

## SCENES FROM "POLITIAN"

AN UNPUBLISHED DRAMA

## I

ROME.— A Hall in a Palace. ALESSANDRA and CASTIGLIONE.

*Alessandra.* Thou art sad, Castiglione.*Castiglione.* Sad!—not I.

Oh, I'm the happiest, happiest man in Rome!  
 A few days more, thou knowest, my Alessandra,  
 Will make thee mine. Oh, I am very happy!

*Aless.* Methinks thou hast a singular way of showing

Thy happiness—what ails thee, cousin of mine?  
 Why didst thou sigh so deeply?

*Cas.* Did I sigh?

I was not conscious of it. It is a fashion,  
 A silly—a most silly fashion I have  
 When I am *very* happy. Did I sigh? (*sighing.*)

*Aless.* Thou didst. Thou art not well. Thou hast indulged

Too much of late, and I am vexed to see it.  
 Late hours and wine, Castiglione—these  
 Will ruin thee! thou art already altered—  
 Thy looks are haggard—nothing so wears away  
 The constitution as late hours and wine.

*Cas.* (*musings*). Nothing; fair cousin, nothing—  
not even deep sorrow—

Wears it away like evil hours and wine.

I will amend.

*Aless.* Do it! I would have thee drop  
 Thy riotous company, too—fellows low born  
 Ill suit the like of old Di Broglio's heir  
 And Alessandra's husband.

*Cas.* I will drop them.*Aless.* Thou wilt—thou must. Attend thou also  
more

To thy dress and equipage—they are over plain  
 For thy lofty rank and fashion—much depends  
 Upon appearances.

*Cas.* I'll see to it.

*Aless.* Then see to it!—pay more attention, sir,  
 To a becoming carriage—much thou wantest  
 In dignity.

*Cas.* Much, much, oh, much I want  
 In proper dignity.

*Aless.* (*haughtily*). Thou mockest me, sir!*Cas.* (*abstractedly*). Sweet, gentle Lalage!*Aless.* Heard I aright?

I speak to him—he speaks of Lalage!

Sir Count! (*places her hand on his shoulder*) what  
 art thou dreaming? He's not well!

What ails thee, sir?

*Cas.* (*starting*). Cousin! fair cousin!—madam!  
 I crave thy pardon—indeed I am not well—

Your hand from off my shoulder, if you please.  
This air is most oppressive!—Madam—the Duke!

*Enter Di Broglio.*

*Di Broglio.* My son, I've news for thee!—hey?—  
what's the matter? (*observing Alessandra*).  
I' the pouts? Kiss her, Castiglione! kiss her,  
You dog! and make it up, I say, this minute!  
I've news for you both. Politian is expected  
Hourly in Rome—Politian, Earl of Leicester!  
We'll have him at the wedding. 'Tis his first visit  
To the imperial city.

*Aless.* What! Politian  
Of Britain, Earl of Leicester?

*Di Brog.* The same, my love.  
We'll have him at the wedding. A man quite young  
In years, but gray in fame. I have not seen him,  
But Rumor speaks of him as of a prodigy  
Pre-eminent in arts, and arms, and wealth,  
And high descent. We'll have him at the wedding.

*Aless.* I have heard much of this Politian.  
Gay, volatile and giddy—is he not,  
And little given to thinking?

*Di Brog.* Far from it, love.  
No branch, they say, of all philosophy  
So deep abstruse he has not mastered it.  
Learned as few are learned.

*Aless.* 'Tis very strange!  
I have known men have seen Politian

And sought his company. They speak of him  
As of one who entered madly into life,  
Drinking the cup of pleasure to the dregs.

*Cas.* Ridiculous! Now *I* have seen Politian  
And know him well—nor learned nor mirthful he.  
He is a dreamer, and a man shut out  
From common passions.

*Di Brog.* Children, we disagree.  
Let us go forth and taste the fragrant air  
Of the garden. Did I dream, or did I hear  
Politian was a *melancholy* man? (*Exeunt.*)

## II

ROME.—A Lady's Apartment, with a window open and looking into a garden. LALAGE, in deep mourning, reading at a table on which lie some books and a hand-mirror. In the background JACINTA (a servant maid) leans carelessly upon a chair.

*Lalage.* Jacinta! is it thou?

*Jacinta* (*pertly*). Yes, ma'am, I'm here.

*Lal.* I did not know, Jacinta, you were in waiting.  
Sit down!—let not my presence trouble you—  
Sit down!—for I am humble, most humble.

*Jac.* (*aside*). 'Tis time.

(*Jacinta seats herself in a sidelong manner upon the chair, resting her elbows upon the back, and regarding her mistress with a contemptuous look. Lalage continues to read.*)

*Lal.* "It in another climate, so he said,

"Bore a bright golden flower, but not i' this soil!"  
*(Pauses—turns over some leaves, and resumes.)*  
 "No lingering winters there, nor snow, nor shower—  
 But Ocean ever to refresh mankind  
 Breathes the shrill spirit of the western wind."  
 Oh, beautiful!—most beautiful!—how like  
 To what my fevered soul doth dream of Heaven!  
 O happy land! *(pauses.)* She died!—the maiden  
 died!  
 O still more happy maiden who couldst die!  
 Jacinta!

*(Jacinta returns no answer, and Lalage presently resumes.)*

Again!—a similar tale  
 Told of a beauteous dame beyond the sea!  
 Thus speaketh one Ferdinand in the words of the  
 play—  
 "She died full young"—one Bossola answers him—  
 "I think not so—her infelicity  
 Seemed to have years too many"—Ah, luckless lady!  
 Jacinta! *(still no answer).*

Here's a far sterner story—  
 But like—oh, like in its despair—  
 Of that Egyptian queen, winning so easily  
 A thousand hearts—losing at length her own.  
 She died. Thus endeth the history—and her maids  
 Lean over her and weep—two gentle maids  
 With gentle names—Eiros and Charmion!  
 Rainbow and Dove!—Jacinta!

*Jac. (pettishly).* Madam, what is it?

*Lal.* Wilt thou, my good Jacinta, be so kind  
 As go down in the library and bring me  
 The Holy Evangelists?

*Jac.* Pshaw! *(Exit.)*

*Lal.* If there be balm  
 For the wounded spirit in Gilead, it is there!  
 Dew in the night time of my bitter trouble  
 Will there be found—"dew sweeter far than that  
 Which hangs like chains of pearl on Hermon  
 hill."

*(Re-enter Jacinta, and throws a volume on the table.)*  
 There, ma'am, 's the book. Indeed she is very  
 troublesome. *(Aside.)*

*Lal. (astonished).* What didst thou say, Jacinta?  
 Have I done aught  
 To grieve thee or to vex thee?—I am sorry.  
 For thou hast served me long and ever been  
 Trustworthy and respectful. *(Resumes her reading.)*

*Jac.* I can't believe  
 She has any more jewels—no—no—she gave me  
 all. *(Aside.)*

*Lal.* What didst thou say, Jacinta? Now I be-  
 think me  
 Thou hast not spoken lately of thy wedding.  
 How fares good Ugo?—and when is it to be?  
 Can I do aught?—is there no further aid  
 Thou needest, Jacinta?

*Jac.* Is there no further aid!

That's meant for me. (*Aside.*) I'm sure, madam,  
you need not

Be always throwing those jewels in my teeth.

*Lal.* Jewels! Jacinta—now indeed, Jacinta,  
I thought not of the jewels.

*Jac.* Oh, perhaps not!

But then I might have sworn it. After all,  
There's Ugo says the ring is only paste,  
For he's sure the Count Castiglione never  
Would have given a real diamond to such as you;  
And at the best I'm certain, madam, you can not  
Have use for jewels *now*. But I might have  
sworn it. (*Exit.*)

(*Lalage bursts into tears and leans her head  
upon the table—after a short pause raises  
it.*)

*Lal.* Poor Lalage!—and is it come to this?  
Thy servant maid!—but courage!—'tis but a viper  
Whom thou hast cherished to sting thee to the soul!  
(*Taking up the mirror.*)

Ha! here at least's a friend—too much a friend  
In earlier days—a friend will not deceive thee.  
Fair mirror and true! now tell me (for thou canst)  
A tale—a pretty tale—and heed thou not  
Though it be rife with woe. It answers me.  
It speaks of sunken eyes, and wasted cheeks,  
And Beauty long deceased—remembers me.  
Of Joy departed—Hope, the Seraph Hope,  
Inurnèd and entombèd!—now, in a tone

Low, sad, and solemn, but most audible,  
Whispers of early grave untimely yawning  
For ruined maid. Fair mirror and true!—thou liest  
not!

*Thou* hast no end to gain—no heart to break—  
Castiglione lied who said he loved—  
Thou true—he false!—false!—false!

(*While she speaks, a monk enters her apart-  
ment and approaches unobserved.*)

*Monk.* Refuge thou hast,  
Sweet daughter! in Heaven. Think of eternal  
things!

Give up thy soul to penitence, and pray!

*Lal.* (*arising hurriedly.*) I can not pray!—My  
soul is at war with God!

The frightful sounds of merriment below  
Disturb my senses—go! I can not pray—  
The sweet airs from the garden worry me!  
Thy presence grieves me—go!—they priestly rai-  
ment

Fills me with dread—thy ebony crucifix  
With horror and awe!

*Monk.* Think of thy precious soul!

*Lal.* Think of my early days!—think of my  
father

And mother in Heaven! think of our quiet home,  
And the rivulet that ran before the door!  
Think of my little sisters!—think of them!  
And think of me!—think of my trusting love

And confidence—his vows—my ruin—think—think  
Of my unspeakable misery!—begone!  
Yet stay! yet stay!—what was it thou saidst of  
prayer

And penitence? Didst thou not speak of faith  
And vows before the throne?

*Monk.* I did.

*Lal.* 'Tis well.

There is a vow 'twere fitting should be made—  
A sacred vow, imperative and urgent,  
A solemn vow!

*Monk.* Daughter, this zeal is well!

*Lal.* Father, this zeal is anything but well!  
Hast thou a crucifix fit for this thing?  
A crucifix whereon to register  
This sacred vow? (*He hands her his own.*)  
Not that—Oh! no!—no!—no! (*Shuddering.*)  
Not that! Not that!—I tell thee, holy man,  
Thy raiments and thy ebony cross affright me!  
Stand back! I have a crucifix myself—  
I have a crucifix! Methinks 'twere fitting  
The deed—the vow—the symbol of the deed—  
And the deed's register should tally, father!

(*Draws a cross-handled dagger and raises it  
on high.*)

Behold the cross wherewith a vow like mine  
Is written in Heaven!

*Monk.* Thy words are madness, daughter,  
And speak a purpose unholy—thy lips are livid—

Thine eyes are wild—tempt not the wrath divine!  
Pause ere too late!—oh, be not—be not rash!  
Swear not the oath—oh, swear it not!

*Lal.* 'Tis sworn!

## III

An Apartment in a Palace. POLITIAN and BALDAZZAR.

*Baldazzar.* Arouse thee now, Politian!  
Thou must not—nay indeed, indeed, thou shalt not  
Give way unto these humors. Be thyself!  
Shake off the idle fancies that beset thee,  
And live, for now thou diest!

*Politian.* Not so, Baldazzar!

*Surely* I live.

*Bal.* Politian, it doth grieve me  
To see thee thus!

*Pol.* Baldazzar, it doth grieve me  
To give thee cause for grief, my honored friend.  
Command me, sir! what wouldst thou have me do?  
At thy behest I will shake off that nature  
Which from my forefathers I did inherit,  
Which with my mother's milk I did imbibe,  
And be no more Politian, but some other.  
Command me, sir!

*Bal.* To the field then—to the field—  
To the senate or the field.

*Pol.* Alas! alas!  
There is an imp would follow me even there!  
There is an imp *hath* followed me even there!

There is—what voice was that?

*Bal.* I heard it not.

I heard not any voice except thine own,  
And the echo of thine own.

*Pol.* Then I but dreamed.

*Bal.* Give not thy soul to dreams: the camp—  
the court

Befit thee—Fame awaits thee—Glory calls—  
And her the trumpet-tongued thou wilt not hear  
In hearkening to imaginary sounds  
And phantom voices.

*Pol.* It is a phantom voice!

Didst thou not hear it *then*?

*Bal.* I heard it not.

*Pol.* Thou heardest it not!—Baldazzar, speak no  
more

To me, Politian, of thy camps and courts.  
Oh! I am sick, sick, sick, even unto death,  
Of the hollow and high-sounding vanities  
Of the populous Earth! Bear with me yet awhile!  
We have been boys together—school-fellows—  
And now are friends—yet shall not be so long—  
For in the Eternal City thou shalt do me  
A kind and gentle office, and a Power—  
A Power august, benignant, and supreme—  
Shall then absolve thee of all further duties  
Unto thy friend.

*Bal.* Thou speakest a fearful riddle  
I *will* not understand.

*Pol.* Yet now as Fate

Approaches, and the Hours are breathing low,  
The sands of Time are changed to golden grains,  
And dazzle me, Baldazzar. Alas! alas!

I *can not* die, having within my heart

So keen a relish for the beautiful

As hath been kindled within it. Methinks the air  
Is balmier now than it was wont to be—

Rich melodies are floating in the winds—

A rarer loveliness bedecks the earth—

And with a holier lustre the quiet moon

Sitteth in Heaven.—Hist! hist! thou canst not say

Thou hearest not *now*, Baldazzar?

*Bal.* Indeed I hear not.

*Pol.* Not hear it!—listen now—listen!—the faint-  
est sound

And yet the sweetest that ear ever heard!

A lady's voice!—and sorrow in the tone!

Baldazzar, it oppresses me like a spell!

Again!—again!—how solemnly it falls

Into my heart of hearts! that eloquent voice

Surely I never heard—yet it were well

Had I *but* heard it with its thrilling tones

In earlier days!

*Bal.* I myself hear it now.

Be still!—the voice, if I mistake not greatly,

Proceeds from yonder lattice—which you may see

Very plainly through the window—it belongs,

Does it not? unto this palace of the Duke.

The singer is undoubtedly beneath  
The roof of his Excellency—and perhaps  
Is even that Alessandra of whom he spoke  
As the betrothed of Castiglione,  
His son and heir.

*Pol.* Be still!—it comes again!

*Voice (very faintly).* “And is thy heart so strong

As for to leave me thus,  
That have loved thee so long,  
In wealth and woe among?  
And is thy heart so strong  
As for to leave me thus?

Say nay! say nay!” \*

*Bal.* The song is English, and I oft have heard it  
In merry England—never so plaintively—  
Hist! hist! it comes again!

*Voice (more loudly).* “Is it so strong

As for to leave me thus,  
That have loved thee so long,  
In wealth and woe among?  
And is thy heart so strong  
As for to leave me thus?

Say nay! say nay!”

*Bal.* 'Tis hushed and all is still!

*Pol.* All is not still.

*Bal.* Let us go down.

*Pol.* Go down, Baldazzar, go!

\* By Sir Thomas Wyatt.—Ed.

*Bal.* The hour is growing late—the Duke awaits  
us—

Thy presence is expected in the hall  
Below. What ails thee, Earl Politian?

*Voice (distinctly).* “Who have loved thee so long.  
In wealth and woe among,  
And is thy heart so strong?

Say nay! say nay!”

*Bal.* Let us descend!—'tis time. Politian, give  
These fancies to the wind. Remember, pray,  
Your bearing lately savored much of rudeness  
Unto the Duke. Arouse thee! and remember!

*Pol.* Remember? I do. Lead on! I do re-  
member (Going.)

Let us descend. Believe me I would give,  
Freely would give the broad lands of my earldom  
To look upon the face hidden by yon lattice—  
“To gaze upon that veiled face, and hear  
Once more that silent tongue.”

*Bal.* Let me beg you, sir,  
Descend with me—the Duke may be offended.  
Let us go down, I pray you.

*Voice (loudly).* Say nay! say nay!

*Pol. (aside).* 'Tis strange!—'tis very strange—  
methought the voice

Chimed in with my desires and bade me stay!

(Approaching the window.)

Sweet voice! I heed thee, and will surely stay.  
Now be this Fancy, by Heaven, or be it Fate,