man."
Thus saying, he passed on.—That Hour is come.

Ang.

And with this warning couldst thou not have striven
To avert the fatal moment, and atone,
By penitence, for that which thou hadst done?

Doge.

I own the words went to my heart, so much
That I remembered them amid the maze
Of Life, as if they formed a spectral voice,
Which shook me in a supernatural dream;
And I repented; but 'twas not for me
To pull in resolution: what must be
I could not change, and would not fear.—Nay more,
Thou can'st not have forgot, what all remember,

That on my day of landing here as Doge,
On my return from Rome, a mist of such
Unwonted density went on before
The Bucentaur, like the columnar cloud
Which ushered Israel out of Egypt, till
The pilot was misled, and disembarked us
Between the Pillars of Saint Mark's, where 'tis
The custom of the state to put to death
Its criminals, instead of touching at
The Riva della Paglia, as the wont is,—
So that all Venice shuddered at the omen.

Ang.

Ah! little boots it now to recollect
Such things.

Doge.

And yet I find a comfort in
The thought, that these things are the work of Fate;
For I would rather yield to Gods than men,
Or cling to any creed of destiny,
Rather than deem these mortals, most of whom
I know to be as worthless as the dust,
And weak as worthless, more than instruments
Of an o'er-ruling Power; they in themselves
Were all incapable—they could not be
Victors of him who oft had conquered for them.

Ang.

Employ the minutes left in aspirations
Of a more healing nature, and in peace
Even with these wretches take thy flight to Heaven.

Doge.

I am at peace: the peace of certainty

Marino Faliero

That a sure Hour will come, when their sons' sons,
And this proud city, and these azure waters,
And all which makes them eminent and bright,
Shall be a desolation and a curse,
A hissing and a scoff unto the nations,
A Carthage, and a Tyre, an Ocean Babel.

Ang.

Speak not thus now: the surge of Passion still
Sweeps o'er thee to the last; thou dost deceive
Thyself, and canst not injure them—be calmer.

Doge.

I stand within Eternity, and see

Into Eternity, and I behold—
Aye, palpable as I see thy sweet face
For the last time—the days which I denounce
Unto all time against these wave-girt walls,
And they who are indwellers.

Guard (coming forward).

Doge of Venice,

The Ten are in attendance on your Highness.

Doge.

Then farewell, Angiolina!—one embrace—
Forgive the old man who hath been to thee
A fond but fatal husband—love my memory—
I would not ask so much for me still living,
But thou canst judge of me more kindly now,
Seeing my evil feelings are at rest.

Besides, of all the fruit of these long years,
Glory, and Wealth, and Power, and Fame, and Name,
Which generally leave some flowers to bloom
Even o'er the grave, I have nothing left, not even
A little love, or friendship, or esteem,
No, not enough to extract an epitaph
From ostentatious kinsmen; in one hour
I have uprooted all my former life,
And outlived everything, except thy heart,
The pure, the good, the gentle, which will oft
With unimpaired but not a clamorous grief
Still keep—Thou turn'st so pale!—Alas! she faints,
She has no breath, no pulse!—Guards! lend your aid—
I cannot leave her thus, and yet 'tis better,
Since every lifeless moment spares a pang.
When she shakes off this temporary death,
I shall be with the Eternal.—Call her women—
One look!—how cold her hand!—as cold as mine
Shall be ere she recovers.—Gently tend her,
And take my last thanks—I am ready now.

[The Attendants of Angiolina enter, and surround their Mistress, who has fainted.—Exeunt the Doge, Guards, etc., etc.]

Marino Faliero

Scene III.

—*The Court of the Ducal Palace; the outer gates are shut against the people.—The Doge enters in his ducal robes, in procession with the Council of Ten and other Patricians, attended by the Guards, till they arrive at the top of the "Giants' Staircase" (where the Doges took the oaths); the Executioner is stationed there with his sword.—On arriving, a Chief of the Ten takes off the ducal cap from the Doge's head.*

Doge.

So now the Doge is nothing, and at last
I am again Marino Faliero:
'Tis well to be so, though but for a moment.
Here was I crowned, and here, bear witness, Heaven!
With how much more contentment I resign
That shining mockery, the ducal bauble,
Than I received the fatal ornament.

One of the Ten.

Thou tremblest, Faliero!

Doge.

'Tis with age, then.

Ben.

Faliero! hast thou aught further to commend,
Compatible with justice, to the Senate?

Doge.

I would commend my nephew to their mercy,
My consort to their justice; for methinks

My death, and such a death, might settle all
Between the State and me.

Ben.

They shall be cared for;
Even notwithstanding thine unheard-of crime.

Doge.

Unheard of! aye, there's not a history
But shows a thousand crowned conspirators
Against the people; but to set them free,
One Sovereign only died, and one is dying.

Ben.

And who were they who fell in such a cause?

Doge.

The King of Sparta, and the Doge of Venice—
Agis and Faliero!

Ben.

Hast thou more
To utter or to do?

Doge.

May I speak?

Ben.

Thou may'st;
But recollect the people are without,

Marino Faliero

Beyond the compass of the human voice.

Doge.

I speak to Time and to Eternity,
Of which I grow a portion, not to man.
Ye Elements! in which to be resolved
I hasten, let my voice be as a Spirit
Upon you! Ye blue waves! which bore my banner,
Ye winds! which fluttered o'er as if you loved it,
And filled my swelling sails as they were wafted
To many a triumph! Thou, my native earth,
Which I have bled for! and thou, foreign earth,
Which drank this willing blood from many a wound!
Ye stones, in which my gore will not sink, but
Reek up to Heaven! Ye skies, which will receive it!
Thou Sun! which shinest on these things, and Thou!
Who kindest and who quenchest suns!—Attest!
I am not innocent—but are these guiltless?
I perish, but not unavenged; far ages
Float up from the abyss of Time to be,
And show these eyes, before they close, the doom
Of this proud City, and I leave my curse
On her and hers for ever!—Yes, the hours
Are silently engendering of the day,
When she, who built 'gainst Attila a bulwark,

Shall yield, and bloodlessly and basely yield,
Unto a bastard Attila, without
Shedding so much blood in her last defence,
As these old veins, oft drained in shielding her,
Shall pour in sacrifice.—She shall be bought
And sold, and be an appanage to those
Who shall despise her! —She shall stoop to be

A province for an Empire, petty town
In lieu of Capital, with slaves for senates,
Beggars for nobles, panders for a people!
Then when the Hebrew's in thy palaces,

The Hun in thy high places, and the Greek
Walks o'er thy mart, and smiles on it for his;
When thy patricians beg their bitter bread
In narrow streets, and in their shameful need
Make their nobility a plea for pity;
Then, when the few who still retain a wreck
Of their great fathers' heritage shall fawn
Round a barbarian Vice of Kings' Vice-gerent,
Even in the Palace where they swayed as Sovereigns,
Even in the Palace where they slew their Sovereign,
Proud of some name they have disgraced, or sprung
From an adulteress boastful of her guilt
With some large gondolier or foreign soldier,

Marino Faliero

Shall bear about their bastardy in triumph
To the third spurious generation;—when
Thy sons are in the lowest scale of being,
Slaves turned o'er to the vanquished by the victors,
Despised by cowards for greater cowardice,
And scorned even by the vicious for such vices
As in the monstrous grasp of their conception
Defy all codes to image or to name them;
Then, when of Cyprus, now thy subject kingdom,
All thine inheritance shall be her shame
Entailed on thy less virtuous daughters, grown
A wider proverb for worse prostitution;—
When all the ills of conquered states shall cling thee,
Vice without splendour, Sin without relief
Even from the gloss of Love to smooth it o'er,
But in its stead, coarse lusts of habitude,

Prurient yet passionless, cold studied lewdness,
Depraving Nature's frailty to an art;—
When these and more are heavy on thee, when
Smiles without mirth, and pastimes without Pleasure,
Youth without Honour, Age without respect,
Meanness and Weakness, and a sense of woe
'Gainst which thou wilt not strive, and dar'st not murmur,
Have made thee last and worst of peopled deserts,
Then, in the last gasp of thine agony,
Amidst thy many murders, think of *mine!*
Thou den of drunkards with the blood of Princes!
Gehenna of the waters! thou Sea-Sodom!

Thus I devote thee to the Infernal Gods!
Thee and thy serpent seed!

[Here the Doge turns and addresses the Executioner.]

Slave, do thine office!
Strike as I struck the foe! Strike as I would
Have struck those tyrants! Strike deep as my curse!
Strike—and but once!

*[The Doge throws himself upon his knees, and as the Executioner raises his sword
the scene closes.]*

Marino Faliero

Scene IV.

—*The Piazza and Piazzetta of St. Mark's.*— *The people in crowds gathered round the grated gates of the Ducal Palace, which are shut.*

First Citizen.

I have gained the Gate, and can discern the Ten,
Robed in their gowns of state, ranged round the Doge.

Second Cit.

I cannot reach thee with mine utmost effort.
How is it? let us hear at least, since sight
Is thus prohibited unto the people,
Except the occupiers of those bars.

First Cit.

One has approached the Doge, and now they strip
The ducal bonnet from his head—and now
He raises his keen eyes to Heaven; I see
Them glitter, and his lips move—Hush! hush!—no,
'Twas but a murmur—Curse upon the distance!
His words are inarticulate, but the voice
Swells up like muttered thunder; would we could
But gather a sole sentence!

Second Cit.

Hush! we perhaps may catch the sound.

First Cit.

'Tis vain.

I cannot hear him.—How his hoary hair
Streams on the wind like foam upon the wave!
Now—now—he kneels—and now they form a circle
Round him, and all is hidden—but I see
The lifted sword in air—Ah! hark! it falls!

[The people murmur.]

Third Cit.

Then they have murdered him who would have freed us.

Fourth Cit.

He was a kind man to the commons ever.

Fifth Cit.

Wisely they did to keep their portals barred.
Would we had known the work they were preparing
Ere we were summoned here—we would have brought
Weapons, and forced them!

Sixth Cit.

Are you sure he's dead?

First Cit.

I saw the sword fall—Lo! what have we here?

Enter on the Balcony of the Palace which fronts St. Mark's Place a Chief of the Ten, with a bloody sword. He

Marino Faliero

waves it thrice before the People, and exclaims,

"Justice hath dealt upon the mighty Traitor!"

[The gates are opened; the populace rush in towards the "Giants' Staircase," where the execution has taken place. The foremost of them exclaims to those behind, "The gory head rolls down the Giants' Steps!"

[The curtain falls.
