

Still will I not descend. Baldazzar, make
Apology unto the Duke for me;
I go not down to-night.

Bal. Your lordship's pleasure
Shall be attended to. Good-night, Politian.

Pol. Good-night, my friend, good-night.

IV

The Gardens of a Palace—Moonlight. LALARGE and POLITIAN.

Lalage. And dost thou speak of love
To *me*, Politian?—dost thou speak of love
To Lalage?—ah woe—ah woe is me!
This mockery is most cruel!—most cruel indeed!

Politian. Weep not! oh, sob not thus!—thy bitter
tears

Will madden me. Oh, mourn not, Lalage—
Be comforted! I know—I know it all,
And *still* I speak of love. Look at me, brightest,
And beautiful Lalage!—turn here thine eyes!
Thou askest me if I could speak of love,
Knowing what I know, and seeing what I have seen.
Thou askest me that—and thus I answer thee—
Thus on my bended knee I answer thee.

(*Kneeling.*)

Sweet Lalage, *I love thee—love thee—love thee;*
Thro' good and ill—thro' weal and woe, *I love thee.*
Not mother, with her first-born on her knee,
Thrills with intenser love than I for thee.

Not on God's altar, in any time or clime,
Burned there a holier fire than burneth now
Within my spirit for *thee*. And do I love?

(*Arising.*)

Even for thy woes I love thee—even for thy woes—
Thy beauty and thy woes.

Lal. Alas, proud Earl,
Thou dost forget thyself, remembering me!
How, in thy father's halls, among the maidens
Pure and reproachless, of thy princely line,
Could the dishonored Lalage abide?
Thy wife, and with a tainted memory—
My seared and blighted name, how would it tally
With the ancestral honors of thy house,
And with thy glory?

Pol. Speak not to me of glory!
I hate—I loathe the name; I do abhor
The unsatisfactory and ideal thing.
Art thou not Lalage, and I Politian?
Do I not love—art thou not beautiful—
What need we more? Ha! glory! now speak not
of it:

By all I hold most sacred and most solemn—
By all my wishes now—my fears hereafter—
By all I scorn on earth and hope in heaven—
There is no deed I would more glory in,
Than in thy cause to scoff at this same glory
And trample it under foot. What matters it—
What matters it, my fairest, and my best,

That we go down unhonored and forgotten
 Into the dust—so we descend together?
 Descend together—and then—and then perchance—

Lal. Why dost thou pause, Politian?

Pol. And then perchance

Arise together, Lalage, and roam
 The starry and quiet dwellings of the blest,
 And still—

Lal. Why dost thou pause, Politian?

Pol. And still *together—together.*

Lal. Now, Earl of Leicester!

Thou *lovest* me, and in my heart of hearts
 I feel thou *lovest* me truly.

Pol. O Lalage!

(Throwing himself upon his knee.)

And *lovest* thou *me?*

Lal. Hist! hush! within the gloom
 Of yonder trees methought a figure passed—
 A spectral figure, solemn, and slow, and noiseless—
 Like the grim shadow Conscience, solemn and noise-
 less. *(Walks across and returns.)*

I was mistaken—'twas but a giant bough
 Stirred by the autumn wind. Politian!

Pol. My Lalage—my love! why art thou moved?
 Why dost thou turn so pale? Not Conscience' self,
 Far less a shadow which thou likenest to it,
 Should shake the firm spirit thus. But the night
 wind

Is chilly—and these melancholy boughs

Throw over all things a gloom.

Lal. Politian!

Thou speakest to me of love. Knowest thou the
 land

With which all tongues are busy—a land new
 found—

Miraculously found by one of Genoa—
 A thousand leagues within the golden west?
 A fairy land of flowers, and fruit, and sunshine—
 And crystal lakes, and overarching forests,
 And mountains, around whose towering summits
 the winds

Of Heaven untrammelled flow—which air to breathe
 Is Happiness now, and will be Freedom hereafter
 In days that are to come?

Pol. Oh, wilt thou—wilt thou

Fly to that Paradise—my Lalage, wilt thou
 Fly thither with me? There Care shall be for-
 gotten,

And Sorrow shall be no more, and Eros be all.
 And life shall then be mine, for I will live
 For thee, and in thine eyes—and thou shalt be
 No more a mourner—but the radiant Joys
 Shall wait upon thee, and the angel Hope
 Attend thee ever; and I will kneel to thee
 And worship thee, and call thee my beloved,
 My own, my beautiful, my love, my wife,
 My all;—oh, wilt thou—wilt thou, Lalage,
 Fly thither with me?

Lal. A deed is to be done—
Castiglione lives!

Pol. And he shall die! (Exit.)

Lal. (after a pause). And—he—shall—die!—
alas!

Castiglione die? Who spoke the words?
Where am I?—what was it he said?—Politian!
Thou *art* not gone—thou art not gone, Politian!
I *feel* thou art not gone—yet dare not look,
Lest I behold thee not—thou *couldst* not go
With those words upon thy lips—oh, speak to
me!

And let me hear thy voice—one word—one
word,

To say thou art not gone—one little sentence,
To say how thou dost scorn—how thou dost hate
My womanly weakness. Ha! ha! thou *art* not
gone—

Oh, speak to me! I *knew* thou wouldst not go!
I knew thou wouldst not, couldst not, *durst* not
go.

Villain, thou *art* not gone—thou mockest me!
And thus I clutch thee—thus!—He is gone, he is
gone—

Gone—gone. Where am I?—'tis well—'tis very
well!

So that the blade be keen—the blow be sure,
'Tis well, 'tis *very* well—alas! alas!

V

The Suburbs. POLITIAN alone.

Politian. This weakness grows upon me. I am
faint,

And much I fear me ill—it will not do
To die ere I have lived!—Stay—stay thy hand,
O Azrael, yet awhile!—Prince of the Powers
Of Darkness and the Tomb, oh, pity me!
Oh, pity me! let me not perish now,
In the budding of my Paradisal Hope!
Give me to live yet—yet a little while:
'Tis I who pray for life—I who so late
Demanded but to die!—What sayest the Count?

Enter Baldazzar.

Baldazzar. That, knowing no cause of quarrel or
of feud

Between the Earl Politian and himself,
He doth decline your cartel.

Pol. What didst thou say?

What answer was it you brought me, good Bal-
dazzar?

With what excessive fragrance the zephyr comes
Laden from yonder bowers!—a fairer day,
Or one more worthy Italy, methinks
No mortal eyes have seen!—*what* said the Count?

Bal. That he, Castiglione, not being aware
Of any feud existing, or any cause

Of quarrel between your lordship and himself,
Can not accept the challenge.

Pol. It is most true—

All this is very true. When saw you, sir,
When saw you now, Baldazzar, in the frigid
Ungenial Britain which we left so lately,
A heaven so calm as this—so utterly free
From the evil taint of clouds?—and he did *say*?

Bal. No more, my lord, than I have told you:
The Count Castiglione will not fight,
Having no cause for quarrel.

Pol. Now this is true—

All very true. Thou art my friend, Baldazzar,
And I have not forgotten it—thou'lt do me
A piece of service; wilt thou go back and say
Unto this man that I, the Earl of Leicester,
Hold him a villain?—thus much, I pr'ythee, say
Unto the Count—it is exceeding just
He should have cause for quarrel.

Bal. My lord!—my friend!—

Pol. (aside). 'Tis he—he comes himself! (*Aloud.*)
Thou reasonest well.

I know what thou wouldst say—not send the mes-
sage—

Well!—I will think of it—I will not send it.
Now pr'ythee, leave me—hither doth come a person
With whom affairs of a most private nature
I would adjust.

Bal. I go—to-morrow we meet,

Do we not?—at the Vatican.

Pol. At the Vatican. (*Exit Bal.*)

Enter Castiglione.

Cas. The Earl of Leicester here!

Pol. I *am* the Earl of Leicester, and thou seest,
Dost thou not, that I am here?

Cas. My lord, some strange,
Some singular mistake—misunderstanding—
Hath without doubt arisen: thou hast been urged
Thereby, in heat of anger, to address
Some words most unaccountable, in writing,
To me, Castiglione; the bearer being
Baldazzar, Duke of Surrey. I am aware
Of nothing which might warrant thee in this
thing,

Having given thee no offence. Ha!—am I right?
'Twas a mistake?—undoubtedly—we all
Do err at times.

Pol. Draw, villain, and prate no more!

Cas. Ha!—draw?—and villain? have at thee then
at once,

Proud Earl! (*Draws.*)

Pol. (drawing.) Thus to the expiatory tomb,
Untimely sepulchre, I do devote thee
In the name of Lalage!

*Cas. (letting fall his sword and recoiling to the
extremity of the stage).*

Of Lalage!

Hold off!—thy sacred hand!—avaunt, I say!
Avaunt—I will not fight thee—indeed I dare not.

Pol. Thou wilt not fight with me didst say, Sir
Count?

Shall I be baffled thus?—now this is well;
Didst say thou *darest* not? Ha!

Cas. I dare not—dare not—

Hold off thy hand—with that beloved name
So fresh upon thy lips I will not fight thee—
I can not—dare not.

Pol. Now, by my halidom,
I do believe thee!—coward, I do believe thee!

Cas. Ha! coward!—this may not be!

*(Clutches his sword and staggers toward
Politian, but his purpose is changed be-
fore reaching him, and he falls upon his
knee at the feet of the Earl.)*

Alas! my lord.

It is—it is—most true. In such a cause
I am the veriest coward. Oh, pity me!

Pol. *(greatly softened).* Alas!—I do—indeed I
pity thee.

Cas. And Lalage—

Pol. *Scoundrel!—arise and die!*

Cas. It needeth not be—thus—thus—Oh, let me
die

Thus on my bended knee. It were most fitting
That in this deep humiliation I perish.
For in the fight I will not raise a hand

Against thee, Earl of Leicester. Strike thou home—
(Baring his bosom.)

Here is no let or hindrance to thy weapon—
Strike home. I *will not* fight thee.

Pol. Now s'Death and Hell!

Am I not—am I not sorely—grievously tempted
To take thee at thy word? But mark me, sir:
Think not to fly me thus. Do thou prepare
For public insult in the streets—before
The eyes of the citizens. I'll follow thee—
Like an avenging spirit I'll follow thee
Even unto death. Before those whom thou lovest—
Before all Rome I'll taunt thee, villain—I'll taunt
thee,

Dost hear? with *cowardice*—thou *wilt not* fight me?
Thou liest! thou *shalt!* *(Exit.)*

Cas. Now this indeed is just!
Most righteous, and most just, avenging Heaven!